

This summer we're going to break ground on a new building on Holy Family's campus and I want to tell you about it. The building is going to be a dedicated space for our Faith Formation program, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS). It will be located just southwest of the Youth Center. The timing of this depends on the permitting process. It might be August. We estimate it will cost \$440,000 plus contingencies. We are not asking you to donate more money or taking out a loan. The funds will come from our savings.

Why do we need another building? Can't we use the school rooms as we've done for years? To answer those questions, I need to explain CGS again. Last year we switched to an exclusively CGS-based faith formation at Holy Family. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is not a program. And it doesn't replace the role of parents as primary teachers in a child's religious life. What CGS is, is a Montessori-based way to open a child up to a personal relationship with God.

Some of the principles of CGS are: God and each child have a unique relationship with one another. That child needs his or her own place to foster and grow that relationship. The growth of that relationship should be assisted by the adult, but it's directed by the Holy Spirit. And the child's spiritual growth is best served through tangible but indirect means.

In our second reading we hear St. Paul tell the Corinthians, "[T]his momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal." The interpersonal relationship between God and a person is always mysterious in that way. The catechist's role in CGS is not so much to impart information, but to prepare the environment and give selected presentations to the child based on scripture parables and the sacraments that call forth the child's response. Together the Catechist and child listen and ask God, "Who are you, and how do you love us?"

The adult doesn't so much teach the child as reflect on questions raised by the child from the presentations.

This all takes place in an atrium. An atrium is a specially designed space, like retreat house, that aids meditation and silence. It isn't so much a classroom, as a place of worship and religious life. The atrium has its own look and feel -- and, optimally, is permanent. It is filled with what are called materials. I once called them "toys," but was corrected by Maria, our Faith Formation Director. Materials are the handmade, often wooden, three dimensional items that are used in the catechist's presentations. They might 3D maps of Jerusalem, mini altars, vestments, churches, figurines from Jesus' parables and stories -- sheep, figures of the Apostles, the upper room, etc. You can see some of the materials from an atrium after mass in the narthex/ social hall.

The need for multiple Atriums (or Atria) is why we're building a new building. If we're to offer the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd to all the children in the parish we first need more space than we

currently have. The new building will house two new atria, in addition to the space we already have in the youth center.

But in addition to more space, we also need more materials to put in the new atria and more catechists. That is where you come in. If you are handy with wood and other materials, crafty, artistic, and like to create things for kids, this is your chance. Please see Maria after mass to volunteer to help us in this way.

We need all of you. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is really about forming a community around Jesus. It's a way of passing on the faith to children that includes many people. We need the gifts of artists, parents, priests, administrators, marketers, and many children.

And we especially need more catechists to help. But to be a Catechist for CGS is a real commitment. It requires its own formation. There are three levels for catechists. To be prepared for even the introductory level will take 90 hours of instruction so you will know how to make the presentations to the children and then listen to the

Holy Spirit with them. We will not send you in unprepared. We are having a level 1 adult formation course here at Holy Family in August. Please consider if you have this vocation, because it is a vocation – to accompany children in their experiencing of God. See Maria after mass if you have questions or feel God might be calling you to this way of discipleship.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is open to all the children of the parish, whether the child attends public school, the HFK parish school, or is homeschooled. And there are children from all three backgrounds already participating in CGS. We fully support the truth that the parent is a child's first and primary teacher of faith. Children might also learn information about Jesus and Catholicism at home, in school, or elsewhere. But CGS is here to help our children to encounter and grow in a relationship with Jesus as a Person. This society makes that difficult. We need dedicated places and times to give our children a fighting chance not only to learn facts about Jesus, but to find Him and

know He's real and loves them individually. As Pastor I am committing our resources to CGS in this way because I'm convinced it gives us the best chance to do this. If taking your next step in your own journey with Jesus might include engaging in CGS please take that step and help us.