

VIRTUS *Touching Safety* – Seventh Grade **Learning about Boundaries and Safe Adults**

Catechists are to review the Teaching Safety guidelines from VIRTUS and the lesson plan guidelines before the class session. Parish catechetical leaders are to make sure that parents or guardians have been advised of their right to have their child opt out of this class session.

Recording Form Due Date:

March 31 of every calendar year

Length of class session: 45-60 minutes

This lesson plan may have more activities than can be included in you 40-60 minute session. Please feel free to choose which activities your class will connect with the best and drop any activities that you think your class would not connect with. Catechists should include opening and closing prayer. They should also include Scripture component and review Religious Education Standards for their correlation with the VIRTUS activities.

Educator Resources:

Archdiocesan Religious Education Tasks, Essential Concepts, and Standards: By the end of the class the child will be able to:

Task I: Knowledge of the Faith

- *Sacred Scripture*
 - Retell Gospel passages that describe Jesus' ministry as one who teaches, forgives, and heals.

Task II: Liturgical Education

- *Sacraments of Healing*
 - Locate New Testament passages that demonstrate healing and forgiveness.

Task III: Moral Formation

- *Made in the Image of God: Foundation of Human Dignity*
 - Describe how we are created in the image and likeness of God.
 - Identify New Testament passages that demonstrate the importance of human dignity.
- *Human Freedom and Conscience Formation*
 - Describe and use a moral decision making process that references both Scripture and the Church's moral teaching.
- *The Human Community*
 - Find New Testament examples of persons responding to God's call to serve God and others.

Task IV: Learning to Pray

- Write and/or spontaneously recite a prayer using the "You, Who, Do, Through" model.

Task V: Education for Community Life

- *Models of the Catholic Church: Temples of the Holy Spirit*
 - Name and explain situations that do and do not demonstrate chaste living, honoring our bodies as Temples of the Holy Spirit.

Teaching Safety Course Objectives: By the end of the class the child will be able to:

- Clearly state the rules about inappropriate touching.
- Describe safe touches.

- Say “No!” when someone tries to touch them in a way that is uncomfortable or otherwise inappropriate.
- Identify the situations when secrets are appropriate and when secrets are a threat of harm.
- Name their safe friends and safe adults.
- Identify special safe adults.
- Respond in an appropriate manner to unsafe situations.

Note to Catechist: The introductory video for grades 6 through 8 is designed to open a simple discussion with youth about touching safety and personal boundaries. The video is approximately six (8) minutes long and is neither created nor intended as a substitute for the lesson itself. It is merely an introduction designed to “break the ice” among those in this age group and to get everyone talking about the relevant personal boundary and personal safety issues. Importantly, the video will get children focused on the topic matter, which will help the catechist to facilitate an easy transition into the interactive activities within the lesson. These interactive activities are the critical components where children have a real opportunity to learn how to protect themselves.

We recommend that you watch the video in advance at least a couple of times prior to showing it to your students, so you’ll be able to more easily anticipate when the video will end. The video really needs no introduction. Just put it into the machine, and hit “play.” If you’re using a DVD version of the video, you’ll select the English or Spanish version and the appropriate age group from a menu screen. If you’re using a link, you will need to select the appropriate link and click play.

In preparing for this activity, review *Teaching Boundaries and Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. **Help children to see that they have a say in what happens to their bodies.**

English Link: <https://seattlearch.box.com/shared/static/q5odkngf74wbaestvebvysldqd2cp9fe.pdf>

Spanish Link: <https://seattlearch.box.com/shared/static/6j4th0n2h11sfo75o4kj0xe2l2ismv1n.pdf>

This age group: Dealing with pre-adolescents and adolescents—key concept is “transition”

The middle school child is experiencing a period of rapid growth. The emergence of interest in the opposite sex is occurring. He / she is often concerned about physical change, body size, skin quality and hair length. Body image is very important to this age as he / she complains of being either too physically mature or immature—and may also complain that they do not have enough privacy. The peer group plays an import role in shaping attitudes and interest. Caregivers need to regularly assure youngsters that changes are normal, though the rate of change varies from person to person.

Lesson leaders must carefully listen to children and observe what is happening in their lives. Let young people be themselves. Let them explore their self-expression; but, know who they are with and what they are doing, and remind them of the importance of protecting themselves during this dynamic time in their lives. During this time, children are completely self-absorbed, and many are naturally less communicative than at other periods during their development. This is the point that more trust will be given to the youth to evaluate safe and unsafe situations when they are not in the care of their parents.

Vocabulary words and definitions: (NOTE - This list is designed to help the catechist explain relevant terms. It includes more terms than the students are expected to know).

