

Saturday 28-A

Annual Conference of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

Sheraton, Richmond

20 October 2018

Dear Deacons Rennie and Guy, dear friends gathered here for the Annual Conference of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd:

Introduction

Once again, a warm welcome to beautiful Vancouver to all of you who are participating in this Annual Conference, especially those who are from out of town. I pray that this time together will be fruitful for you and for the various parishes and communities from which you come. It is an honour for us in the Archdiocese of Vancouver to be the place chosen to host the Conference this year. It promises to be an occasion of grace for all involved.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Church has found a pearl of great price (cf. Mt 13:45-46) in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. It is truly a great grace offered to the People of God, and I am so thankful to the good Lord that this gift from Italy is being “re-gifted” to a great number of communities in Canada. Needless to say, I am thrilled at the enthusiasm shown by so many catechists here in our local Archdiocese who are being trained in this method. It would be remiss of me if I did not express my gratitude to all of you for undertaking this particular catechetical ministry, but especially to Murita Chua, for encouraging that CGS sink down deep

roots in the Lower Mainland.

You all know a great deal more about CGS than I do. The training required of you is demanding but produces such good fruit that those so engaged are, I have heard, grateful for its intensity. But allow me, somewhat from afar, to note four reasons why I am convinced that CGS is just the kind of catechesis for young children that the Church needs today. It has read the “signs of the times” and given a practical way to move forward in introducing children to a personal encounter with our living – and loving – God.

First, it is grounded in one of the great needs of our day: to develop in young people a contemplative outlook on the created world. CGS keeps in the forefront that children have a contemplative nature which, if properly mentored and nurtured, draws them close to God himself. This was one of the great insights of Sofia Cavaletti: she saw that children have a way of being in God’s presence that is both unique to them and a gift to those adults who take the time to notice this intuitive contemplative perspective. In a hectic world, CGS is helping to reclaim and model a healthy pace of life for children and families.

Second, CGS is built on a solid understanding of the human person rooted in a Christian anthropology which, for its part, can trace its origins to Aristotle, enriched by the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. The catechesis is therefore profoundly incarnational and sacramental,

and that's why the use of the senses plays such an important role in a child's learning.

Third, the atrium, with all its charming materials, is a child-friendly space. It is not a traditional classroom, but rather provides children with the opportunity to fall in love with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. As we know from the repeated teachings of our recent Popes, such an encounter with the Person of Jesus Christ is the necessary foundation of every Christian life.

Fourth, I think the program deserves to be ever more widely spread because it is based on the sources of our faith: the Bible, Tradition, the sacred Liturgy and Sacraments, and the Church's teachings, which convey the mind of Jesus. This wealth unfolds in a way which engages the whole person of the child: not merely their mind but their heart as well.

I say to all of you who have been trained or are being trained in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: "well done, good and faithful servants" of the beauty of our faith.

Conclusion

Allow me to conclude this reflection by citing what St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, as we heard in the First Reading: “I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers” (Eph 1:15).

✦ J. Michael Miller, CSB
Archbishop of Vancouver