



OFFICE of the BISHOP

May 2, 2014

Dear parish priests, catechetical leaders and Catholic School Administrators:

I am sharing with you a letter from Father David Fleming, Pastor, St. Pius X Parish in Urbandale, about the many formational and spiritual benefits he has experienced through the *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* approach to religious formation of children. I encourage you to review his letter. If you have any additional questions, please direct them to Father Fleming at 515-276-2059.

Know of my continued prayerful support for the Church in Southwest Iowa as we engage together in the important work of forming the faith of our children and teens.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines



ST. PIUS X CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Wednesday, February 1, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Many of you already know about this gentle work called the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. It is Montessori approach to the religious formation of children. It is one that is gentle and patient. It is based on Scripture and the Liturgy of our Church. It allows room for the children to meet their Good Shepherd and build their own relationship with him. It is a place where they can receive the guidance and knowledge they need to develop and blossom this relationship with God.

You will hear the term "Atrium" used a lot when referencing the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. The Atrium is the room that is prepared for the children. It is not a classroom. Instead it is a place of religious experience, community, and worship. Everything in this room is intended to be appropriate to the ages and sizes of children who gather there. The furniture is child-sized to foster moving about freely, working comfortably, using and moving objects. The materials aid the children in their understanding of the teachings of Jesus, worshiping God, and the essential tenets of our faith.

We began Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at Saint Pius X ten years ago with a handful of children from our faith formation program. We had one atrium session and nine children. Then CGS began to grow. In that growth we had decided this must be for all our children, we needed to figure out how. We now offer twelve sessions a week, as well as an additional six sessions for our children in the Catholic School. It continues to grow.

As Pastor, I can attest to not only the value of this method of faith formation, but the graces that it has brought our community. My association with CGS began when I was pastor at All Saints Parish in Stuart. Since that time I believe this process of formation can be invaluable to our young people and the parish communities where it is offered. Here at St. Pius X Parish, CGS is offered alongside our more traditional classroom-based model of faith formation. We have been blessed to provide for the varying needs of our families and young people.

My own appreciation of Scripture and Liturgy has deepened, having observed the children and their catechists in the Atrium. I enthusiastically recommend the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd to other parishes in our diocese. As you consider implementing Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in your parish or Catholic School setting, please feel free to contact me, or members of our parish staff to answer your questions.

Sincerely Yours In Christ,

Rev. David P. Fleming

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