

Circle of Grace Lessons

We recommend that Circle of Grace is not taught during the first few weeks of class, but after the students and catechists have had the opportunity to get to know each other.

Statistics show that 90% of abuse occurs by people known to the child (parents, step-parents, siblings, extended family, friends, coaches, teachers, etc.). **Being in a group with peers allows children to better receive the age-appropriate lessons about boundary violations, how to ask for help and provides an opportunity to ask questions.**

Even with a close parent/child relationship, children may be hesitant to talk to their parents about abuse. **One of the most successful components of Circle of Grace is having children choose several trusted adults, in addition to their parents, to turn to if something happens. When the child and parents have identified several other trusted adults a bigger safety net is developed to protect them if abuse occurs.**

Family Based Catechesis

To support the unique needs of family-based faith formation programs, we have created a separate curriculum called *Family, Faith and Circle of Grace*. Having parents/guardians be present and part of the gathering reinforces to their children the value of this important safety curriculum.

***Family, Faith and Circle of Grace* is only to be used when parents and children can come together in a large group to learn about Circle of Grace in the format provided in the *Family, Faith and Circle of Grace* curriculum.**

Five different planned options are given for family gatherings. Each has a Leader Guide to help prepare for the family gathering, including a script for the leader. Also included are an agenda for parents and other adults who attend (which includes family discussion questions), youth lessons and suggestions/resources for the adult session.

Outline of the Program

Circle of Grace lessons must be taught exactly as written to fully meet the requirements of the USCCB for child and youth protection. They cannot be altered or replaced by a lesson or video on a similar topic.

The Circle of Grace Partners website contains all of the curricula, resources, administrator and implementation support.

Pre-Kindergarten - What is a *Circle of Grace*?
Kindergarten– Everyone has a *Circle of Grace*
Grade 1– Your *Circle of Grace* and Others
Grade 2– Being Safe in Your *Circle of Grace*
Grade 3 - Sacredness and Boundaries
Grade 4 - Social Media and Our *Circle of Grace*
Grade 5– Coping with Stress and Pressure
Grade 6 - Technology’s Influence on our Relationships
Grade 7 - Saying “No” to Disrespect
Grade 8 - Morally Responsible in Today’s Culture

Gr. 5- 8 Alternate Lessons

- ◇ Honoring Relationships
- ◇ Consequences of Technology
- ◇ *Circle of Grace* and New Age Spirituality
- ◇ Humility and Modesty
- ◇ Navigating an “Anything Goes” Culture
- ◇ *Circle of Grace* Retreat

High School Lessons

Grade 9 - N.O.T.I.C.E.: When Boundaries are Challenged
Grade 10 - Levels of Intimacy and Influence
Grade 11 - Tech Savvy or Tech Safe?
Grade 12 - Love and the Theology of the Body

High School Alternate Lessons

- ◇ A.C.T.I.O.N. Steps when Concerns Don’t Go Away
- ◇ Modesty: A thing of the Past or Not?
- ◇ Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery
- ◇ Uncomfortable Situations with Peers
- ◇ *Circle of Grace* and New Age Spirituality
- ◇ Navigating an “Anything Goes” Culture
- ◇ *Circle of Grace* Retreat

Circle of Grace[©]

Guide for Using Circle of Grace in Religious Education



Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8

Archdiocese of Omaha

Imprimatur. Most Reverend George Lucas
Archbishop of Omaha
Updated Curriculum May 2023
Information protected under U.S. copyright status

For Religious Education Directors or Coordinators

When planning for child protection lessons, every Religious Education Director's first concern is "How am I ever going to fit one more thing into an already overfilled calendar?"

Since *Circle of Grace* is faith-based, the lessons are built on Catholic teachings that are already the basis of the curriculum: respect for ourselves and others as children of God, Creation, the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, conscience formation, responsible relationships and the sanctity of life are just a few.

Circle of Grace is easy for the catechists to teach. In fact, the lessons are no different than following their regular religion lesson plans! The success of *Circle of Grace* depends on the catechist's ability to teach that God is truly present in our lives and desires to keep His children safe. The curriculum does not require teaching any sex education or human physiology.

Many catechists are volunteers and come with a variety of gifts and skill levels. It is important as a DRE that we know they will have the tools they need to teach these important lessons and that it will be done appropriately. *Circle of Grace* provides this for catechists of each grade-level.

There is a strong parent component that respects parents as the primary catechists of their children. In addition to parent letters included with lessons, there are *Parents First* educational fliers for each grade to give parents information and resources to help answer questions their children may ask about human dignity, sacred relationships and sexuality in an age-appropriate manner.

Your leadership is very important in implementing *Circle of Grace* and keeping the passion alive in future years. When you begin, it helps to build excitement by sharing program information in the bulletin, newsletters and social media. It is good to remind adults each year of our common goal to create a safe environment in our parishes and schools and to teach our children and youth how to keep themselves safe in the world they live and navigate each day.

Catechists also need to have their enthusiasm for child protection reignited each year before teaching *Circle of Grace*. It is a great topic to discuss at catechist meetings. It can be combined with a reminder that since we are teaching faith, any lesson or discussion all year can bring forth a disclosure of abuse. It can also be a good time to review how to handle a disclosure with catechists. Check for mandatory reporting laws in your state.

It is no wonder catechists say *Circle of Grace* lessons have the best student participation for the whole year because it shows how our faith affects every relationship in our lives. **It won't be long before *Circle of Grace* becomes part of your parish culture.**

Circle of Grace brings God and our Catholic beliefs into the center of child protection by teaching:

- God's presence and assistance in difficult and confusing situations as an essential component in its Pre-K- gr. 8 curriculum.
- a philosophy that can be used at all times that reinforces God's real presence in our lives, respect for self and others, and skills for good decision making.
- the sacredness of each person and how relationships are called to be experiences of divine love.

***Circle of Grace* lessons are taught in relationship: the student's relationship with God, God's relationship with them, and their relationship with others in their family and community.**

Circle of Grace makes your job easier!



- **Philosophy and goals are consistent throughout the Pre-K- Gr. 8 curriculum,**
- **so you and all of your catechists are on the same page!** The Catholic teachings that are being taught are listed at the beginning of each lesson, helping you see where *Circle of Grace* may reinforce or enhance your current religion lessons.
- **Comprehensive and self-contained materials for each grade.** Leader guidelines, key concepts, goals and objectives, vocabulary, list of materials needed, complete lessons with opening and closing prayers, lesson development and activities, copy masters of handouts, activity sheets, pre- and post- tests (in appropriate grades), parent letters and a lesson evaluation.
- **Five alternate lessons for grades 5-8 and a retreat format** are provided to give you options to better meet the safety needs of your students.
- **This means as DRE, you can copy or email one file to catechists with the materials needed for each grade,** keeping you from searching all over to find the correct parent letters, handouts, etc.
- **An administrator's section is included with resources just for you,** including help with implementation, special needs students, suicide prevention and how to handle a disclosure of abuse by a child. It has additional information about the program, common questions parents ask, abuse and neglect recognition, and other topics that you can send directly to parents, catechists and others in the parish.