



The National Association of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

All About the Atrium



Gently we unwrap the pieces of the family crèche and place them carefully on the table. The children delight in seeing their favorite figure, be it an angel, the Holy Family or one of the sheep and long to hold it in their own hands as they ponder the story in their minds and hearts.

In the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, we offer to the youngest children, the greatest mysteries of our faith. Included in those great mysteries is the Incarnation, how God comes to dwell among us. The young child, for their personal growth and joy, needs to be oriented to these great mysteries and how they are celebrated within the Church community. (*The Good Shepherd and the Child: A Joyful Journey* by Sofia Cavalletti, p73) In the weeks leading up to the season of Advent, the children have been prepared by focusing on the place Jesus was born, the Land of Israel. They discover Nazareth, where Mary lived when the angel came to visit her; and Bethlehem, where Jesus was born.

The **Infancy Narratives** or stories that focus on the birth and infancy of Jesus are:

For the youngest children

- *The Annunciation of the Angel to Mary*
- *The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth*
- *The Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Shepherds*
- *The Presentation in the Temple*
- *The Adoration of the Magi*

For the children age six and older, also

- *The Flight into Egypt*

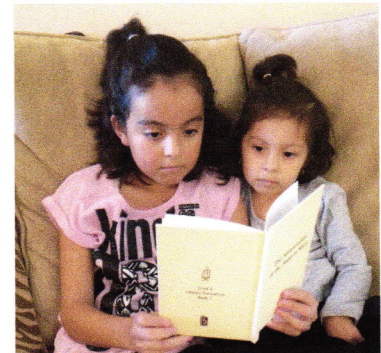
The children come to see that each of these individual narratives is a part of one history. In the Atrium, the Infancy Narratives are materials available at all three levels and not only during the Advent and Christmas season, but all year. We find the children reflect upon the person of Jesus as revealed in these scripture texts through their work with these materials and the extensions that accompany them all year long.

At Home

- When in the Atrium, the children love to draw images from the Infancy Narratives. Prepare a tray with paper

and colored pencils for your child near the family crèche. Would your child prefer to draw or write their own prayer? These are treasured gifts!

- Look at your child's baby picture. Share how you prepared for your child to join your family. Ponder together how your family will prepare for Jesus' coming this Advent.
- For families with younger children: Make a prayer card with the words: **Glorify to God!**
Words that the angels proclaimed and that we proclaim in liturgy.
- For families with older children: Write the names of the figures in your family's Nativity on small pieces of paper, ie *Joseph, shepherd, angel, sheep*, etc. Invite each person in your family to choose a slip of paper. Read aloud the Birth of Jesus and the Adoration of the Shepherds and invite family members to retell the narrative in their own words from the perspective of the name of the figure they chose.



- With assistance from you, an atlas or the Internet, invite your older child to measure and calculate the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Discuss: What would it have been like for Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem? How long did it take for them to make that journey?
- Read the Infancy Narratives aloud as a family. You may purchase a boxed set of the Infancy Narratives from CGSUSA for your children at <http://www.cgsusa.org/products/little-gospels-infancy-narratives-set/>
The Little Gospels bring great joy and make a wonderful gift for little hands!