Boundaries – the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others.

Chastity – a virtue that allows us to do what is right and good in the areas of relationship and sexuality.

Conscience – our inner voice from God telling us right from wrong (CCC #1777-1778)

Consequences – the results of our actions; what happens from the things we say and do

Evil – the opposite or absence of good (CCC #309-311, 385, 1707)

Free Will – the freedom and ability to choose (CCC #1730-1739)

Intellect – our mind, our ability to think

Holy – close to God; filled with God’s grace

Holy Spirit - the third Person of the Trinity; the Spirit of God. (CCC #685; 152; 243)

Human Dignity – The belief that all people are created in God’s image and worthy of honor or respect

Moral life – choosing to act with goodness

“No!” or other words and phrases that mean, “No!”—a child needs to know that any time someone tries to touch his or her private body parts or tries to get the child to touch the private body parts of the other person, the child should say words that mean “No,” run away, and then should tell the child’s mother or father or another safe adult as soon as possible.

Peer Pressure—the strong influence of a group—especially of young people—on members of that group to behave as everyone else does.

Pornography – the printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate erotic rather than aesthetic or emotional feelings.

Private Body Parts – those body parts covered by a bathing suit

Right – what we are allowed to do

Respect – want only the best for other people and do good things for us

Rules – tell us what we can and cannot do

Sacred – holy and special to God

Safe friend/ safe adult/ safe touch – people who respect our wishes and the rules of our parents; they won’t hurt or scare us without a good reason

Secret – something kept hidden or unexplained

Sin - choosing to disobey God. It is doing what you know is wrong. (CCC #1849; 1853)

Special safe adult – our parents, doctor or nurse – are those very special adults who can see or touch our private body parts, but only to keep us clean and healthy and only when we are sick or need help

Soul – where God lives within us

Spontaneous Prayer – writing or saying a prayer to God using the “You, Who, Do, Through” formula

Stewardship – taking care of God’s creation, such as our bodies that God has created

Temple of the Holy Spirit – At baptism, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our bodies and souls to nourish, heal, guide, and protect us (CCC 739, 809-810)

Ten Commandments – rules from God that help keep us safe and respect others

Touching Rules: “If someone tries to touch a child’s body parts or wants the child to touch their **private body parts**, the child should...”

- Say, “No!”
- Run away.
- Tell a parent or other safe adult what happened.

Touching safety – knowing how to protect our bodies from those who might want to hurt us

Unsafe friend/ unsafe adult/ unsafe touch – people who do not respect our wishes and the rules of our parents; they could hurt us

Virtuous – making a habit of choosing to do the good and right thing

Lesson Plan:

Resources:

Catholic Youth Bibles (Bible open to the passage of 1Corinthians 3:16-17)

Touching Safety introduction DVD for Grades 6-8 or provided YouTube link.

English: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/P3RoYAYkDQ4>

Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/XBN8gsD8A7U>

- Welcome the students. Remind them that God calls our bodies “**Temples of the Holy Spirit**”. That means that God made us good and **holy**. Because we are good and holy and we are to **respect** and to take care of our bodies by following **safety rules** and knowing how to protect ourselves and thus, we have the **right** to say “No” to people who make us feel uncomfortable. It is important to learn about our personal boundaries and those of others.
- Opening prayer that includes scripture and begins and ends with the Sign of the Cross.
 - All: + **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**
 - Catechist: A Reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians... (*read verse 3:16-17*). Short pause. Remind the youth that God, the Holy Spirit, lives in their bodies. Because each of us was uniquely created in the image and likeness of God, we are indeed called to be holy or to be Temples of the Holy Spirit and all of our body parts are special and holy (sacred). God wants us to take care of them by following **rules** to keep them safe, healthy, and holy. God also wants to protect us and that means we need to know when to say “No!” to people who might want to hurt us.
 - Review **relevant** vocabulary words, including:
 - **Rules**—a prescribed guide for conduct or action. We follow the rules to make sure we are safe—just like how we have a seatbelt rule to keep us safe in the car, or the safety rules before we cross the street. [For example, teach the child a simple rule for what to do if someone tries to touch him / her in an unsafe way, which is to say “No!”, try to get away, and tell an adult as soon as possible.]
 - **Limits**—the point or edge beyond which something cannot go. The furthest edge of something.
 - **Rights**—We are all born free and equal, and have certain rights that are automatically ours. Everyone is entitled to these rights, and they should not be taken away from us. For example, teach children, “you have a right to be safe, and your body belongs to you!”
 - **Boundaries**—the limits that define one person as separate from another or from others. There are boundaries you can see (like a fence around a yard) and boundaries you can’t see with your eyes (like the comfort zone around us that we call our “personal space”). Boundaries vary depending on the relationship with the other person. For example, a boundary between a child and a grandparent is different than the boundary between a child and a catechist or coach.
 - **Saying “No”**—to say “no” means to refuse, deny, reject or express disapproval of. This word is used to express a boundary and communicate that you do not want something to happen or continue. [*Let children know It’s OK to say “No” to an adult if they make you feel scared or uncomfortable, or if they touch your private body parts.*]
 - **Secret**—something kept hidden, never told or unexplained. Secrets exclude others and have potential to harm, sometimes causing the person involved to

