

GODLY PLAY & CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD briefly compared

The Rev. Joyce Scherer-Hoock 12/26/2002, revised 8/13.2018 Jshoock @gmail.com

KEY CONCEPTS & APPROACHES SHARED BY THE CATECHESIS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD & GODLY PLAY

Both have roots in Montessori philosophy and method

- Material is presented in an evocative rather than didactic manner.
- Children are drawn into an “Aha!” moment via open ended questions or “wondering.”
- Both offer an open, rather than closed, view of the Bible.
- Silence is valued as a space for God to speak with the child.
- Use of symbolic religious language is taught by modeling.

In both classroom space becomes “Sacred Space.”

- Content is communicated in demonstrations with specially prepared, three-dimensional materials rather than purely verbal storytelling, paper and pencil work, or crafts. Honors the young child’s need to learn in a multi-modal and sensorial manner.
- Space and materials become the teacher. The teacher is a facilitator in use of space & materials in CGS. She is the “storyteller” in GP.
- The child is taught how to work in and maintain the space & material. A careful external ordering of space and materials facilitates the child’s autonomy and mastery.
- The child is taught behavior appropriate to a sacred space. Berryman calls this “The Unspoken Lesson.” In CGS this is done in depth with the “Practical Life” and ‘Grace and Courtesy” exercises.

Both methods strive to provide Christian Formation rather than education.

SOME KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CATECHESIS & GODLY PLAY

- Godly Play is Theo-centric. It begins with God in the Old Testament and uses Bible stories to help the child wrestle with common existential questions
- CGS is Christocentric / Trinitarian. It’s goal for the 3-6 year old child it to help them “fall in love with Jesus.” This begins with the discovery that Jesus reveals God as a Good Shepherd who cares for and lays down his life for his sheep. CGS offers children the words of Scripture directly without embellishment in the tradition of Lectio Divina
- Godly Play offers the child Biblical material in the order it appears in the Bible. It begins in Genesis and includes many OT stories for young children. It does not use the text of the Biblical text directly but relies on the conceptions of storytelling to maintain interest.
- CGS offers Biblical material based on the child’s spiritual sensitive periods and level of cognitive development. It offers Jesus as the Good Shepherd first, so the child can fall in love with Jesus as protector before encountering God as judge.
- Godly play does not organize the Bible material developmentally, but according to the chronology of the Bible, or order of church year.
- CGS does organize the biblical material developmentally. These levels are based on Montessori’s “planes of development.” At each level children are drawn to aspects of the Christian faith that correspond to their developmental need at that time.

Ages:

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- 3 – 6 are sensitive to protection – The Parable of Jesus the Good Shepherd offers the child God-in-Christ as one who cares, protects and knows.
 - 6 - 9 are sensitive to the need for community and are beginning to engage moral issues - The Vine, is the center point for this age. Moral Parables such as The Good Samaritan, Jesus moral teaching in the sermon on the Mt and summary of the Law as is the creation of the universe a God’s plan in materials about The History of The Kingdom of God: Creation, Redemption and Parousia.
 - 9 – 12 are sensitive to heroism – Bible Studies on the five major incidents in God’s Covenant with the Hebrew people- Creation & Fall, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the epic of the people of God in Hebrew scripture are explored and linked to Liturgy. The Plan of God timeline invites the preadolescent to think of his or her future vocation and work in the world as a way to participate in God’s plan for unity and peace. Human work is an opportunity to work toward the time when “the earth will be full of the knowledge to God as the waters cover the sea.” More in depth liturgical materials are used
- Godly Play’s material is for children 3 – 8. GP trainings offer scripts and background for the teacher.
 - CGS’s formation courses prepare adults to work with children ages 3 - 12 in atria at three levels. It has lessons for approx 10 curricula years.
 - GP contains some liturgical and sacramental material; overall tends to be Protestant.
 - CGS explores liturgy and sacraments in great depth; is Biblical/Sacramental/catholic.
 - GP focuses on Biblical stories - a “story” approach. Has an therapeutic, existentialist basis.
 - CGS’s selection and presentation of biblical material is rich in theological background and resonance. Cavalletti’s writings quote extensively from the early church fathers - a “theological” approach.
 - CGS integrates natural history, including evolutionary theory, world history, and culture, and Biblical criticism with Biblical story, liturgy, and theology at Levels II & III in timeline material.
 - Godly Play presentations & material can be purchased independent of any adult formation. Trainers conduct weekend-long workshops for teacher training.
 - CGS is committed to adult formation as well as children’s formation. For the program to begin adults must attend a Formation Course. There lessons are seen during formation courses hours and transcribed by the students into an “album page” and gathered in albums. Background in theology and children’s development is given as well as group theological reflection and discussion much like in EFM. CGS adult training is all part of the formation course. Once a program is begun additional adults may be formed in the local church atria by watching and assisting a formation course-trained catechist.
 - CGS is intentionally non-commercial. Material making is seen as a way of praying. Churches and individuals are strongly encouraged to make their own materials and to view this as an extension of their spiritual preparation. Material making is part of starting and atrium .Wood items and time-lines can be purchased online, but all materials sold need some in house finishing. This makes it an economical option as much can be donated or found in thrift shops and attics.
- GP materials can be purchased in completed sets and are quite expensive. Scripts are published as accompanying books. Contact: www.churchpublishing.org “Young Children and Worship, Sonia Stewart & Jerome Berry presents an alternative way to offer the Godly Play program without the cost of buying materials from the Godly Play Foundation.

KEY TERMS & CONNECTIONS

“Catechesis of the Good Shepherd”
Adult leaders are called “catechists”

Sofia Cavalletti

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Atrium

Presentation

The Work of the Child or “work”

Contact: The National Association of The
Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

www.cgsusa.org:

A slide show overview is on The
Massachusetts Guild of the Good Shepherd:

www.cgsma.org

For pictures and an inside view of a parish
program see

blog<http://fromthesheepfold.blogspot.com/>

See introductory video on YouTube search

Introduction to Catechesis of the Good

Shepherd Parts 1 and 2 St. Mark’s Church

“Godly Play”

Adult leaders are “Storytellers”

Jerome Berryman

Children’s Worship Center

