

# Circle of Grace

Safe Environment Training

Social Media:

*Can You be Both Savvy and Safe?*

Grade 11 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org), or <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>

## *Grade 11 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/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.
- The 9-12 curriculum is formatted to be used in two ways:
  - ✓ The traditional way: lessons taught to the identified grade.  
The lesson for grade 12 is only to be taught to seniors.
  - ✓ The second way: select any one of the alternate lessons or retreat 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*. Lesson specific parent information should be handed out as directed. 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.

# *Social Media: Can You be Both Savvy and Safe?*

*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 teaching revealed in the Creed that applies to 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 internet/social media safety is important.
2. Recognize the key ways one can be deceived by an internet/social media interaction.
3. Recognize ways internet/ social media interactions or internet sites can damage one's relationship with God, self and others.
4. Understand the connection between internet/social media activity and your *Circle of Grace*.
5. Recognize the need for healthy boundaries, when involved in social media/ internet activity.
6. Recognize ways youth are pressured to participate in questionable internet/social media activity.
7. Know appropriate responses when one is 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. Social Media: Can You be Both Savvy and Safe Quiz for each student (see the end of the lesson).
3. Leader answer guide to the quiz for each student (see the end of the lesson)
4. Cultivating Virtue and Blocking Virtue diagrams for each student
5. Whiteboard or chalkboard
6. Props for skits

## 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

Most American youth are savvy when it comes to social media and technology but are they safe? Today we are going to talk about being savvy and safe with social media/technology and its many tools. These electronic tools include phones, tablets, internet games and computers. Many people use their phones or computers to go to social networking sites, blogs, micro blogs, to play games and to send messages, photos, or texts. Some of these tools use the internet and some don't. All of these tools can help people feel connected or disconnected from the world around them. Sometimes these human connections reflect the love of God and neighbor but many times they do not.

*Make a list of all the tools mentioned above (phones, notepads, internet games, computers and any other ones the group identifies) on the board. Ask youth to brainstorm all the reasons they use these tools. List the responses under the appropriate tool, example: communication could be listed under all the tools. Getting information, entertainment, escape, or boredom may be only listed on some. Now have the youth identify positive (P) and negative (N) activities under each reason.*

Examples:

- **Communication:** P - texting a friend who just lost their grandparent, N - texting a vulgar statement to unpopular classmate (cyber bullying)
- **Entertainment:** P - playing a word game on your tablet/phone, N - playing a violent and sexually explicit internet game with anonymous players (objectifying people)
- **Boredom/Escape:** P - You search the internet for information regarding your favorite hobby (movies, sports, cooking), N - You start chatting on a social network site with someone you have never met. You go to a questionable site and discover pornography.

Summarize: It is important to recognize the positive and negative ways one can use social media/technology. Recognizing the positive ways to use technology/social media can assist one in using the tools more appropriately in the future. Recognizing the negative ways technology/social media can be used help us avoid potential harm or problems in the future.

**Opening Activity:** Social Media: Can You be Both Savvy and Safe?

*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:**

Were you surprised by any of the statistics on the quiz? Why might one communicate something using technology/social media that they would not say in person?

*Allow for a few responses. Write them on the board.*

Let's discuss 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 (Distribute and review the Summary of Key Concepts in front of lesson)**

It is important that young people understand the relationship between the Circle of Virtue and the *Circle of Grace*. The *Circle of Grace* is always present and never leaves us. Our Circle of Virtue is our positive response to our *Circle of Grace* and can change due to our free will. When we participate in negative behaviors, we damage our ability to fully participate in God's grace and stunt the development of virtue in our lives.

*Distribute to each student a copy of the Cultivating Virtue and Blocking Virtue Diagram for each student found at the end of the lesson. Write and review the definitions below on the board.*

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

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

**Cyber Bullying:** The use of the internet, cell phones or other electronic devices to send or post texts or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.

**Objectification:** the seeing and/or treating a person, usually a woman, as an object

**Sexting:** Sexually explicit images or texts sent by way of the phone or other electronic devices. There may be legal consequences if one or both persons involved are minors.

**Pornography:** 1: The depiction of erotic behavior (pictures/writing/on-line or video) intended to cause sexual excitement. 2: material (as books, video or photograph) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement 3: the depiction of acts in a sensational manner so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction, *Merriam Webster*.

**Catfishing:** luring someone into a relationship by means of a fictional online persona.

So, what do these concepts really mean and how do they connect to our relationship with God?

