

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

Humility & Modesty-

Does the World Know who You Really Are?

Grade 5-8 Alternative Lesson

Philosophy

What is a Circle of Grace?

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.

Adults assist young people to recognize God’s love by helping them to understand that each of us lives and moves in a *Circle of Grace*. You can imagine your own *Circle of Grace* by putting your arms above your head then circle down in front of your body including side to side. This circle, front to back, holds who you are in your body and through your senses. It holds your very essence in mind, heart, soul, and sexuality.

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.

Adults, as they strive to provide a safe and protective environment, hold the responsibility to help young people understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where young people recognize when they are safe or unsafe and know how to bring their concerns, fears, and uncertainties to the trusted adults in their lives.

How is the Circle of Grace Curriculum different from other safety programs?

According to research, one in four girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused by age eighteen.¹ Many protection programs focus on “stranger danger,” however, up to ninety percent of the time the perpetrator is a relative, family friend or other person known to the child/young person. *Circle of Grace* goes beyond just protection by helping young people understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults.

Goal of the Circle of Grace Curriculum - Grades K-12

The goal of the *Circle of Grace* curriculum 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 Curriculum - 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, discern 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.

¹ www.usccb.org, or <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>

Leader Guidelines

- A **Leader** is defined as clergy (priest or deacon) school administrator, director of religious education/formation, teacher, or catechist who has been trained to teach the *Circle of Grace* Program.
- Every leader should read the Philosophy, Goals and Key Concepts to better understand and prepare to teach the *Circle of Grace*. The Key Concepts review the essence of the curriculum, that God is always present in our *Circle of Grace* because He desires an intimate relationship with His children.
- The time frame may vary depending on size of class, age of young people, amount of discussion, etc.
- Vocabularies with definitions are intended for the leader. The explanation of vocabulary should be integrated within the context of the lessons to assist the young people in their understanding of the *Circle of Grace* Curriculum. The depth of the young people's understanding will depend upon their age and developmental stage. A master vocabulary list of the *Circle of Grace* Curriculum is in the administrator/director section. The pertinent vocabulary is listed in each lesson.
- Leader's instructions for each lesson are italicized. Non-italicized text needs to be presented by the leader to the students.
- If possible it is always "best practice" to have two adults in the room during the lesson due to the sensitive nature of the material.
- Leaders will need to keep a record of what lesson is taught each year.
- Ongoing reinforcement of the concepts is encouraged throughout the year. Hopefully, the language of *Circle of Grace* will become a part of a positive culture of respect, care, and faith that will help protect our young people and help them to know what to do when they feel unsafe
- Your School Administrator, Religious Education Director, or Youth Minister Director will be sending out a letter to all parents regarding *Circle of Grace*. Lesson specific parent information should be handed out as directed. The Parent information is included in the Curriculum. Every parish/school is encouraged to provide parent education opportunities both to inform parents about the *Circle of Grace* curriculum and to foster greater communication in families.
- Evaluations for each grade are to be completed and returned to the School Administrator or the Director of Religious Education/Formation. The evaluations will be used to complete the Summary Evaluation that is used for ongoing improvement of the curriculum and for the audit records.

Summary of the Key Concepts of “Circle of Grace”



God gives each of us a Circle of Grace (see below) where He is always Present:

*Raise your hands above your head, then bring your outstretched arms slowly down.
Extend your arms in front of you and then behind you
embrace all of the space around you
slowly reach down to your feet.*

Knowing that God is in this space with you. This is your Circle of Grace; you are in it.

God is Present because He desires a relationship with us.

- God is with us when we are happy and sad. God does not cause bad things to happen to us. He loves us very much.
- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- Having faith may not take away all of life’s struggles. It is because of these struggles, God promised to always be present; providing guidance and comfort in our time of need

God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace

- Our feelings help us know about ourselves and the world around us.
- God helps us know what belongs in our Circle of Grace by allowing us to experience peace, love or contentment when something or someone good comes into our Circle of Grace.

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

- God desires to help us when we are hurt, scared or confused (unsafe).
- The Holy Spirit prompts (alerts) us that something does not belong in our Circle of Grace by giving us “a funny or uncomfortable feeling” that something is not safe. This feeling is there because God wants us to be safe.

