

Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

Modesty: A thing of the Past or Not?

Grade 9-12 Alternate 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* Curriculum.
- 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. A master vocabulary list of the *Circle of Grace* curriculum is in the administration 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.
- The 9-12 curriculum is formatted to be used in two ways:
 - ✓ The traditional way: lessons to the identified grade.
The lesson for grade 12 is only to be taught to seniors.
 - ✓ The second way: select an alternate lesson to teach the class or group.
 - ✓ 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*. 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.

Circle of Grace

Modesty: A Thing of the Past or Not?

Grade 9-12 Alternate Lesson

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

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. Identify and understand why modesty is important
2. Recognize the key elements of modesty
3. Understand the connection between modesty and their *Circle of Grace*
4. Recognize that modesty is a healthy boundary which protects the true person
5. Recognize ways they are pressured to not value modesty
6. Know how to respond when they are confronted with inappropriate interactions or violations

Materials Needed

1. Summary of the Key Concepts of Circle of Grace handout for each student (front of lesson)
2. What is your Modesty IQ? Quiz for each student (see the end of the lesson)
3. Leader answer guide to the Modesty IQ quiz (see the end of the lesson)
4. Intimate Center Handout for each student (see the end of the lesson)
5. Whiteboard or chalkboard
6. Art supplies and newsprint paper
7. Approved magazines

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 *Distribute and review the Summary of Key Concepts of the Circle of Grace. Discuss how each key concept relates to their lives.*

Today we are going to talk about modesty. You may be asking yourself, “how does modesty fit in with my *Circle of Grace*?” Our first activity will help us discuss this connection.

Opening Activity: What is Your Modesty IQ?

Option 1 - Distribute the quiz to each student. Have the youth do the quiz individually and then go to the large group discussion section.

Option 2 – Distribute the quiz to each student. Divide the class into several groups. Have the groups discuss the questions on the quiz then go to the large group discussion section.

Large Group Discussion:

What do you think is the definition of modesty? *Allow for a few responses then provide them with the definition. Do you think modesty is an ancient concept? Does it have a place in our everyday lives? Allow for a few responses. Write them on the board.*

Let's visit about the questions on the quiz.

The answer guide to the quiz is at the end of the lesson. Discuss each question. Prompt the youth to identify the correct answer and key concepts related to each question. After the discussion, proceed to the review.

Review

It is important that young people understand the relationship between the *Circle of Grace* and the Circle of Virtue. The *Circle of Grace* is always present and never leaves us. Our Circle of Virtue is our positive response to our *Circle of Grace*. Let's look at the definitions.

Circle of Grace: The love and goodness of God that always surrounds us and others.

Circle of Virtue: Our response to the invitation of God's grace by cultivating goodness and virtue in our lives.

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

Humility: Understanding of the truth of God and who we truly are; made in His image.

Introduction

So what do these concepts really mean? We are going to discuss each concept in depth.

Give a chance for the group to respond to the questions. Write the responses on the board.

1. **Circle of Grace**: God's presence always; the in-dwelling and out-dwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - What are some examples of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us?
Examples: Sacraments, Gifts of the Holy Spirit, yearning for the truth and to be loved.
 - What are some examples of the Holy Spirit dwelling outside us?
Examples: Experience unconditional love and forgiveness, all good and holy interactions/relationships.
2. **Circle of Virtue**: Our positive response to God's Grace. This response springs from an intimate relationship with God.
 - What are some positive responses to God's Grace?
Examples: A desire to know Him at a deeper level, ability to discern right from wrong, desire to take care of His creation which includes ourselves.
 - What does an intimate relationship with God look like?
Examples: One has faith in His love and forgiveness. One desires to spend time in prayer.
3. **Humility**: We develop humility by knowing the truth of God and who we are. Unfortunately, humility has an unjust reputation of being bad/weak. Many view it as a negative. Popular culture would have us believe that it is more important to be proud than humble. Humility is actually a beautiful virtue. It is coming to a clear understanding of the truth of God and who one truly is and that is good news!
 - Give some examples of how our culture entices us to have a false sense of pride.
Examples: One has control over his/her life. Winning and being the best becomes our god.
 - Give some media examples of how someone showed a true sense of humility.
Examples: The police officer gives a homeless man some boots, TV show where the person in charge secretly does the front-line work.
4. **Modesty**: Because of this humility, we desire others to know us as we are created "In His image".
 - Give some examples of assaults on modesty in the media.
Examples: TV shows, Music Videos, Movies. Ask the youth for more examples.
 - Give some examples of positive views of modesty in the media.
Examples: A football player kneels down to pray before a game. Teens raise money for a classmate who has cancer. Ask the youth for more examples.