feel frightened or uncomfortable. *[For example, let children know that there are no secrets when it comes to personal and physical safety. Tell children that it's wrong for an adult or another child to ask a child to keep a secret about safety—especially unsafe touches—because that's a way for people to get hurt. If an individual tries to make a child keep a secret or makes him / her feel frightened, the child must know to communicate this information right away to a parent or caring adult—and be reassured that the child will be protected regardless of threats or seeming consequences of "telling".]*

- Catechist tells students, please bow your heads and make the Sign of the Cross, as we pray... *Dear God, you made each of us in your image, as good and wonderful. Because we are Temples of the Holy Spirit, you want us to always take care of ourselves and to be with others, who want to keep us safe and holy. Help us to learn ways we can respect ourselves and each other. Thank you for the gifts of Jesus and all those, who protect us from harm. We thank you through Christ our Lord. Amen.*
- All: + **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Show the introductory video (7 ½ minutes).

Activity #1: Discussion – Discovering the Boundaries in Your Life

Activity: The purpose of this activity is to create scenarios for youth that will give them ideas about boundaries and limits, and how both are an important part of our daily lives. You'll discuss how rules establish boundaries, how sometimes we people infringe on our boundaries, and how we can create them for ourselves.

Discussion: **Step 1:** Begin the conversation about boundaries by asking if they know what a "boundary" is, and have them explain it from their perspective.

Step 2: Then, begin to create scenarios by asking questions about some of the rules they have at home. For example:

- What are your family rules regarding when your homework must be completed? Are there other activities that aren't allowed until your homework has been completed?
- For how long, and how late are you permitted to be on the phone?
- What are your family's rules regarding the Internet?
- What are your family's rules regarding gaming or video games?
- Does your family limit who can come into your room and when they are allowed to be in your room?
- Do you expect your best friend to sit next to you at lunch every day?
- Do you want your parents to pretend that they don't know you when you are together at a party or at the mall?
- Do you wear any type of seatbelt when you're in the car?

Explain: Each of these "rules" that we just talked about establishes a boundary. Everyone has them, including adults. Like the examples just discussed, some are rules that are given to us by others—like our parents, catechists or coaches.

Step 3: Explain that sometimes we get to choose our own boundaries, and ask the children if they can think of any ways that they have created boundaries or rules for the people in their lives. Questions you can ask:

- Have you ever pretended to agree with something, or someone, when you really did not agree?
- Have you ever chosen not to tell on someone who broke the rules, because that person asked you not to tell?
- Have you ever gone along with an activity even though you didn't really want to go along with it?
- Have you ever declined to join in on an activity that you really wanted to do because someone else talked you out of it?
- Have you ever hidden how you really feel out of fear of how other people might react?
- Have you ever spent too much time doing things for other people and been frustrated that you don't spend enough time doing things you need to do for yourself?

Step 4: Ask your students why they do these things and how it makes them feel?

During the discussion of their reasons, address the following points:

- When you disregard your personal beliefs, values, wants and feelings, it sometimes causes you to feel diminished, disrespected, upset, annoyed, frustrated, angry, etc.
- Boundaries are the invisible lines we draw around ourselves for self-protection and self-preservation.
- When you don't speak up, you hide your true self and allow others to violate your boundaries. Sometimes we feel like we can't speak up.
- Most people will respect our boundaries if we let them know what they are. However, with others, we must actively defend our boundaries.

Activity #2: Review and Expand the Touching Safety Rules

Directions: In preparing for this activity, review *Teaching Touching Safety: A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Other Caring Adults*. Then, discuss the fact that a child has a right to say "No," and to expect the other person to listen and respect the "No."

Note: These exercises are intended to empower young people to begin to think about safety issues and to be their parents' or guardians' partner in making sure that the child has the tools needed to resist the overtures of a potential child molester.

