

Circle of Grace  
Curriculum and Lesson Outline

The lesson objectives and activities outlined here will be adapted to and presented at each grade level of Faith Formation every year per the Diocese of Sacramento guidelines.

Opening Prayer

**Holy Spirit, show us the way.**

**Be with us in all we think, do, and say. Amen.**

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.**

We recognize God’s love by understanding 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.**

**God is “Present” because He desires a relationship with us.**

**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 from someone we trust.**

**Discussion**

1. Now, we will talk about why it is important that we know about our *Circle of Grace*.
2. *Ask the children:* Do you remember that Jesus told us how he would always love us and always be with us? If God is always with us, we are always in a special, holy place. That place is our *Circle of Grace*. This is the place the Holy Spirit is with us and within us.
3. When we remember that we are in a *Circle of Grace*, with God and surrounded by God’s love, we will also remember to **behave with the respect for ourselves and for others** that is called for when we are in a holy place.

**Vocab\_Respect:** Being kind to others and doing what’s best for myself and others because I honor all people as Children of God.

Ask the children: Provide examples of respectful behavior.

Most of the time you know what is safe and good to allow in your *Circle of Grace*. Sometimes you need others who respect your *Circle of Grace* to help you know what is safe and what is not, people like our parents or teachers – **Trusted adults**. God has given each of us our own kind of signal to keep us safe and protected. Sometimes these signals are called feelings. Our feelings are one of the main ways the Holy Spirit helps to guide us.

## Lesson Goal

Be able to recognize safe and unsafe situations in a person's *Circle of Grace*.

**Safe:** I am safe when my body and my feelings are respected by me and by others.

**Safe Touch:** Touch that respects others and me.

## Exercise: Actions that belong inside and outside their *Circle of Grace*.

Which of the following things or behaviors belong inside my Circle of Grace?

Which things or behaviors should I work to keep out of my or another's Circle of Grace?

- **Taking good care of yourself** (*healthy foods, getting enough sleep, medication, getting help when needed*)
- **Drugs**
- **Caring touch** (*comfort from a parent, a kiss on the cheek from your grandparent, encouraging pat on the back, high-fives, etc.*)
- **Harmful touch** (*hitting, kicking, pushing, touch that intrudes on your privacy, etc.*)
- **Violence**
- **Kind words**
- **Bad or hurtful words said to someone at school**
- **Bad or hurtful words sent to someone from the computer or phone**
- **Compliments**
- **Name calling in person or sent from the computer/phone**
- **Words of encouragement**
- **Love**
- **Hate**
- **Gossip**
- **Praise**
- **Prayer**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Excluding someone**

## Lesson Goal

Children will know (demonstrate – 3rd) how to take action if boundaries are threatened or violated. Learn and role-play the skill of “How to Ask for Help”. (3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and above)

## A Boundary Can Be Physical, Symbolic, or Internal

**Physical:** An actual barrier that blocks or restricts something.

- Fence (*defines property*)
- Bathroom/bedroom door (*can be shut and locked to respect privacy*)
- Clothes (*protect our bodies from elements and covers private areas*)
- School Building (*secures learning environment, doors, alarms, school office*)
- Home (*keep family secure: alarm system, protection from the weather*)
- Seat Belt (*protects our body if there is an accident*)

**Symbolic:** A limit you can see that does not physically restrict you. You can choose to respect or ignore this limit.

- Playing Field (*visual lines to help play fairly*)
- “Do Not Enter” Sign (*privacy or potential danger alert*)
- A Crosswalk (*a guide as to where to safely walk*)
- PG 13 movie rating (*an alert regarding mature content*)
- Video game with a parental warning on the label (*a warning of mature and violent content*)
- “No Trespassing” Sign (*alerts you to stop and keep out of another’s property*)
- “Keep Off the Grass” Sign (*alerts you to keep off another’s property*)
- “Keep Kids Alive! Drive 25!” (*encourages drivers to drive slowly around children*)

**Internal:** An understanding of a rule or limit that you carry in your head. Most of these are learned through experience or taught by those who care for us. The Holy Spirit nudges us to remember our internal limits in order to help us be safe.

- Acceptable volume on a radio or CD player (*respects others sensitivity to noise*)
- Space between you and an unknown or known person (*this space could vary depending on culture, family, and current relationship*)
- You stop eating when you are full (*an internal sensation that no more food is needed*)
- Not playing in the street (*internal limit regarding danger taught by those who care for us*)
- Knowing not to participate in an activity your parents would not approve (*internal limit based on prior parental guidance*)
- Appropriate behavior in church and school (*internal limit based on prior adult guidance*)

## Vocabulary

1. **Trust:** Being able to count on someone to help me stay safe within my *Circle of Grace*.
2. **Trusted Adult:** A grown-up who helps me to stay safe in my *Circle of Grace* and to respect others within their *Circle of Grace*.

Ask the children to brainstorm ideas of how they would tell a trusted adult they felt unsafe. (If time permits)

## **Summary and Teaching goals**

- Children understand they are created by God and live in the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Children will be able to describe the *Circle of Grace* which God gives each of us.
- Children will be able to identify and maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Children can identify types of boundary violations.
- Children can demonstrate how to take action if a boundary is threatened or violated.

## **This lesson complements the following Catholic teachings:**

- We are all Children of God
- As Children of God, we are unique and loved by Him
- Jesus teaches us how to love and respect God and others and self
- We are all called to do good

Closing Prayer

**Thank you, God,**

**for always being with me in my *Circle of Grace*.**

**Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit**

**who helps me know what is good.**

**Thank you for giving me people who care about me**

**and want me to be safe.**

**Amen.**