

**Diocese of Corpus Christi
Office for Child and Youth Protection**

Dear Parent,

Your child will be offered safe environment/personal safety education in accordance with Article 12 of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* which states "Diocese/eparchies will establish safe environment programs. They will cooperate with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children.

The program your parish is offering may consist of one or more of the following presentations followed by classroom or small group discussion as appropriate for each age group.

1. *Circle of Grace Curriculum Kinder to High School Level*
2. *Strong Voices, Smart Choices Elementary Level DVD*
3. *Personal Power; A Gut Check on Safety DVD Middle School Level*
4. *Behind the Screens High School Level DVD*
5. *Healthy Happy Holy; Edge Program, Middle School Level Presentation*
6. *NetSmartz Internet Safety Training – Elementary and Middle School Level Powerpoint Presentation*

Why is it important to help our children understand the importance of a safe environment and personal safety?

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

Safe environment/personal safety education goes beyond just protection by helping children and young people understand the sacredness of who they are and how to seek help through their relationships with trusted adults. Please feel free to contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection at 361-693-6686 if you would like more information. Should you choose to opt your child out of receiving this curriculum as integrated in their religious education class, please fill out the attached form and return to the Director of Religious Education at your parish or your child's classroom teacher if your child is attending school at one of our Catholic schools.

Youth Education – Personal Safety
Non-Participating Children/Young People
(please complete a separate form for each child declining training)

Parish or School: _____ Date: _____

I _____, decline to allow my child _____
(print name of parent/guardian) (print name of student)

to participate in the safe environment/personal safety education being offered at:

(print name of parish or school)

I have been offered materials and information to conduct the training for my child.

Parent / Guardian signature

Relationship to child

Parish / School Representative

Position

For Parish or School Administrator/Directors use:

Please provide parents who have declined training for their child with the Circle of Grace Parent Information packet found on the diocesan website -> www.diocesecc.org -> Resources -> Child and Youth Protection -> Documents and Forms -> from the Submenu select Circle of Grace Parent Education (English and Spanish options are available). Please call the Office for Child and Youth Protection at 361-693-6686 if there are any questions or concerns.

Please keep this completed form on file for Safe Environment Audit Documentation

Teaching Children about the Circle of Grace at Home



Your home is the first place your child will experience the security and protection of God's love. And YOU are the first persons to communicate this profound touch of God's circle of grace to your child.

From the moment of birth, a child can know deep down inside if they are loved and secure. Your child experiences a circle of grace from the gentle way their parents and caregivers hold them, how they respond to their needs when he or she cries, and how they are reassured when they are afraid or in danger. God provides his love and care for your child through your nurturing care for them. At your child's baptism, you were given a candle and asked to be a "light to your child . . . shining the light of Christ's love and presence on them.

When you are a loving and responsible parent, your child learns about the circle of grace from you as you communicate God's love to them through your faithful care and protection. Here are a few ideas to assist you in teaching your child that they are God's precious creation, and that they are never outside the circle of His love and grace.

Creating Sacred Space in your Home: "Hidden or not hidden, God is present"

Place sacramentals in your home to remind yourself and your children that God is present all the time whether or not we are attentive to Him. Sacramentals (a cross or crucifix, pictures or statues of Mary, Jesus or the saints, a rosary, a medal or scapula, or other religious art) are objects that remind us of our faith. Placing the scriptures in a prominent place with a candle nearby is a way of acknowledging God's presence in His holy word. Or create a home altar with a symbol of Christ, a candle, and objects to remind you of God's presence all around you in nature, in photos of loved ones, or in mementos of happy times together.

Praying Together Daily

Gather whoever is at home at mealtime or bedtime and ask God's blessing on your family. Pray when someone is sick, sad, or anxious. Pray when you have something to celebrate. Have a book of family prayers at home to help you remember to pray daily. In your prayer, acknowledge God's presence with you, ask for what you need and give thanks for your blessings. Prayer is a dialogue with God in which we are reassured by His power and presence in our lives.

Teaching Your Child about the Circle of Grace that Surrounds Them

Your words teach your child about God's protection and comfort. Use words to remind your child that God is with them watching over them day and night. When they are afraid or anxious, remind them they are never alone. Assure them that they are wonderfully made by God . . . just as they are, short, tall, freckled, or plain.

Your actions teach too. Show respect for your child by allowing them age-appropriate privacy, not teasing them about their body, setting rules about bullying and name-calling, setting boundaries at home so that mutual respect is learned and practiced every day in ordinary ways.

Your attitude will communicate to your child in profound ways. An attitude of openness and acceptance of your child's dreams and fears is important to establish the sense of trust they need to tell you what they are feeling. They need to know that they can tell you anything and that you will listen and accept their feelings without retribution.

Prayers for Parents

You are part of the circle of grace which surrounds your child. Your love for your child communicates God's love and care. These prayers may help you deepen your participation in God's ever-expanding circle of love for your child.

A Prayer of Confidence in God's Love

"I am certain of this: neither death nor life, not angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, not any power . . . will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord".

Romans 8:37-39

Loving God, whose circle of grace surrounds us now and into eternity, we thank and praise you for your steadfast love and protection. By the power of your Holy Spirit open our eyes to your presence each day as we feed and clothe, nurture, and instruct our children in Your ways. We offer this prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Morning Prayer:

I begin this day with gratitude for the gift of life.
Asking for God's strength to direct me.
God's power to sustain me.
God's wisdom to guide me.
God's vision to light my way.
I acknowledge my limitations before you,
O God and trust that
Your ear is listening to me,
Your hand is upholding me,
Your shield is protecting me from every evil
Now and Forever.
Amen.

(Adapted from St Patrick's Breastplate prayer)

An Evening Prayer

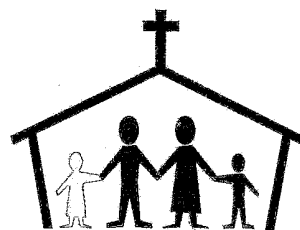
At the close of this day, Lord,
we give you thanks and praise for all good things.
We rest beneath the blanket of your love and protection,
trusting in your power and presence with us.
Grant us restful sleep and guard us from every evil. We entrust ourselves to you Father, Son and Holy Spirit, God now and forever. Amen. (Composed by Mary Jo Pedersen)

Goal of the Circle of Grace Program 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.

The Circle of Grace Prayer

Raise your hands above your head
And then bring your arms slowly down
Keeping them outstretched
Extending your arms in front of you and 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.



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