



## John XXIII Montessori Children's Center

**CGS Atrium Newsletter ~ Advent ~ 2007**

*At this point in the Atrium year, the children in all sessions have become comfortable with each other, and are happy to enter the Atrium and settle into serious work appropriate for their level. It is beautiful to see how their "communities" really start to gel. This sense of community is expressed in many ways: In the 3-6 Atrium we see a five year old hastening to help a three-year old tie the strings of his work smock in back, children waiting patiently for their turn with a particular work or the Catechist's attention, and many other thoughtful gestures on the part of our littlest community members.*

*In the 6-9 Atrium, the children have been learning the use the "Peace Cross" as a tool for working out disagreements. The children discussed suggestions to try when you have a small problem or disagreement, such as: Go to another work or lesson, Ask them to stop, Ignore it, Share and take turns, or Talk it out by using the Peace Cross. The Peace Cross is a beautiful, smooth wood cross, hand-carved to fit in the palm of your hand. If the children think they need this communication tool, they take turns holding the cross while they share feelings about the issue until a resolution is achieved.*

*At the end of all Atrium sessions we come together as a community to pray and to praise God as a group. It is an important moment for the 6-9 year olds, when they begin to catch a glimpse of the big picture and of their potential impact on the world around themselves. The children love to choose a theme and to prepare a prayer service for the*

*rest of the group. This is completely led by the children and the Holy Spirit, and it is a joy to spend that time together with God. These child-led prayer services foster a sense of community and help to further the Kingdom of God here on earth.*

*In the 9-12 Atrium, where, like the 6-9 children, they write their own rules of behavior, a new Covenant is discussed and signed by all in the first weeks of every year. We ask the children each year: "What kind of place do we want this to be? Why do we come here?" A significant element to this Covenant is an expressed desire to make the Atrium a "safe" place - a place where all can share their deepest thoughts at prayer time and not be ridiculed or laughed at in any way. We all agree to be respectful of others, their work and their prayer. It is inspiring to see the children striving to uphold this commitment.*

*Perhaps all of these efforts will bear fruit in time and flow out from the Atrium into our home lives with our other family members, and into the larger parish and town community as well.*

### **Atrium Calendar at-a-glance:**

**December 5-7:** Advent Celebration in the Atrium – please have your child bring evergreens to their session.

**December 26-28, January 2-4:** Christmas Break, no Atrium – have a blessed Christmas!

**January 9-11:** Atrium resumes - Epiphany Celebration.

**January 23-25:** Parent Observations begin – sign up in HLI vestibule.

### **Advent Wreath Greens**

This Advent the children in all Atrium sessions will again be constructing a wreath of fresh greens to be used at Advent. The week of **December 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>**, please send a good-sized bunch of fresh cut evergreens with your child when they come to their Atrium session. These greens may be cut from pine, boxwood, spruce, etc, and should be about 6-10" in length.

### **Montessori/CGS Lending Library**

Thanks largely to the efforts of Karen Primeau, we now have a good selection of books and videos for parents to check out on the topic of Montessori education and religious formation. These books and tapes offer the wisdom and fruits of the life's work of Maria Montessori, Sofia Cavaletti, and others steeped in Montessori's philosophy. They will be available for signing out, one or two at a time, for a period of up to a month for the purpose of learning more about how to provide children with an excellent home environment. The CGS books in particular make beautiful spiritual reading, and have application for adults as well as children; we are all children before God! We hope parents will avail themselves of this opportunity and check out one or more of these great resources. The Lending Library book cart will be in the hallway before, during and after each Atrium session. Please refer to and use the provided sign-out notebook. We also encourage parents to pick up additional articles of interest placed on the lower shelf of the cart.

### **A is for Altar, B is for Bible**

An example of an Atrium ABC book we are offering for sale will also be on the Library cart while supplies last. Each letter of the alphabet has a beautiful image from the Atrium and a prayer from Scripture or the Liturgy. This book is one the children have seen in the 3-6 Atrium, and it makes a beautiful gift for this aged child to bring with them to Mass. They are available for \$10.00. Please ask a Catechist or Assistant for a copy from the closet, make a check out

to John XXIIIMCC, and place your payment in the box provided on the lower shelf of the Library Cart.

Additionally available is

### **The Seed of God: A Series of Books for Children age 3-7 to prepare for and deepen their Baptismal Life.**

Containing meditations with few words and simple drawings, these books will spark much thought, conversation and prayer. This set may be obtained by placing an order with a pre-payment of \$25.00/set, or \$30.00 for a boxed set. An example of the boxed set may be found on the Library Cart. The set you order will be ready for pick-up at the Atrium before Christmas. Refer to information on the Cart for how to place your order.

