

## Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at St. Bartholomew in Pewaukee First Communion Class

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Christian Ministry for children aged 3-12 years that is based on the Bible and liturgy of the church; it is inspired by the principles of Montessori education. This Ministry provides:

- An opportunity for children to fall in love with Jesus, the Good Shepherd, in a child-friendly space called an atrium – located in a church or school.
- Guided play to aid meditation on Bible scripture and the mysteries of the Christian faith once a week - in small groups, facilitated by trained adults (catechists).
- That each child's unique spiritual needs and abilities are respected and nurtured.

The [Catechesis of the Good Shepherd](#) is recognized as a ministry offering religious formation for children by Episcopal and Catholic churches. This is the formation program that is offered at St. Bartholomew in Pewaukee. Recently, a group of children and their parents participated in a special, multi-week class that culminated in their first communion.

Children from the First Communion Class spent several weeks pondering and discussing some of Jesus' parables (True Vine in John 15; the Found Sheep, Found Coin and Forgiving Father in Luke 15) to help them consider more carefully and deeply their relationship with God and with others.

After these weeks of meditation, the children gathered for a special weekend retreat leading up to the First Communion service. During this time the children considered the great gifts of God for the people of God in creation, culminating in his gift of Jesus Christ who is supernaturally present in the Eucharist. The children also learned about the origin of the Eucharist – in Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples.

Also during this retreat the children spent time thinking about and preparing for participation in the sacrament of reconciliation with Fr. Greg Wilde – which liturgically leads to their First Communion – that great feast celebrating their reconciliation with God. The children made white garments and special “First Communion” candles to help them commemorate this special day in their lives. The children finally participated in and celebrated their first solemn communion during the 11:00 service on Sunday, May 17.

Without the help and participation of many people in the church, this class and retreat would not have been possible. We give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, for calling each of these precious lambs by name and giving all of himself to all of us in the sacrament of Holy Communion.