

Circle of Grace

Kindergarten – Grade 12 Safe Environment Program

Developed by
Archdiocese of Omaha

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Beyond the USCCB's 2002 Dallas Charter: Importance of Safe Environment efforts in our Church

National statistics indicate:

- That one in four girls and one in seven boys will experience some sort of sexual abuse/exploitation by the age of eighteen
- Up to ninety percent of the time the perpetrator is known to the child/youth such as a relative or family friend.
- Up to 30 percent of perpetrators are under the age of nineteen

These statistics reveal that today's children/youth have a much higher risk of being abused by someone they know as opposed to a stranger.

www.usccb.org, or <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>

Why Teach Safety in Our Catholic Church?

- God, our creator, desires his little ones, children/youth, to be safe more than we could ever imagine.
- It is an important lesson for children/youth to know their Church community cares about their well being and that they are sacred in God's and the Church's eyes. This knowledge builds trust which enables them to more fully embrace their faith
- Teaching divine sacredness along with healthy/unhealthy boundaries and an action plan maximizes the child/youth's ability to seek help.

What is the Circle of Grace?

- It is the love and goodness of God that surrounds us and all others.
- It is the recognition that God is always with us and is there to help us in difficult situations.
- Your Circle of Grace holds your very essence in mind, heart, soul, body and sexuality.

Circle of Grace Prayer

Imagine the following :

Raising your hands above your head

And then bring your arms slowly down

Keeping them outstretched

Extending your arms in front of you then behind you

*Knowing that **GOD** is in this space with you*

Then slowly reach down to your feet.

This is your Circle of Grace

You are in it.



Key to Teaching Circle of Grace

- The key to teaching Circle of Grace is truly believing, as the prayer expresses, that God is that close to us and is all around us!
- It is an invitation for adults to re-examine their own spirituality.
- What would the world look like if our actions reflected this belief?

Circle of Grace Philosophy

- The Catholic Church teaches that God has created each of us as unique and special.
- Genesis 1:27 tells us that we are created “male and female in God’s image” and that God saw this as “very good.”
- In that goodness, we are meant to respect ourselves and everyone else as persons created and loved by God.

Why is it Important to Help Our Young People Understand the Circle of Grace?

- God intends our relationships in life to be experiences of divine love.
- Respectful, nurturing, loving relationships increase our understanding of our own value and help us to love others.
- It is never too early to help young people understand how very special they are and how relationships in life are called to be sacred.
- Understanding this can help them to protect the special person they are and to be respectful of others

Circle of Grace Culture

- The Circle of Grace philosophy represents the core teaching of our Catholic faith: the belief and knowledge of God's real presence in our lives.
- This presence embraces the very essence of each person.
- Awareness and integration of this knowledge has the ability to transform every aspect of a person's life.

“Walk the Talk”

Adults need to model the integrated understanding of their own Circle of Grace.

This will greatly assist children and youth embracing the knowledge of God’s real presence in their lives.

BREAK



Goal of the Circle of Grace

Grades K-12

The goal of the Circle of Grace program is to educate and empower children and young people to actively participate in a safe environment for themselves and others.

Objectives of the Circle of Grace Program Grades K-12

- Children/Young People will understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Children/Young People will be able to describe the Circle of Grace which God gives each of us.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify and maintain appropriate physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual boundaries.
- Children/Young People will be able to identify all types of boundary violations.
- Children/Young People will demonstrate how to take action if any boundary is threatened or violated.

Self Contained Material in Every Grade

Each Grade section includes:

- ✓ Philosophy and Goals
- ✓ Leader Guidelines
- ✓ Full Vocabulary for Program
- ✓ Pre and Post Assessments in Identified Grades
- ✓ Easy to follow Lessons
- ✓ Lesson Evaluation
- ✓ Copies of Prayers
- ✓ Handouts and Parent Take Home Sheets
- ✓ All parent information is available in Spanish

Curriculum's Framework

Comprehensive lessons in the crucial grades:

- Kindergarten - 3 lessons
- First Grade - 3 lessons
- Second Grade - 3 lessons
- Third Grade - 3 lessons (Pre and Post Test)
- Sixth Grade - 4 lessons (Pre and Post Test)
- Ninth grade - 4 lessons (Pre and Post Test)

Curriculum's Framework Continued

Focus grades have a lesson on a particular area:

- Fourth Grade - Internet
- Fifth Grade - The Influence of Media
- Seventh Grade - Respect
- Eighth Grade - Morality and Popular Culture
- Tenth Grade - Boundaries
- Eleventh Grade - Emotional Grooming
- Twelfth Grade - Theology of the Body

Implementation



Responsibilities of the Archdiocesan/Diocesan Level:

- Communication and education for Chancery and Clergy.
- Customization of the program.
- Provide training for the trainers.

Implementation



Responsibilities of the Archdiocesan/Diocesan Level:

(continued)

- Provide a structure for:
 - Sharing general information on the program*
 - Timeline for training the parish and school personnel*
- Administrators/Directors receive a printed copy or CD of the full program.
- Review Summary Evaluations.

Implementation



Responsibilities of the Director/Administrator Level:

- Administrators, Directors or Pastors need to develop a timeline for program implementation.
- Provide training for those who will be teaching the program focusing on the philosophy, goals, format of the lessons, how to handle sensitive situation (action card) and reporting obligations.
- Be aware that the content may trigger past issues for some leaders.
- Be available to leaders if there are questions or issues.

Implementation



Responsibilities of the Director/Administrator Level (continued)

- Communicate general information to parish or school
- Send out the parent letter prior to the program.
- Copy the lessons and action card for the leaders.
- Make parent information available.
- Keep track and document any parent refusal of the program.
- Send the Summary Evaluation to the Archdiocesan/Diocesan representative.

Evaluation of Program

Circle of Grace Program had several critical phases of evaluation in the Archdiocese of Omaha

2005-2006 - Piloted K-2 curriculum in several urban and rural parishes

2006-2007 - Implemented in all K-12 parish programs and schools

2007-2008 - Revised program in all K-12 parish programs and schools

Additional Resources

- Child Abuse Reporting Packet
- Parent information in Spanish
- Circle of Grace “at home” Educational Brochure
- Logo Availability
- Circle of Grace Brochure Customized with Local Information
- Power Point CD to use for Future Trainings

QUESTIONS?

