Here at St. Dominic’s, the parish has shepherded 3 to 6-year-olds to join CGS in its Level 1 (L1) Atrium for the last 12 years. This year is the first year the parish is offering First Communion CGS, in our newly created Level 2 (L2) Atrium. Kathy Folan and Lisa Considine are two of the catechists who lead the program every Sunday. They’re joined by Sister Dominic Marie from the Missionaries of Charity, and parishioners Alyson Voltmer, Adriana Dahik Moor and Jim Considine. I had the unique opportunity to sit in on a parents’ meeting as well as a class session. St. Dominic’s has been blessed to support such an amazing program started by Rebekah Rojcewicz, who had trained to be a catechist under Sofia Cavalletti herself. At the parent meeting, Dr. Ruth Ohm Sutherland, a CGS Formation Leader and one of the founders of the L1 Atrium at St. Dominic’s, gathered us in the L2 Atrium. After introducing us to all of the children’s materials and activities, she gave the narrative of the Good Shepherd in the manner that it is presented to the child. For a moment, we pretended we were kids again. We sat on the floor, curiously listening.

... "And the sheep hear his voice, as he calls his own sheep by name... and the sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice." (John 10:3). The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) begins its formation with this simple parable. It introduces children, age 3 to 12 years old, to the joy of their faith through hands-on learning opportunities. Founded by Sofia Cavalletti and Gianna Gobi in Rome, Italy, in 1954, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd combines the theories of Montessori education with spiritual enrichment throughout the developmental stages of a child’s life. The program fosters spiritual growth through tactile interaction with the adult catechists, peers, and their environment in "The Atrium," the physical space where the child can begin to explore their relationship with God. The materials within the space are accessible to the child as tangible demonstrations of the teachings of the church. The altar pieces for Eucharistic celebration, the telling of the infancy narrative, and the liturgical calendar colors are a few examples of materials used to enrich the child’s experience in discovering their faith at their own pace.

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Catechesis of the Good Shepherd: Learning by Doing
By Jilian Carlo

Mission of Charity’s Sister Dominic Marie leads the children in prayer to open up class.

The Bishop’s Chair, located at the back of the class, is open for parents who want to observe.

Doctor Ruth Ohm Sutherland tells the story of The Good Shepherd during a parent meeting.
Brother Matthew on the Beauty of Teaching

By Katie Willem

You can see how this classroom is not only just for the kids... the materials used in CGS provide a touchpoint with articles and gestures of the Mass.” Kathy, who also serves as Director of Family and Youth Ministries, explained how catechists let the child come to their own understanding as the course goes along. Questions are intentionally left open-ended for the children to ruminate on and make the connections themselves. Lisa, now a catechist for 12 years mentioned, "We’re not really teachers... the Holy Spirit is the teacher." Both Kathy and Lisa shared, "There’s a motto of this program: to help me learn about God all by myself.” One parent, Pam, a mother of 3 children also said “It’s a great treasure in our church and has helped me fulfill my mission to get my kids closer to God.”

After hearing from the catechists, watching the children inside the Atrium and listening to the thoughts of the parents of these little catechumens, it’s apparent how special the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is toward this community that "radiates the joy of the gospel in the heart of the city.”

Though Brother Matthew’s year-long residency with St. Dominic’s has just begun, the impact of his presence has been felt greatly by the church. Joining St. Dominic’s to further his learning in pastoral leadership, he’s taken charge of several parish activities, including coordination of the Confirmation program and adult formation. He will continue to grow in his pastoral knowledge throughout the upcoming holidays by leading a TORCH group, beginning counseling for marriage preparation, offering an Advent series on angelic life, as well as offering several days of reflection.

His greatest joy has been in the classroom with those both tall and small. Alongside preparing students for Confirmation, Brother Matthew offers a course between the 9:30 am and 11:30 am Masses, inviting parents of students attending Sunday formation courses to come together and grow in faith and knowledge as well. The group is currently delving into the principles of spiritual growth and theology found within the book of Song of Songs, something that he believes isn’t found anywhere else in the state. Structured in a more open-format teaching style, Brother Matthew considers this dialogue opportunity an allowance for vulnerability and growth for himself and attendees. He noted that Gregory of Nyssa often gave hour-long homilies when serving as bishop, leading Brother Matthew to believe that the need for more formation beyond the expected ten-minute homily necessary. He shared, “The Truth can unfold in our midst in a way that is literally life-giving.” He then thoughtfully added that the course isn’t just for parents, but open to anyone interested in forty-five minutes of spending time discussing the sacred word of God.

While every moment spent among the community teaching and serving has its own unique effect, the beauty of the moments experienced is difficult for Brother Matthew to describe properly. I’m able to set myself in a certain context where I can see people’s eyes light up with gratitude, with eagerness to learn, with encounters of the Truth. For example, with my Confirmation students, being there to witness the moment when their minds witness a new light, that is like a sacred moment for me. I’m so grateful to be around young people who are just starting their lives, and I hope to help them and be an influence in the present moment that will hopefully bear fruit in the coming decades. “We’re so grateful to have Brother Matthew here with us and can’t wait to see what he teaches us next.
Brother Michael James on Serving Those in Need

By Katie Willem

As Director of Community Outreach Services, Brother Michael James gets a lot of face time with those in need. He works specifically with the Lima Center guests, and he oversees the interactions and intercessions with homeless guests. The ministry builds patience and compassion for him, but the opportunity to help and hear the stories of those the center serves has been a great blessing for Brother Michael James. He says, “I get to see the fruit of the corporal works of mercy we’re doing at the Lima Center. Seeing the benefit of clothing the naked, feeding the hungry and the spiritual consolations of those acts and being able to counsel individuals through their struggles or write a check to their landlord so they don’t have to worry about rent this month. It’s a real gift.”

