

History of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd:

- **Maria Montessori (1870-1952)**
 - First woman medical doctor in Italy.
 - Method based on scientific observation and guidance verses direct instruction.
 - Recognized from the youngest children a “silent plea”. “Help me to do it myself.”
 - Saw religious formation as essential to the fullness of child’s development.
 - Believed that “Liturgy is the magnificent expression of the content of our faith. The liturgy can even be called the pedagogical method of the Catholic Church.”
 - 1919: Created an environment she entitled the “atrium.”

- **Sofia Cavalletti (born August 21, 1917, died, August 23, 2011)**
 - Received her degree in Hebrew and Comparative Semitic Languages from the Sapienza University in Rome.
 - Contributed to several editions of the Bible and to international publications on biblical studies.
 - Studied under the former Jewish rabbi, Eugenio Zolli.
 - Was asked by a friend to help prepare some children for first communion.
 - She was introduced to **Gianna Gobbi**, a Montessorian, in 1954.

- **Gianna Gobbi (1919-2002)**
 - Montessori certificate was signed by Maria Montessori.
 - Worked for 15 years in various Casa dei Bambini and as an assistant for national Children’s House courses.
 - Sofia and Gianna became good friends, set up an atrium modeled on the Casa set up by Montessori.
 - “In every material that I look at, I see Gianna’s pencils and pens, and also my saws. There is no material that was only her work or only mine.” (*Essential Realities*, 49).
 - “In my memory, it was Gianna’s work to take the children by the hand and lead them to the Word of God, while Sofia brought the Word of God to the Children.”

- **CGS**
 - 1962: Maria Montessori Association for Religious Formation of the Child began as a movement of catechists exploring with Cavalletti and Gobbi the theology of children / the way children come to God.
 - 1975: The First CGS training in the United States in St. Paul, MN.
 - 1984: Pope John Paul II visited Rome Atrium
 - 1984: CGSUSA, the National Association of the United States, was formalized.
 - Mission of NA: “to share in a common religious experience with the child, in which the religious values of early childhood – especially contemplation and enjoyment – predominate.”
 - 1996: Surge in growth in the Catholic Church.
 - 2009: Adopted by Missionaries of Charity.
 - CGS is a method or way of living.
 - CGS is marked by a profound respect for children and their rich capacity for relationship with God.
 - The underlying belief/premise is that there is already a relationship between God and the child.

- **Resources:**
 - Standing, *The Child in the Church*
 - Lillig, *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Essential Realities*, 1-61
 - Lillig, *The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd in a Parish Setting*, 3-13
 - Cavalletti et al, *The Good Shepherd & the Child: A Joyful Journey*, 101-104
 - Cavalletti, Sofia, “Prehistory and History of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd,” *Journals of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*, 1998-2002, 68-72.
 - Coulter, Patricia, *Way of Holy Joy, Selected Writings of Sofia Cavalletti*, 79-82
 - Garrido, *Mustard Seed Preaching*, 5-9
 - Grazzini, Camillo, “Obituary: Gianna Gobbi,” *NAMTA Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 1, winter 2004, 247-250