### **Activity**

1. Divide the youth into two groups.
2. Give each group one of the diagrams (*Cultivating Virtue and Blocking Virtue*).
3. Instruct them to develop a skit to reflect aspects of the diagram. Advise the Blocking Virtue group to portray the inappropriate behavior generally and not include any specific inappropriate words or actions. They are encouraged to add additional blocking behaviors to the blank arrows. Below are a few examples. Youth may come up with other examples.
  - ✓ Example 1: A teen decides to leave a party at a friend's house because the group is posting cruel messages on a classmate's social network page.
  - ✓ Example 2: A teen has been going to inappropriate websites. Lately, he has been distant from friends and family and uninterested in normal activities. When his parents or friends ask what is wrong, he gets angry or acts like he doesn't care. Deep down, he thinks he may have a problem but is embarrassed to talk about his secret online behavior.
  - ✓ Example 3: You and your friends decide to message a classmate posing as a teen another school who is romantically interested in them (catfishing)
4. Provide them with props for the skits.
5. Each group performs their skit for the class.

Summarize: Ask the following questions:

1. How can posting a cruel message (a negative/blocking behavior) damage our relationships with others? With God?
2. Let's review virtues: The Theological virtues are faith, hope and charity. The Cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. Which virtue(s) would help you walk away from a bad situation like posting cruel messages?
3. How did going to inappropriate websites (a negative/blocking behavior) damage the young man's relationship with his family? With his friends? With God?

4. Which virtue(s) would help you avoid seeking out inappropriate websites?
5. Which virtue(s) would enable you to ask a parent or friend for help if you were finding it difficult to stop going to inappropriate websites?
6. Do you think these situations happen in real life?
7. What are safe ways to resist participating in tech/social media behaviors that can block God's grace?

*Allow time for various responses then post some of their responses on the board.*

### **Final Discussion -**

1. Where or to whom can a teen go for help if he/she is feeling pressure to participate in internet/social media behaviors that violate his/her personal boundaries?
2. Where or to whom can a teen go for help if he/she is feeling pressure to participate in internet/social media behaviors which violate another's personal boundaries?

*Allow time for various responses then post some of their responses on the board. Summarize and add to their responses with the following recommendations.*

- 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.
- When someone pressures you, try to take yourself out of the situation.
- Take a break from social media so you can discern the situation without negative input.
- If you are worried that a relationship is unhealthy, talk to someone you trust – parent, professional, counselor, or other trusted adults.
- Talking about it with an adult you trust will help you identify what might be unhealthy in the relationship and any needed steps to be taken.

