

Faith First Philosophy

We believe:

- Faith is both a gift from God and our free response to God.
- Faith includes not only an intellectual understanding of doctrine but also a conversion of the heart (adopting a way of life).
- Faith grows and develops throughout all of life.
- Faith is something to be lived and is best lived in community.
- Being a person of faith means looking at our actions and the world in a different way than others who are not people of faith. We see things through the eyes of faith, and all of life changes when we do this.

In **Faith First**, we want children to understand what we believe as Christians and how to live out those beliefs. This is the process that Jesus used again and again as he taught his disciples. Jesus taught us what to believe and then showed us how to put those beliefs into practice. For instance, Jesus asked his followers to love their neighbors and then illustrated in the story of the Good Samaritan exactly how to do it. This simple format is repeated throughout the **Faith First** program. It is not something new. Rather, it is a return to the way Jesus taught.

Faith First is based on a firm foundation made of three essential elements:

1. The **beliefs** of a people as explained by the Catholic Church – the doctrines that have been passed down to us through the generations and are at this time gathered into the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The *Catechism* is not a book for children, but the contents of it can be made accessible to children.
2. The **story** of a people that has been passed down from generation to generation. This story is first and foremost contained in the Bible. But **Faith First** also shares the stories of saints and people of faith who have come before us and have shown us how to live as Christians.
3. The **celebration** of a people as lived out in our liturgical year. Each year, we as Catholic Christians relive the story of our salvation as we pass through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time. We celebrate the saints and the holy times that we share as a people.

The **Faith First** program provides a balance between doctrine, Scripture, and the liturgical year. Each is given individual emphasis and is integrated into the whole. These three themes are well developed on their own in the **Faith First** program. One is not seen as less or more important than the others. It is the balance that gives each the emphasis that it deserves in the faith education of children. Then these three themes are woven throughout the program into the everyday life and experience of the children.