Activity - Intimate Center

1. *Distribute the Intimate Center Handout to each student to use as a reference.*
2. *Divide the class into four groups.*
3. *Give each group two large pieces of paper/newsprint. As a reference, both pieces of paper should have all four concepts (Circle of Grace, Circle of Virtue, Humility and Modesty) from the*

handout on it.

4. *On the first piece of large paper, write a make-believe letter from a reader seeking help from an advice columnist about their struggles with modesty.*
5. *On the second large piece of paper, write a make-believe advice of the columnist on how to live the modesty concept in daily life.*
6. *Bring the groups back together and have them report on their columns. Which part was harder to do? Consider displaying it in the classroom.*

Final Discussion -

What are some ways a young person can seek help if he/she is pressured to be immodest or experience a violation of other personal boundaries?

Give the youth a chance to respond to the question. Write the responses on the board. Prompt the following responses.

- Listen to your gut, it is the Holy Spirit prompting you that something is wrong. Learn to recognize the settings and interactions that can get you into uncomfortable situations.
Examples: There is alcohol at a party which makes you uncomfortable. Someone dares you to send a semi-nude photo. A classmate wants you to join in on defaming another classmate on a social network site.
 - When someone pressures you, try to take yourself out of the situation.
Example: Prepare a response to get out of difficult situations. Discuss possible responses with your parent or trusted adult.
 - You can free yourself from unhealthy relationships by seeking help from a trusted adult.
 - Tell someone who can help you. Talk to someone you trust – parent, professional, counselor, or other trusted adults.
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Closing Prayer:

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

**God help me slow down
and be present to Your everlasting love.
Help me have REAL conversations with You
that guide and heal my brokenness.
Cultivate in my heart Your truth
and help me respond to Your Grace.
Give me courage to reject the lie
that You are a "distant" God.
Bless me with the gift of discernment,
knowing Your compassion and love is not relative
but eternal.
Your greatest desire from me
is my sincere "yes".**

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 worshiping You.
Amen.

Closing Prayer

God help me slow down
and be present to Your everlasting love.
Help me have REAL conversations with You
that guide and heal my brokenness.
Cultivate in my heart Your truth
and help me respond to Your Grace.
Give me courage to reject the lie
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Bless me with the gift of discernment,
knowing Your compassion and love is not relative
but eternal.
Your greatest desire from me
is my sincere "yes".

Amen

What is your Modesty IQ?

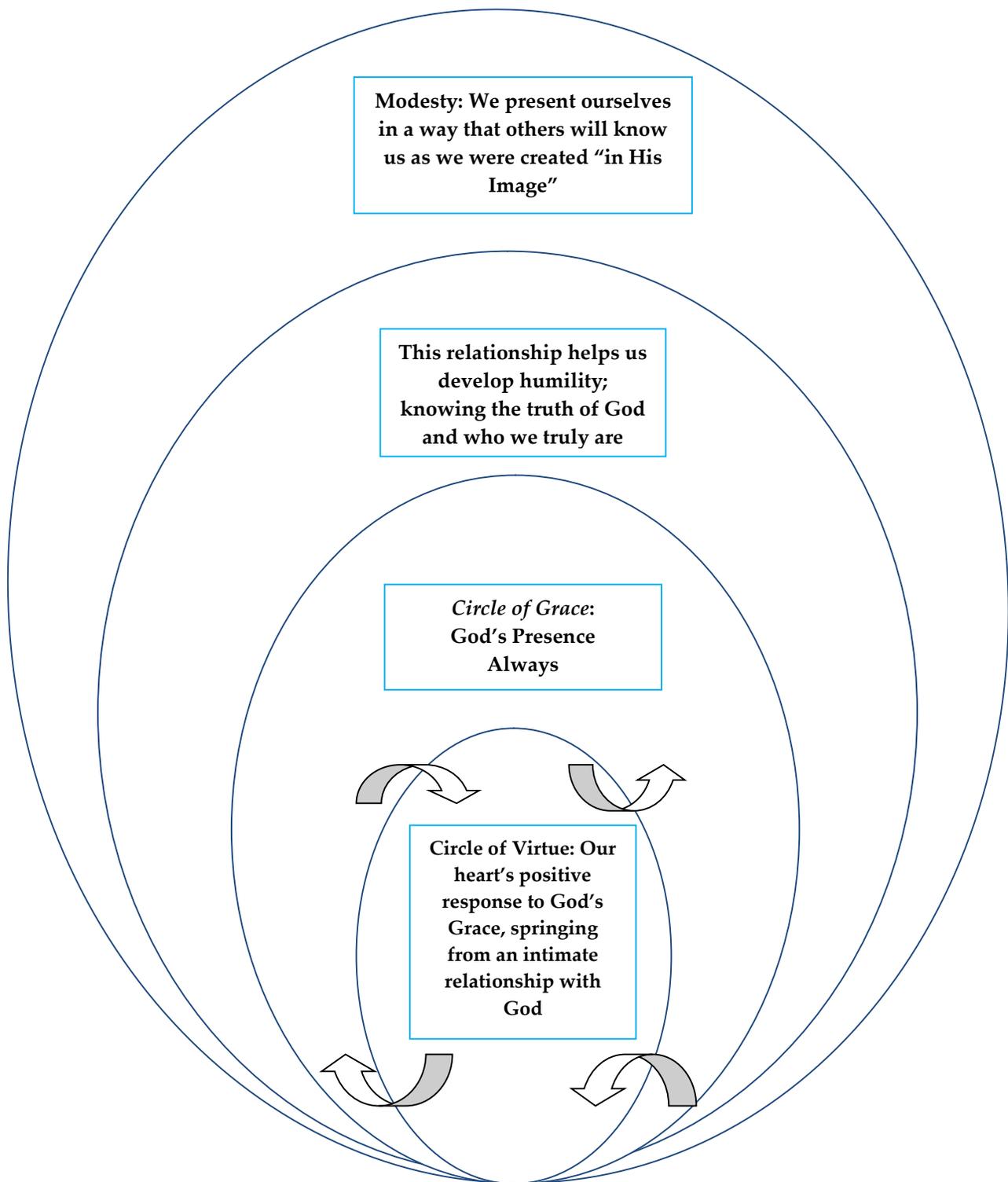
Complete the following questions. Be prepared to discuss them in the large group.