God helps us know when to ask for help from someone we trust.

- God gives us several trusted adults, in addition to our parents, to talk to about our worries, concerns or “funny/ uncomfortable feelings” so they can help us be safe. If a parent or trusted adult is not available or unable to help us, God wants us to go to another trusted adult until we get the help needed to be safe.

Humility & Modesty-

Does the World Know who You Really Are?

Sometimes young people reveal personal information or details about incidents that, in order to respect confidentiality, need to be handled outside of the group environment. If this happens, tell the young person, "Thank you for sharing that, _____. That sounds really important. I will talk to you about that later (at the end of class, at the break, as soon as humanly possible, etc.)." When this happens, be sure you talk to the young person at your first opportunity and alert the administration. Remember that you are the responsible reporter in cases of suspected abuse.

This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:

- Church teachings revealed in the Creed applies in our daily lives
- Human relationships are intended to be experiences of Divine Love
- Personal covenant with God
- Live responsibly as fully initiated members of the Church
- Discipleship is our call to holiness
- The relationship between the love of God, our love of self and our love of others
- The image of God is in ourselves and others

Lesson Objective

Young People will be able to:

1. Recognize the key elements of humility and modesty
2. Understand the connection between humility and modesty and their *Circle of Grace*
3. Recognize that humility and modesty are healthy boundaries which protects the true person
4. Recognize ways they are pressured to not value humility and modesty
5. Know how to respond when they are confronted with inappropriate interactions or violations

Vocabulary

1. ***Circle of Grace***: The love and goodness of God that always surrounds me and others.
2. ***Circle of Virtue***: Our response to the invitation of God's grace by cultivating goodness and virtue in our lives.
3. ***Humility***: Understanding of the truth of God and who we truly are; made in His image.
4. ***Modesty***: How we express the knowledge of who we truly are in the eyes of God.

Materials Needed

1. Whiteboard or chalkboard
2. Summary of Key Concepts of Circle of Grace handout for each student (front of lesson)
3. Large paper
4. Writing materials
5. "This is Me" handout (end of lesson)
6. Parent Letter to send home (end of lesson)

Opening Prayer:

Leader calls class to prayer by asking youth to quiet down and join in the Sign of the Cross. Then say together,

**God,
We ask for Your guidance and a little more:
guidance in relationships,
guidance in decisions,
guidance in love,
and guidance in worshiping You.
Amen**

Getting Started

Review (*Distribute and Review the Summary of Key Concepts of Circle of Grace*)

Today we are going to talk about humility and modesty. You may be asking yourself, "what is humility and modesty? What is so important about them?" Let's first review the summary of *Circle of Grace* and the definition of Circle of Virtue and how they work together.

Allow the students to share their answers to the following questions. Write the answers on the board.

Circle of Grace-

- What is it? *The goal is for the students to know that the Circle of Grace is the love and goodness of God that always surrounds us and others.*
- How do we know who and what to allow in our Circle of Grace? *We allow those who we feel safe with and will keep us safe. Also, recognize when the Holy Spirit is speaking to us, especially when someone or something is not safe.*
- Give me some examples of who we allow in?
- Give me examples of what we allow in?

Circle of Virtue-

- What is it? *Our response to the invitation of God's grace by cultivating goodness and virtue in our lives.*

- How can we respond to God’s grace in a positive way? *To desire and have a deeper relationship with him through prayer and treating ourselves and others with respect.*

To conclude, the Circle of Grace is God’s love and goodness that surrounds us, and the Circle of Virtue is how we respond to God’s love and goodness. It’s important to acknowledge both because they can help us live our lives and lead us from situations that are unsafe or not good. There are times we forget that God is right here. We begin to do what we want and what others say we should do to be popular, smarter, and cooler, even when it goes against our Catholic faith. God is always with us, and He desires us to respond to him by loving him, praying to him, and listening to him. He really does know us and what’s best for us because He created us in His Image.

God created us in His Image. God’s image is love. What does that mean to you? *(Write the students’ answers on the board. The following are some answers that are desired from the class: loving others as yourself, respectful to self and others, forgiving, understanding, non-judgmental, grateful, humble, etc. This will help the students understand more about who God created them to be.*

Introduction

Now that we have a better understanding of who God created us to be, which is in His image, let’s look at 2 important words that help us know who we truly are and that provides a path of how we should interact with others.

