Circle of Grace

Kindergarten – Grade 12 Safe Environment Program

Developed by
Archdiocese of Omaha

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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 for children/youth to know their Church 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.
Importance of Safe Environment Efforts in the Church: Looking Beyond the Charter

*National Statistics*

*Help us to realize the world that kids need to navigate*

- One in four girls and one in six boys will experience some sort of sexual abuse/exploitation by the age of eighteen.*

- Up to 90 percent of the time the perpetrator is known to child/youth.*

- Juveniles commit approximately one third of all sex offenses against children*

- 1 in 5 children (10-17 year olds) receive unwanted sexual solicitation on line.*
G.R.A.C.E.S

Circle of Grace was developed by the Archdiocese of Omaha’s “GRACES” committee.

The committee members are:
- Clergy
- Directors of Religious Education
- Principals
- Youth Ministers
- Community Members
- Victim Assistance Coordinator
- School Social Workers
- Archdiocesan Ministry Coordinators
The Development of *Circle of Grace* Program

- The subcommittee of GRACES started to meet in 2004. The goal of the committee was to develop a faith based and clinically sound program.

- The Committee experienced early on that the Holy Spirit guided the committee’s passion to develop a program that honored the Catholic faith.
Evaluation and Outreach

AOO
- COG was implemented for 3 years
- Changes were made based on the evaluations
- 148 parishes/76 schools in both urban and rural

Other Diocese
- COG is in 11 other archdiocese/dioceses
- Summary evaluations have been excellent
- Go to www.archomaha.org to view comments

Other Christians
- COG was reviewed by several Protestant denominations and has been successfully piloted
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 Meditation

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.
Circle of Grace is Relational

• God is in our Circle of Grace because He desires a relationship with each of us!

• Circle of Grace is taught in the context of a relationship.

• Moral development and discernment matures with real “face to face” relationships not with “technology” relationships.
God’s Desire to Keep Us Safe

From a Trusted Adult

Seek Help

Listen:
Uncomfortable Feelings

Holy Spirit Prompting
Key to Teaching *Circle of Grace*

• The key to teaching *Circle of Grace* is truly believing, as the meditation 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.
What Popular Culture Wants Young People to Believe…

- Relationships are more about “taking” less about ‘giving”

- Relationships can be obtained by consuming the latest products, clothing, music and looks.

- What you do with your body is separate from who you are: a disconnect
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 an 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.

Children and youth will view the adult as someone they can trust.
BREAK
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

- 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.
Objectives Simplified…

• God is “present” in everyone’s *Circle of Grace*.

• God is “present” because He desires a relationship.

• God helps us know what belongs in our *Circle of Grace*.

• God helps us know what does not belong in our *Circle of Grace*.

• God helps us know when to ask for help.
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 and Vietnamese
- Curriculum 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)
Rational for Comprehensive Grades

Kindergarten through Grade 3
- Younger and more vulnerable
- Benefits from repetition

Grade 6th and Grade 9th
- Transitional years
- Research shows an increase in bullying
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
Comprehensive Review
Grade 2
Focus Review
Grade 4
Practice Activity

The Ten Commandments: Grade 8
Implementation Tips…

• Parent letter needs to be sent out before teaching the curriculum

• “Action Card” for leaders is helpful

• Be aware that the content may trigger past issues for some leaders

• Helpful for parishes and schools to be aware of the general concept
Implementation Tips

• Realize that you have to believe in what you are teaching for it to be effective with the children and youth

• Teach the lessons once you had a chance to know the children and youth

• Comprehensive grades need to have the last two lessons taught close together

• When combining classes, assess what grade best fits the group.
Additional Resources

- Child Abuse Reporting Packet
- Parent information and Curriculum in Spanish
- Parent information in Vietnamese
- Preschool lessons
- 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?

CIRCLE OF GRACE