### **Welcome to our new 3 year olds**

beginning Advent in the 3-6 Atrium. Anastasia Wadleigh and Juliana Cuddeback will be welcomed this week by Mrs. Castellan and the Friday afternoon children and assistants.

### **Advent Meditation by Maria Montessori – Christ and the Child.**

We include an excerpt from Montessori's book, The Child in the Church, for your Advent reading.

### **Have yourself a Montessori Christmas,** taken from a ***Christian Family Montessori School*** parent

handout, is attached as the back of this newsletter. We hope you may find these suggestions helpful this Advent-Christmas season.

## **Have Yourself a Montessori Christmas**

With holiday shopping upon us, we would like to make a few suggestions about presents for children from a Montessori perspective. We start with a few general principles, and then give specific suggestions for each plane of development.

### **For All Ages**

- **Less is more** – Children need limits on their toys. Your child should only have access to the number of toys he or she can keep neat. Other toys can be kept in storage, and rotated in and out, perhaps on a monthly or quarterly basis. After the holidays, old toys can be rotated out to make room for the new ones, or even retired (stored for the grandkids, or donated to a younger friend or a charity).
- **Order is essential** – Storage space is a precious commodity in any child's room. Have low, open shelves for primary-aged children, and lots of bins or drawers for older children to organize. Children can and should be tidying up regularly; if toys are constantly all over, they can disappear into storage.
- **“Reality is so much more beautiful than fantasy”** – While children may ask for any glittery licensed merchandise they've been exposed to, they actually crave, and get more long-term enjoyment out of, simpler and more reality-based playthings. Heavily advertised items may only last until the next fad comes along, but a real mop or screwdriver provides skills for a lifetime. Not only will a good, generic wooden dollhouse or blocks last for generations, they'll do more to spark your child's imagination and creativity than the latest plastic brand-name toy.
- **Family fun is number one** – What children really long for most of all is more fun time with their parents. Board games to play with parents, tools or art materials that come with parental supervision and lessons, read-aloud books, and gift certificates for one-on-one special events.

### **Gifts for Primary Students, ages 3-6**

- Child-sized but truly functional cleaning tools: broom, mop, bucket, sponge, crumber,

duster, scrub-brush, carpet-sweeper (and chances to really use them!)

- Blocks, including pattern blocks (small, colored geometric shapes to make patterns)
- Beads for stringing; sewing/lacing cards
- Child-sized, sturdy tables, chairs and easels
- Books, including children's cookbooks, holiday books, art books, poetry, etc.
- Real, child-sized kitchen tools: bowls, spoons, cutting boards, vegetable slicer, etc. (so your child can really help in the kitchen!)
- A big cardboard box of thrift-store dress-up clothes and accessories
- Puzzles – especially maps, realistic multi-cultural scenes, letters and numbers
- Simple board games
- Realistic baby dolls whose life-size clothes need buttoning, tying, lacing, etc.
- Simple, acoustic musical instruments

### **Gifts for Elementary Students, ages 7-12**

- Artist-quality art materials and papers, sketchbooks and journals
- Musical instruments (and lessons or how-to books)
- Craft kits - knitting, beading, woodworking
- Science kits – microscope, chemistry set, rock tumbler, etc.
- Gardening tools, seeds and potting equipment
- Blocks, including pattern blocks (really, they're not too old!)
- Art materials
- Cameras, from disposable to digital to video
- Really big books of lists and facts (almanacs, how everything works)
- Simple cookbooks (at child's reading level)
- Tool kits and projects for using them, like do-it-yourself furniture
- Sewing kit; beginner's sewing machine
- Family board games and puzzles
- Gift certificates for one-on-one day trips (museums, hiking, etc.)

### **On-line sources for Great Gifts:**

- <http://www.montessoriservices.com/> (cleaning, kitchen, gardening, tools)
- <http://www.communityplaythings.com> (furniture)
- <http://www.michaelolaf.com> (practical life, science and cultural plus great advice.)
- <http://www.ravensburger.com> (puzzles and games)
- <http://www.melissaanddoug.com> (wooden puzzles, dollhouses, etc.)
- <http://www.thinkfun.com> (puzzles and games, brainteasers)
- <http://www.hearthsong.com> (toys, games, books)