Definitions

Draw 2 columns on the board. At the top of one column write the word Humility. At the top of other column write Modesty. After sharing the definition of each, write it under the word. Then share and write a few examples of each under the appropriate column. Allow the students to come up with examples for each and write their examples on the board under the word.

Those 2 words are **Humility** and **Modesty**. We are going to look at each one separately to help you have a better understanding of each. Both go hand in hand so it’s important for you to understand and recognize each one.

- **Humility**: Understanding who we truly are and who others truly are; made in God’s loving image.
 - It’s seeing others’ worth and talents, but also recognizing yours.
 - It is not seeing or treating yourself less than others or believing you are unworthy.
 - Humility is not the same as being humiliated.
 - The opposite of humility is pride.

Activity (please do at least 2):

Divide the class up into groups for the activity. Read each scenario. After each scenario, ask the students the questions that follow.

Give the group about 7-10 minutes to discuss with each other. Allow each group to share their answers with the whole class.

1. You and your team made it to the final tournament. Everyone on the team has practiced hard and feel confident of winning. The game is tied and there are a few seconds left. Your team has the ball, but your opponent gets the ball and make a goal. The whistle is blown and game over. The other team won. Everyone on your team is disappointed but know you all played the best that you could. You all also realize that the other team was good. Everyone lines up to congratulate the other team. As you are going down the line and saying, "good game," someone on the other team pushes you and calls you a "loser". Later that evening, you become aware of your teams photo on social media posted by a player of the team you lost too. Under your team photo it is commented "LOSER."

Ask the students these 4 questions.

- Were boundaries of your Circle of Grace dishonored?
- Was someone else's Circle of Grace dishonored?
- How would you handle the situation in a respectful and humble way?
- If nothing is done, what consequences may happen?

Allow the students to discuss and share answers. After each group shares, state the following:

When playing sports there will always be a team who wins and team who loses. That is part of the game. A humble person acknowledges their skills and efforts and all those playing, even those playing on the other team. It was not right for the other team player to put you down. That person showed the opposite of being humble and was trying to get you to react to the comment. A prideful person may react with arguing or even physically pushing the other team player. The humble person walks away knowing he/she and the rest of the team played their best. Later in the day, the other team member dishonors you and your team's *Circle of Grace* by posting a comment on social media that was hurtful. Now it is time you turn to a trusted adult so he/she could address it with your coach, the other coach, and the other school.

2. Your teacher gives the class a group project. Everyone is divided into groups. Someone needs to take the role of the leader. The leader is responsible for making sure everyone works together. You are chosen as the leader. Everyone is graded as a group. Your group has 2 weeks to complete the project. During this time, you notice that one person is not following through with tasks and not participating. They are always on their phone or goofing around. You have told them several times to do their part and to participate. The others have come up with great ideas and have played an equal part in completing the project, which included picking up the slack from the person who has not participated. After presentation of the project, your group scores a 'B.' You feel that your group deserved an 'A.' You become upset at the teacher and at the person who did not participate. You really want to tell everyone that the student is lazy and dumb, and that it is their fault why your group received a lower grade.

Ask the students these 4 questions.

- Were boundaries of your Circle of Grace dishonored?
- Was someone else's Circle of Grace dishonored?
- How would you handle the situation in a respectful and humble way?
- If nothing is done, what consequences may happen?

Allow the students to discuss and share. After each group shares, state the following:

There will always be situations when you have to work in a group setting: school, sports, and work. It's hard when someone is not holding up their part of a project. In this case, the leader could have shown humility by asking the person, why they were not helping? Maybe they did not understand the project and did not want to look "dumb" by asking questions. A humble person has feelings and acknowledges these feelings. The leader was upset about two things; getting a B and the person who did not help. This is when you need to turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance. A person who acts in a humble way would go talk to the teacher about the grade and the issues the group faced during the project, openly listening to the feedback and criticism so they can learn. A person who acts in disrespectful and hurtful way may gossip about the person who did not help.

