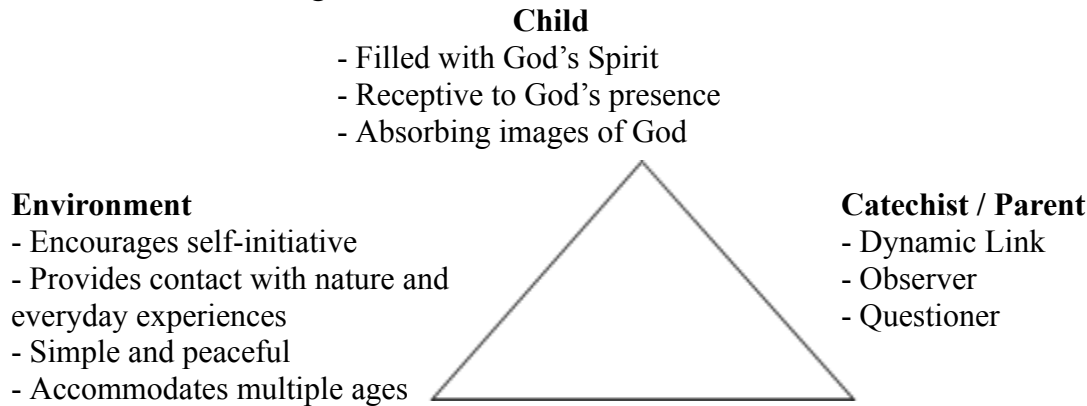


Wondering about God with Children

The philosophy behind Bellarmine's Montessori- based
Preschool Religious Development Program

The Constructive Triangle



The Child – A preschool child is filled with God's spirit and naturally receptive to God's presence in the world around them. The child comes to know God through experiences in day-to-day life. The "work" of the child is the process of becoming more aware of God's presence in themselves, others and in nature. The environment and the teacher allows this to happen naturally.

The Environment

Welcoming

Quiet and Engaging

Natural- It is important to allow the children to experience the beauty and simplicity of nature as it exists in the world. In this day of neon colors and flashy TV and video games, a child's spirit naturally craves an environment which is peaceful and simple. Providing such an environment gives the child the uncluttered space to discover God.

Orderly- With each completion of the work cycle, the child is contributing to the overall order of the classroom.

Child-Directed- If children are to experience God's love through their relationship with others, then catechists who give the children freedom to explore, indeed, allow the children to experience love and trust.

The Teacher/Parent

The dynamic link- The catechist has the important task of presenting the work to the child in a way that the material, rather than the teacher, speaks to the child of God's presence.

Facilitator- "It is not that we have something to tell the child that he/she is to learn, but we have something to look at with the child."

Role model- Catechist should model reverence, care and concern for others, and everything in the environment.

Be present to the child's need

Wonder with the Child

"It is not so much in lectures and long explanations, but in the teacher's own attitude toward the things of the world that the child understands there is Someone beyond us who is for us"

Self Initiated Activities

During each session a variety of hands-on experiences are available for the children to choose. This allows the child to experience the carefully planned themes according to their developmental needs and the natural cycle of nature. The materials are naturally beautiful and evoke a sense of wonder. Through the materials the children come to discover that they are Loveable, Capable and Part of God's World

Experience of a Church Community

We gather as a church family of multi-age preschool children and we foster a sense of belonging to a church family

Bread Sharing

Each week one "church friend" from our class is celebrated. At this time the parents are invited to attend class with the child and bring a loaf of bread for the whole class to share. We will also be sharing your child's "celebration page with the class. At the end of class, we will ask you to take home the napkins and cups we used for bread sharing. Please ask your child to help you wash them and bring them back the following week for use in class. Thank you in advance for taking care of this simple chore.

Parents as Primary Religious Educator

Perhaps the most precious gift of faith we can give our children is spending time nurturing our own spirituality. **Religion/spirituality is more caught than taught**, and what we do speaks louder than what we say. When our children see the reverence with which we interact with nature and each other, hear us talking about our faith, or see us praying, we touch a part of their souls that education and preaching never can.

Growing In Faith Together (GIFT) Montessori Pre-K Faith Formation Program Weekly Session Schedule

10: 05–

10:15 Greeting the children

A lead catechist will greet the children at the cubbies. The child will put his or her coat on the table in the hallway, get his or her picture and name tag from their cubby, and enter the classroom. Parents are invited to bless the child as they leave. Making a sign of the cross on their forehead and saying, "I love you and God loves you."

In the classroom, a Helper will assist the child in putting his or her picture/gift on the attendance tree. The child will be directed to a small group.

10:15 – Small Group

10:20 Catechist read books until most of the group is present. Children stay in small groups to sing "Little Red Box" and do Silence Game simultaneously with other small groups

10:20– Large Group/ Bread Sharing/Celebrate Child - Gather to “Community Song”

10:35 Play “We come to the Table”- Set prayer table
Introduce celebrated child and family
Share bread from one loaf that Celebrated Child brought
Share child’s “Celebration Page”
New “works” from the shelf are presented

10:35 – Discovery Time- Choosing self-initiated activities

11:05 The children will have the opportunity to work on theme-based activities of their choice in which they experience God. A catechist may gather small groups of children during part of this time for Art Expression.

11:05 – Large Group/Closing Prayer Time

11:15 Gather to “Growing in God’s Love”
Play “We come to the Table” and set prayer table
Delight in contents of God’s Wonderful World Box
Read from Holy Bible and say closing prayer
Extinguish the candle by using the “Change the Light” poem

11:15 Dismissal- Play- “If I were a Butterfly”

While all the children are engaged in singing, One at a time the children are dismissed from the circle to meet the parent at the door

NOTE: We try to maintain a very quiet and reverent atmosphere in the classroom. Before your child enters the classroom, quietly remind them to walk slowly and use their quiet inside voice. We appreciate your help with this.