

ST. ROBERT BELLARMINÉ

CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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THE GIFT OF SILENCE

You may have noticed that your little ones sometimes come home with little cards that say, “**I can make silence.**” Have you ever wondered what is up with that? Especially when they are so excited?

In the Atrium we offer opportunities for silence: at the prayer table, during presentations, and during work time. The silence we are talking about isn’t the silence of trying to quiet a noisy classroom, but rather a substantial silence that rises from stillness, that brings interior order. This silence is a gift! It is a vehicle for prayer. There is no prayer without silence. Gianna Gobbi, a foundress of CGS, says “**God’s self-revelation comes to us in silence...stillness and silence foster reflection and the capacity to listen to the Other, to receive God’s presence in our whole being**” (*Listening to God with Children*, p. 122). The peaceful, sacred space of the atrium fosters this gift of silence and the capacity for prayer.

What can you do at home to nurture silence?

- Unplug! Spend a little bit of time with the TV and devices off.
- Invite the children to be still and practice being still with them. Just a minute or two, but they love practicing it (it takes a lot of self-control and accomplishing it brings the children so much joy!).
- After you have practiced being silent, ask the children what they heard in the room? What sounds did you hear in nature? Or in your own body? Share your experience too.
- Model these moments of silence for your children. They watch you! You are the primary example of prayer in your children’s lives. Your modeling silence and prayer is a gift for them now and in the future.



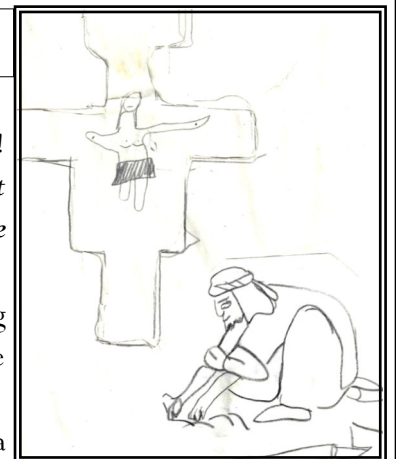
LEVEL ONE: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The 3-6 year olds have begun to discover the mysteries of the Kingdom of God parables! We learn about the *Mustard Seed*, *The Kingdom of Heaven & The Pearl of Great Price*, *The Kingdom of God & the Hidden Treasure*, *The Growing Seed*, and *The Kingdom of Heaven & the Leaven*.

With *The Mustard Seed*, *The Grain*, and *The Leaven*, Jesus tells us how something small becomes great. Through these parables, we discover that God’s power is the source that makes the Kingdom grow.

The Pearl of Great Price and *The Hidden Treasure* help us realize that, as Sofia Cavalletti said, “so great is the value of the Kingdom which is inside us and around us that it surpasses everything.”

Our work with the parables is never ending and it is work that we will keep returning to in the atrium and for the rest of our lives.



Work of the Child: Level II child connects the Hidden Treasure parable and the risen Christ (San Damiano cross).

LEVEL TWO: THE TRUE VINE

The parable of *The True Vine* is the heart of the Level II atrium. This parable is split into three moments for our 1st, 2nd, & 3rd graders and is a key part of Sacramental Preparation for 1st Eucharist and Reconciliation. We read John 15:1-11, which lifts up *The True Vine* as a new image that Jesus gives us of his true identity and our relationship to him. Jesus says, **"I AM the True Vine and you are the branches."** Jesus is not only revealing Himself, but also telling us who we are in His heart and mind.



**Level II:
True Vine material**

In the first moment (1st gr.), we think about who is the Vine Dresser (God the Father), who the branches are (us), and who is the Sap that runs through the branches (Holy Spirit). We think about when we first became a branch at our baptism and how Jesus says nine times in the parable to remain in him. We think about how we can remain in Jesus.