3. A friend confides in you that he or she has been feeling sad. They feel like no one likes them and feels alone. They even said that they don't like themselves. You try to cheer them up by pointing out positive things about themselves and how important they is to you. As time goes on, your friend continues to sound more depressed and says more negative things about themselves. Your friend says that they want to die. You continue to try to cheer them up.

Ask the students these 4 questions.

- Were boundaries of your Circle of Grace dishonored?
- Was someone else's Circle of Grace dishonored?
- How would you handle the situation in a respectful and humble way?
- If nothing is done, what consequences may happen?

Allow the students to discuss and share. After each group shares, state the following:

There are times that we feel that we can handle situations on our own. When a friend confides in us, we may feel that we can't turn to others and that we need to handle the situation on our own. As time goes by the situation may get worse. It's no longer your friend just feeling sad. They are making statements that should be taken seriously. If you do not seek help, your friend might cause harm to themselves. A humble person knows when to ask a trusted adult for help. It may help save a life.

Activity:

Now we know what humility is and how it plays a role in our lives. Let's talk about modesty.

- **Modesty:** How we express the knowledge of who we truly are in the eyes of God.

- It's the way we talk, behave, dress, and live our lives.
- It's showing the world who God created us to be. No more. No less.
- It is not pretending to be someone you are not.
- It is not being disrespectful in the way we talk, dress or act.

Divide the class up into groups for the activity. Read each scenario. After each scenario, ask the students the questions that follow. Give the group about 7-10 minutes to discuss with each other. Allow each group to share their answers with the whole class.

1. Every year your neighborhood has a big block party. You always look forward to it because it is fun, and everyone stays out late. The adults and the kids hang out in separate groups. There is a new family who moved in a month ago. The new family introduces themselves to everyone. They have a kid who is a year older than you. As the day goes on, the new kid starts hanging out with you. You begin to talk, and it seems that you have some common interests. At night when the parents are sitting around and talking, the new neighbors ask their child to grab some drinks out their fridge in the garage. They ask if you want to go, and you say "sure." When you get to the garage, they grab a beer and ask if you want it and says that everyone who is anyone at their school drinks. They ask you "haven't you ever had a beer?" You don't want to drink the beer, but you also don't want to look un-cool.

Ask the students these 4 questions.

- Were boundaries of your Circle of Grace dishonored?
- Was someone else's Circle of Grace dishonored?
- How would you handle the situation in a respectful and modest way?
- If nothing is done, what consequences may happen?

Allow the students to discuss and share. After each group shares, state the following:

Being modest is knowing who you are, regardless of what others may think. In this case, your neighbor is asking you to do something that you know could get you in trouble and put you in an unsafe situation. Do you do something to "look" cool in the eyes of neighbor? A modest person will act in a way that is "cool" in God's eyes. They will not act as someone they are not because they have respect for themselves.

2. You and your friends are standing in line for a haunted house. It's a long line and long wait. You are talking in your normal voices about the haunted house and people in your class. Since there are no parents with you, you and your friends use language that is inappropriate. You are not paying attention who is around you. When there is a pause in the conversation, you look up and notice a mom, who you babysat for last weekend. In fact, you had been asked to babysit again next weekend. The mom is looking at you. You say hello to her, but you can't help noticing a disappointed look on her face. She says to you, "I hope you don't talk like that around my children when you babysit."

Ask the students these 4 questions.

- Were boundaries of your Circle of Grace dishonored?
- Was someone else's Circle of Grace dishonored?
- How would you handle the situation in a respectful and modest way?
- If nothing is done, what consequences may happen?

Allow the students to discuss and share. After each group shares, state the following:

We all act and talk in a certain manner when we are with different groups of people. You may talk one way with your friends, and another way with your parents. However, the language we use with any group shows others our character, or who we are. Using language that is inappropriate, such as cussing, does not make us look smarter, cooler, or more responsible. In this case, the language that was being used revealed to another person a side that they did not approve. They most likely question the influence you may have on their own children. Basically, they are protecting their own children's circle of grace. A modest person will use language that is respectful, no matter whom they are interacting.

3. You are getting ready for a party where there will be many kids from different grades and schools. You want to look good for someone you have been talking to. You find an outfit that you like, and think will catch others' attention. When you get to the party, you join your group of friends. You find the person you have been talking to and go up to them. You notice while you are talking, they are paying more attention to your clothing than what you are saying and begins touching you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Ask the students these 4 questions.