Most recently, Brother Michael James successfully organized the Harvest Bake Sale within his ministry. The event brought together baked goodies provided by parishioners, succulents, and a raffle of parishioner donations that helped benefit and support the Lima Center. Upcoming is the parish’s food drive for the holidays. The church works with Catholic Charities to support up to three hundred families with turkeys for Thanksgiving. As done in past years, the church will collect non-perishable and canned items starting in late November, which will be listed in the bulletin and on bins around the church. Once the drive is over, Brother Michael James, alongside the youth group, will assemble food packages for those in need. Beyond that, the collections for the Giving Tree will begin in December, which St. Dominic’s uses to provide gift cards to popular stores for those in need for the Christmas season. Brother Michael James noted that even the provision of a single gift card offers someone in need the means to purchase groceries, medication, or to make ends meet. The Lima Center also provides new sleeping bags to guests at Christmastime.

Brother Michael James shared that donations toward purchasing the bags are always appreciated, as well as donations of socks, underwear, and toiletries. These items help guests through the two weeks that the Lima Center remains closed during Christmas. Brother Michael James, thank you for your compassion for those you serve in your ministry.
Domestic Novices Join the Parish Community

By Brother Michael James

On August 29th, four men received the habit of the Order of Preachers and began their first year of formation as novices. Blessed with different talents and interests, they look forward to giving witness to the kingdom of God as they continue their formation as Dominican preachers.

Brother Matthew Francis

Br. Matthew Francis is from Irvine, CA, and has known the Dominicans his whole life since his uncle, Fr. Joseph Sergott, O.P., is a friar of the Western Dominican Province. Educated at Gonzaga University, where he earned a B.A. in Mathematics and Philosophy, he enjoys “board sports” such as skateboarding, surfing and board games. Inspired by Hebrews 12:29, he wants to be consumed by the fire of God’s love and used as a light for others. His desire to share the faith is one of the many things that attracted him to the Order of Preachers, whose charism and mission is to preach the Gospel for the salvation of souls. And it’s why he admires the Polish Dominican St. Hyacinth, whose joyful disposition, edifying preaching, and devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Eucharist, drew so many to the faith.

Brother Michael Thomas Cain

Br. Michael Thomas is from Santa Paula, CA. He has a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Thomas Aquinas College where his father teaches and both parents are members of the Dominican Laity. He draws inspiration from St. Thomas Aquinas, whose brilliant intellect was united with an intense humility. He enjoys backpacking, swimming, cycling, and running, which may be why he relates so well to 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, where St. Paul draws a comparison between the spiritual life and running a race. “The world’s need for Christ is urgent.” Br. Michael Thomas observes, “and the Dominican is called to bring the light of Christ to all nations.”

Brother Kevin Peter Cantu

Br. Kevin Peter was born near Seattle, but grew up in Clearwater, FL. He returned to the West Coast for studies where he received a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Thomas Aquinas College. Fr. Paul Raftery, O.P., one of the college chaplains, introduced him to the Dominican life. Br. Kevin Peter greatly admires the Dominican St. Juan Macias, who like his contemporaries St. Martin de Porres and St. Rose of Lima, cared for the poor and marginalized. Reflecting on Colossians 3:1-4, he contemplates the mystery of dying with Christ in order to live with Him. Thus Br. Kevin Peter desires to preach Christ crucified as a Dominican friar.

Advent & Christmas Calendar

A Baroque Christmas Concert, Monday, December 16
7:30 PM, St. Dominic’s Schola Cantorum, soloists & Festival Brass

Advent Reconciliation Services, Tuesday, December 17
With individual confessions available
12:00 noon - 1:00 PM & 7:30 - 8:30 PM

Parish Christmas Party, Thursday, December 19
Doors open after the 5:30 PM daily Mass, Parish Hall

Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24
4:00 & 6:00 PM Christmas Vigil Masses
11:15 PM carol service followed by a Solemn Mass at Midnight, With St. Dominic’s Schola Cantorum & Festival Brass. No confessions today.

Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25
8:30 AM Parish Mass with carols
11:00 AM Solemn Mass with choral music, strings and brass
No confessions today.

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
Tuesday, December 31
5:30 PM Vigil Mass
10:30 PM New Year’s Eve Prayer Vigil
11:30 PM Vigil Mass

Wednesday, January 1, 2020
9:30 AM (One Parish Mass)

The Solemnity of the Epiphany, Sunday, January 5, 2020
5:30 PM Vigil (Saturday, January 4)
7:30, 9:30 & 11:30 AM, 1:30 (in Spanish), 5:30 & 9:00 PM