1. The *Circle of Grace* is really someone's personal space.
True False
2. The *Circle of Virtue* allows someone to discern right from wrong in difficult situations.
True False
3. Define humility:
4. Define modesty:
5. Modesty protects the "intimate center of the person".
True False
6. Modesty is only about the type of clothing you wear.
True False
7. There is freedom in being modest.
True False
8. There is nothing wrong with showing off your physical attributes.
True False
9. What does popular culture say about modesty?
10. List 5 ways youth are pressured not to be modest:

What is your Modesty IQ?

Answer Guide for Leaders

1. The Circle of Grace is really someone's personal space.
False, Circle of Grace is much more than "personal space". It is the love and goodness of God that always surrounds each of us. It is space that is always shared with God who longs for an intimate relationship with each of us.
2. The Circle of Virtue allows someone to discern right from wrong in difficult situations.
True, but it is much more. Circle of Virtue is our response to the invitation of God's grace by cultivating goodness and virtue in our lives
3. Define humility: Humility is based on knowledge of the truth about God, oneself and others. The more we truly know God, the more we realize who we truly are... each second of our lives is held in existence by the loving hand of God.
4. Define modesty: Catechism of the Catholic Church states that modesty protects the intimate center of the person. This intimate core holds our true divine desire to love completely (body, mind and soul) in union with God's will and love for us.
5. Modesty protects the "intimate center of the person".
True, see answer 4
6. Modesty is only about the type of clothing you wear.
False, one may think modesty is a response to outward influences such as faith, parents or culture. True modesty stems from an inward influence. This inward influence directs our appearance and interactions with the world. It has a direct correlation to our relationship with God and our understanding of being made in His image. In the image of God he created them male and female, and found it very good. (Genesis 1:27-31)
7. There is freedom in being modest.
True. Freedom to be who you really are and not what media/culture dictates you to be.
8. There is nothing wrong with showing off your physical attributes.
False, there is nothing wrong with wanting to look your best! But highlighting or accentuating one particular part of your body, in an immodest way, does not give honor to your true self (examples: low cut blouses, very short shirts, shirtless or pants that hang below the waist.) You want people to remember you for who you truly are and not a particular part of your physical appearance
9. What does popular culture say about modesty?
Its motto is "if you got it, flaunt it". The key word is "it". Culture deceives youth into believing that their body is separate from who they are. It encourages them to believe the lie that what they do with their body does not have an impact on a person. This disconnect causes them to lose sight of who they really are, a child of God.
10. List 5 ways youth are pressured not to be modest:
Write the youth's answers on the board.



*Intimate Center of a Person:
How it influences the outward expression of our true selves*

Grade 9-12 Alternate Evaluation

Date _____

Parish/School _____ City _____

Leader _____ Number of young people in class _____

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 will be able to describe Circle of Virtue.
4. YES _____ NO _____ Young People understand how having an intimate relationship with God helps us know who we truly are.
5. YES _____ NO _____ Young People understand that modesty comes from an inner desire to present oneself in a way that others will know us as we are created, "in His Image".
6. YES _____ NO _____ Young People will identify ways in which they are pressured to be immodest, not honoring who they truly are.
7. YES _____ NO _____ Young People will know what action to take when pressured in to being immodest or other boundary violations.

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, Director of Religious Education, or Director of Youth Ministry.