Reviewing the touching rules and violations

- "If someone tries to touch a person's body parts or wants the child to touch their **private body parts**, the person should..."
 - Say, "No!"
 - Run away.
 - Tell a parents or guardian' or other safe adult what happened.

Talk with students about risky situations they might face with adults and other young people and discuss appropriate ways to respond. Remember that children of this age are dealing with enormous peer pressure while trying to understand their independent role in the world apart from their families. It is not always “cool” to say that you must tell someone if you are touched or approached in an inappropriate or sexual way. So, **do your best to stress the importance of good communication while speaking to the adolescent in a way that has him or her actually hear you, rather than ignore you.**

Discuss situations that could be a part of a grooming process. As you look at the situations, you will see that none of them are clear-cut examples of grooming. Discussion allows the young people to work out the issues involved in determining whether the adult’s actions are part of the grooming process. It is important that young people begin to recognize the elements of grooming and identify things that are “red flags.”

- Adults or older children who allow young people to watch R-rated or X-rated movies. (In the first situation, the mere fact that an adult allows a child to watch an R-Rated movie is not necessarily grooming. However, if the movie is one the parents or guardians have forbidden the child to see and the adult tells the child to keep it a secret, the adult’s action become more suspicious.)
- Adults or other children who tell dirty jokes or look at “adult” (naked or sexually explicit) pictures.
- An adult or older child who does something unsafe and, when the young person says, “Stop,” the adult or older child agrees to back off but asks the child not to tell anyone what happened.
- A friend confides in you that someone has molested him or her or has done some things that make the friend uncomfortable with the other person.
- You are at a friend’s house. The parents or guardians are gone and your friend wants the two of you to get into the liquor cabinet for some “refreshments.”

Discuss difficult situations that encourage the young people to look carefully at challenges that might arise and think through the issues to come to a safe and healthy decision. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to begin to confront the challenge of doing the right thing in the face of peer pressure and the child’s real need to “fit in” and be part of the group. It also offers reflection on the Catholic teachings on human dignity, moral decision-making, and respect of our bodies.

Activity #3: Identifying Safe Touch through Bible Stories (New Testament)

Directions:

Break the class into small groups of 3-6 students. Each group will be assigned one of the following Bible stories:

- Jesus has the children come to him (Matthew 19:13-15)
- Healing of Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:35-43)
- Jesus helps the blind man see (John 9:1-7)
- Jesus washes the feet of his disciples (John 13:3-9)
- Doubting Thomas (John 20:24-29)

The group is to read the assigned Scripture passage and then answer the following questions:

1. What happened in this story?
2. Who was involved?
3. Why is this a story about safe touch? Were the safety rules followed?

Emphasize the following points to students:

- Safe friends and safe adults are those who always respect your boundaries.
- Safe friends and safe adults honor your right to say "No!"
- Safe friends and safe adults are people who demonstrate safety in all of their activities (e.g., they don't drive recklessly or forget to wear safety goggles when using a power saw).
- Our human dignity is based on being created by God in his image and likeness.
- We know that God has created us to be respected, just as he looked out for the people in our Bible stories.

Activity #4: Netsmartz Online Safety: NST Profile Penalty

Background: This short 3-minute video is shared with permission from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and can be played for children as part of an activity. It is designed to open a simple discussion with youth about safety. Youth learn to be safe online and offline, and that they have a right to be safe.

Directions: Click here for the link:
<https://www.missingkids.org/netsmartz/videos#middleandhighschool>

The video title is **Profile Penalty**. Please click on the link to get to the Middle and High School videos page then select the correct video and download to view.

Description: Watch the video to determine how to strengthen your online boundaries. Everything on your profile represents who you are. What does yours say about you? Click here for the link:

Closing Prayer Option 1:

Help the students develop a spontaneous prayer using the "Who, You, Do, Through" model, thanking God for the gifts of our bodies and helping us learn to respect others and ourselves.

Using the "You, Who, Do, Through" formula, explain to the children how they can write a spontaneous prayer to God on safe touch.

For example,

"You": Dear God, who made us in your image as Temples of the Holy Spirit,
"Who": You are always with us and want to protect us from all harm,
"Do": Please help us to remember and to follow the safety rules we learned today,
"Through": We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Write the prayer for all the students to see. Then lead the students to pray together their prayer to end the class session.

Closing Prayer Option 2:

Lead students in the following prayer:

+ Dear God, we thank you for your presence in our lives and many ways you want to bless us. We thank you for the gifts of others, who want to keep us safe from harm and show us ways toward being healthy, happy, safe and holy. Please help us always remember the gift it is to be a Temple of the Holy Spirit and the importance of respecting our human dignity for ourselves and others. Amen.+