- Were boundaries of your Circle of Grace dishonored?
- Was someone else's Circle of Grace dishonored?
- How would you handle the situation in a respectful and modest way?
- If nothing is done, what consequences may happen?

Allow the students to discuss and share. After each group shares, state the following:

Today there are so many different trends and styles of clothing to wear. What we wear, just like how we act and talk, sends a message of who we are. Being modest is not impressing others by what we wear, instead dressing modestly means we want to reveal to others that we honor and value ourselves (body and soul), and the message we send to others is for them to honor and value us as God does. Each and every one of us is a person of God.

Wrap it Up and Activity:

Hand out 'This is Me' worksheet. If there is not enough time in class to complete, have the students take it home to complete and bring back to confirm it was completed.

Now we know what humility and modesty is. Both help us to honor and value ourselves as unique children of God and help remind us that we are created in God's loving image. We use both to reveal to others who we truly are.

Each of you have been given a handout that states: This is Me. Take a moment to write words, journal or draw how you see yourselves and how you want to reflect yourself to the world.

Give the students about 10 minutes to complete.

Now please take that home and put it in a place where you can see it every day to remind yourself that you are loved, honored, and valued.

Closing Prayer:

Leader calls class to prayer by asking youth to quiet down and join in the Sign of the Cross. Then say together,

**Dear heavenly Father,
you created us out of Your image.
Your image is love.
Help us to remember everyday who we truly are,
which is a son/daughter of yours.
Help us to honor our minds and bodies and value our uniqueness.
Give us the courage to always follow you.
Amen.**

Opening Prayer:

**God,
We ask for Your guidance and a little more:
guidance in relationships,
guidance in decisions,
guidance in love,
and guidance in worshipping You.
Amen**

Closing Prayer:

**Dear heavenly Father,
you created us out of Your image.
Your image is love.
Help us to remember everyday who we truly are,
which is a son/daughter of yours.
Help us to honor our minds and bodies and value our uniqueness.
Give us the courage to always follow you.
Amen.**

This is ME!

Circle of Grace
Parent Letter
Humility & Modesty-
Does the World Know who You Really Are?
Grade 5-8 Alternate Lesson

Dear Parent,

Circle of Grace is a faith-based safety curriculum used by your archdiocese/diocese.

Today your child learned about humility and modesty. The students learned that they are created in the image of God and God is love. God created us each with talents and skills.

They learned that acting as someone they are not can lead to unsafe situations, whereas being humble and modest sends a message to others that they know who they are and respect themselves and others, which honors their own and other's Circle of Grace. The world tends to send a message to youth that they should act, talk, and dress in manner to fit in, but when one knows their own true value and worth, as created in the image of God, they will be able to live a way that God is calling them to live, which is to honor, value and respect themselves and others.

The students were asked to write qualities and characteristics of themselves they want the world to see. They were asked to keep it in a place they can see every day to help remind themselves who they are, which is a child of God who is loved and belongs. Encourage your child to share it with you.

Social media, styles, peers, television, etc. can all influence your child's thoughts about themselves. When they don't know who they are, they may feel unloved and don't belong, and that may lead in unsafe behaviors. It is important to always talk with your child.

Thank you for allowing us to be a partner in providing a safe environment for your child!

Grade 5-8 Alternative Evaluation

Date _____

Leader _____

Parish/School _____ City _____

Number of young people in class _____ Grade-level/s of students _____

Each grade's curriculum was designed to meet the overall program objectives.

Please check whether the objectives of the *Circle of Grace* Program were met.

1. YES ____ NO ____ Young People understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will be able to describe the *Circle of Grace*.
3. YES ____ NO ____ Young People understand how having an intimate relationship with God helps us know who we truly are.
4. YES ____ NO ____ Young People understand that we are created in God's Image, which is love.
5. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will know what humility and modesty is and how both can help keep them safe.
6. YES ____ NO ____ Young People will know how to send a message to others that they honor and value themselves and others.

Please list what worked well and any resources that you would like to share with others (use back if necessary).

Please list any suggestions that would improve lessons (use back if necessary).

Return to your School Administrator or Director of Religious Education