### **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  
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

# Social Media: Can You be Both Savvy and Safe? Quiz

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

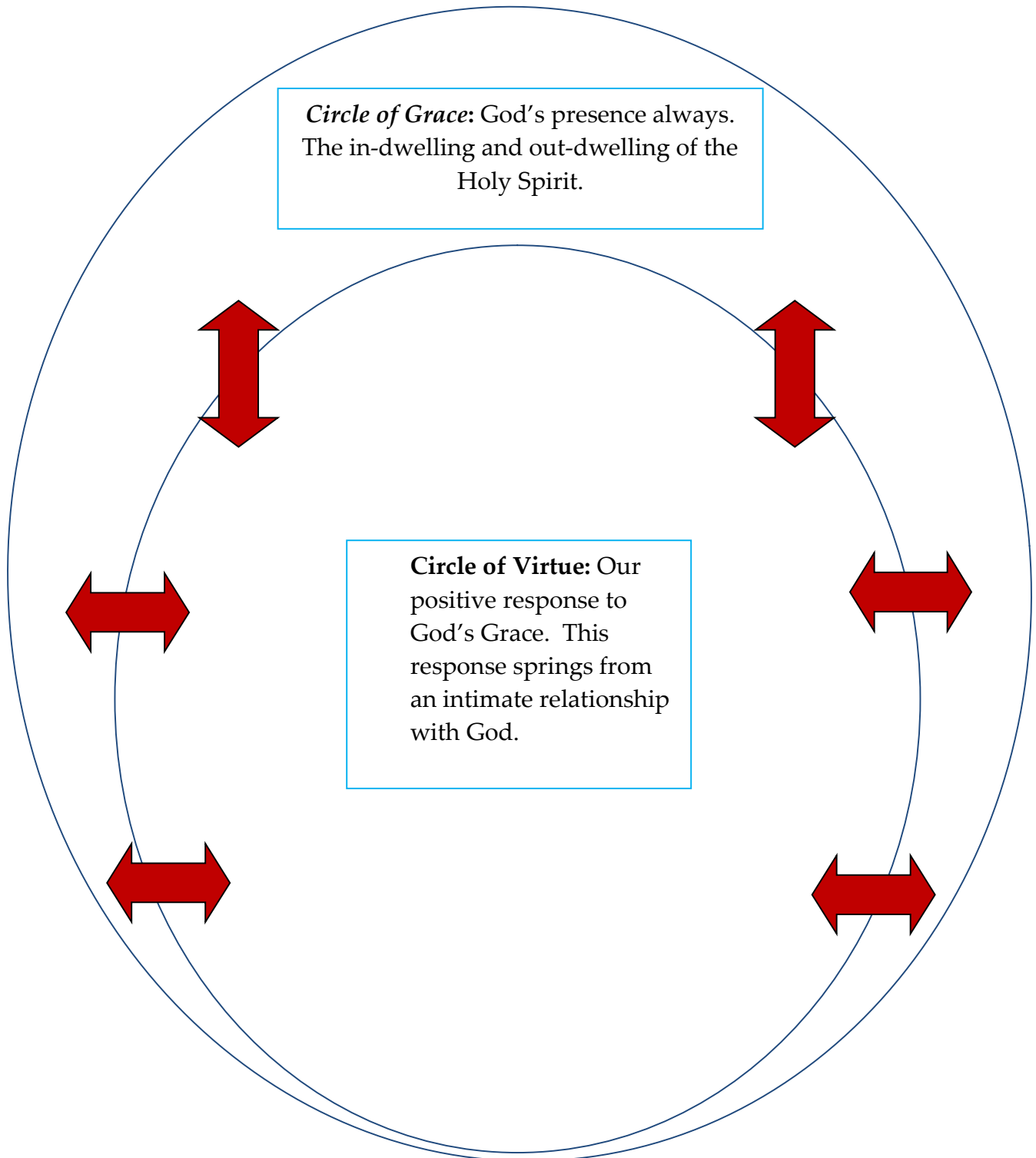
1. Being “internet/media savvy” automatically means one is always safe when using technology.  
True      False
2. Many youth are exposed to pornography online that they are not seeking. A 2018 meta-analysis found that one in ten youth under 18 are exposed to unwanted sexual material online.  
True      False
3. A US study indicates that of youth in late adolescence, 80.3 percent reported accessing pornography.  
True      False
4. Define Objectification:
5. Define Cyberbullying:
6. According to cyberbullying research, parents of kids between the ages of 10 and 18, reported that 15 percent of children have been cyberbullied.  
True      False
7. What is “catfishing”? How can it affect teens?
8. As of January 2020, 44 percent of all internet users in the U.S. said they have experienced online harassment.  
True      False
9. What does popular culture say about pornography?
10. List 5 ways youth are pressured to participate in unsafe online or electronic activity:

# Social Media: Can You be Both Savvy and Safe? Quiz

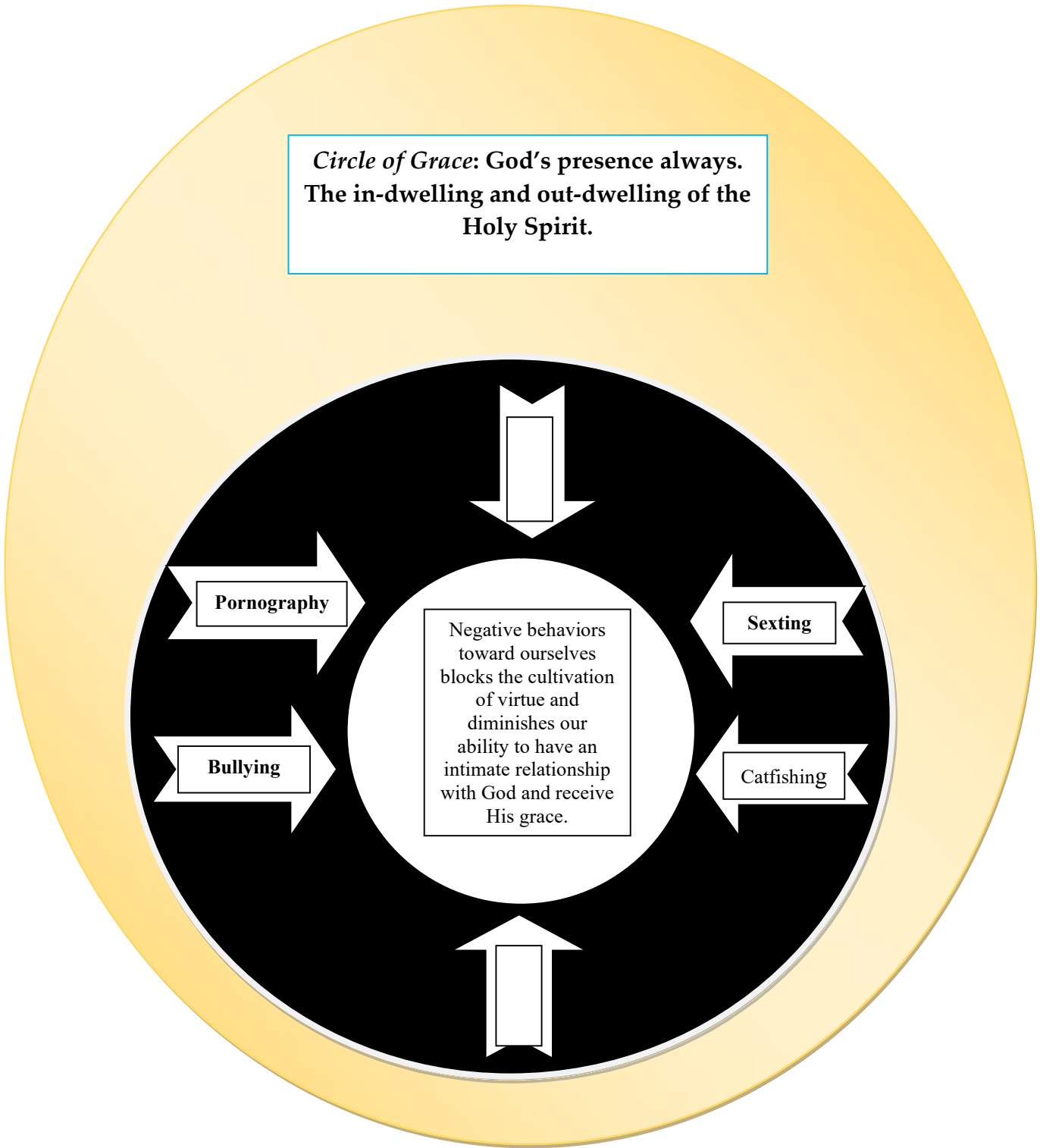
## Answer Guide for Leaders

- 1. Being “internet savvy” automatically means one is always safe when using technology.**  
*False, being savvy does not mean someone is safe. Safety comes when one has the desire and ability to discern what is moral and good. Example: One may be the best at navigating the internet and installing new applications but believe the new person they met on the internet is who they say they are.*
- 2. Many youth are exposed to pornography online that they are not seeking. A 2018 meta-analysis found that one in ten youth under 18 are exposed to unwanted sexual material online.**  
*False. One in five youth are exposed to unwanted sexual material online. (ACT Youth 2020)*
- 3. A US study indicates that of youth in late adolescence, 80.3 percent reported accessing pornography.**  
*True. (Astle et al., 2020).*
- 4. Define Objectification:** *An attitude in which women are objects rated by size, shape, and harmony of body parts. Can women objectify men? Objectifying women/men leads to emotional unavailability and dissatisfaction. Discuss why this is not consistent with “being made in God’s Image”.*
- 5. Define Cyber Bullying:** *Use of the internet, cell phone or other electronic devices to send or post texts or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person.*
- 6. According to our cyberbullying research, parents of kids between the ages of 10 and 18, reported that 15 percent of children have been cyberbullied.**  
*False. 21 percent have been cyberbullied. (Psychology Today 2022)*
- 7. What is “Catfishing”? How can it affect teens?**  
*Catfishing is luring someone into a relationship by means of a fictional online persona. Teens can become depressed/angry when they realize the person is not who they thought they were.*
- 8. As of January 2020, 44 percent of all internet users in the U.S. said they have experienced online harassment.** *True. The most prevalent type of online harassment was offensive name-calling, making up 37 percent of all incidents. (Psychology Today 2022)*
- 9. What does popular culture say about pornography?**  
*Encourage them to identify subtle (i.e.: T.V. shows, advertizing) and the obvious (pornography website) ways that popular culture promotes a disrespectful and degrading view of sexuality and the human person.*
- 10. List 5 ways youth are pressured to participate in unsafe online or electronic activity:**

# Cultivating Virtue Diagram



# Blocking Virtue Diagram



# 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 different technological tools.
3. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ Young People will be able to describe different technological tools as well as the positive and negative ways they are used.
4. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ Young People understand that negative technological behavior can block our openness to God's grace.
5. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ Young People will identify ways in which they are pressured to participate in negative technological behaviors.
6. YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_ Young People can identify what action to take when negative technological behaviors occur.

*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.**