In the second moment (2nd gr.), we learn that the Vine contains no time or space, so it includes people from all over and even people who have died. Death is not a hindrance to the Vine, but what does stop it from growing and producing fruit is sin or blockages, that get in the way of our relationship with God. All we have to do is ask God to remove those blocks and He can clear them away. God gives us a gift when we ask for the blocks to be removed called the sacrament of *Reconciliation*.

In the third moment (3rd gr.), we will do a Bible study where we will continue to examine parts of ourselves that we want to invite God to prune off so that we can bear more fruit and remain in Jesus.

LEVEL THREE: ARMOR OF LIGHT

During this time of Lent in the Level III atrium, we will be presented **The Armor of Light meditations**. This time is often called "Second Reconciliation" because the scriptures, the age 9-12 Maxims, and parables to help us grow in our understanding and awareness of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These meditations are split into three moments.

The first moment will meditate on *Ephesians 5:8* and *Romans 13:11-12*. We talk about when we received the gift of light at our baptism and what it means to live as children of the light. A way to live as children of the light is by living out the *Maxims* that Jesus taught us. We put out all the maxims and individually choose one to reflect on, work with, and live out over the next week. The following week we will return and see how we did living out our chosen maxim. We know that we have weaknesses (we recall the parable of the *Found Sheep*) and sometimes we fail, but just as in the parable of the Insistent Friend (*Luke 11:8*), we go to God and ask for what we lack and He will help us.

In the next moment (following week), we will mediate on **new** maxims (*Lk. 9:62, Mt. 7:13, Mk. 2:17, Mt. 5:44-45, Mt. 21:28-31, Mt. 7:21, Lk 6:46-49*) that we have not heard yet and will work with these over a couple weeks. We strive not only to know these mentally, but to reflect on them so we understand them with our hearts. Only then can we truly live these out!

In the final moment, we will read the *Healing of the Paralytic* (*Matthew 9:1-8*). We talk about how Jesus forgives the paralytic and how sin can paralyze us. Forgiveness brings about healing from sin. Jesus didn't just forgive one time, but wants to forgive all people throughout all time when they sincerely ask for forgiveness. Jesus gives the power to forgive sins to the bishops and priest, so when we go to reconciliation today with our parish priest, he forgives our sins through the power of God and in the name of God. The gift of reconciliation is our most helpful "armor of light."

The Sacrament of Reconciliation helps fill us with God's light, love, strength, and helps us go forward living in hope! We work toward living as children of the light who fully shine!

Important NEWS & EVENTS

- **NO RELIGIOUS ED. CLASSES ON FEB. 15.** THERE WILL BE CLASS ON TUESDAY, FEB. 16.
- **SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION MINI-RETREATS FOR 2ND GRADE:** Parents, if you have not already signed up for the four upcoming sessions, please do so! A link was sent last week. If you have any questions, please contact the Religious Education Office.
- **ASH WEDNESDAY:** Mass times for Ash Wednesday are 8:30 am, 1 pm (School Mass), 4:30 pm (Religious Ed Mass), and 6:45 pm.
- **CHILDREN'S STATIONS OF THE CROSS:** There will be a Children's Station of the Cross on March 5, 2020 in the church. We invite all our families to attend.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY OF BAPTISM (FEBRUARY BAPTISMS):

Eve Sheldon (February 1)

Parker Zalewski (February 7)

Jacob Rousseau (February 11)

Elizabeth Hartmann (February 18)

Andrew Valerio (February 22)

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES:

"The Hidden Treasure is Love and Hope..." - 3 year old.

When asked what makes the precious pearl so special, a four year old responded,
"It is the Jesus Pearl - Jesus who died and rose from the dead. The Jesus Pearl."

When asked if anyone knows what a parable is, a four year old responded,
"Yes - it's how God speaks to us."

"This tells us that The Kingdom of God is always growing and growing!"
-3rd grader on the Mustard Seed

"Nothing is more important than the Kingdom of God." - 2nd grader