

Teaching *Circle of Grace* in Family Faith Formation



Having a gathered session with parents and multiple ages could be fun! If current COVID regulations allow, it could even be a way to get communities that have been apart for a while due to COVID to come together for an evening. (You might have to divide it into smaller groups, grades, families... to deal with COVID regulations for meetings and do the event multiple times.)

Since *Circle of Grace* is copyrighted, below is an approved solution that would meet your needs and the expectations of USCCB yearly audits. The Circle of Grace family event could be done easily in a gathered session. The lessons can be taught from an hour to 90 minutes, or more if you would like to make it a mini- family retreat.

1. **The session can open with families joined in prayer.** (Parents and children together.)
 - Opening prayer and welcome by the pastor/DRE/pastoral minister. (In COVID times, it might include discussion of how important community is in God's plan.)
 - Short teaching on the principles of COG:
 - Circle of Grace reminds us of God's real presence in our lives, respect for self and others,
 - The sacredness of each person and how relationships are called to be experiences of divine love.
 - Circle of Grace helps us learn skills for good decision making and reminds us of God's presence and assistance when we are facing difficult and confusing situations

OR

- An opening with a smaller group or group of younger students and parents could also include having everyone stand up and help visualize their Circle of Grace.

Circle of Grace

Raise your hands above your head and then bring your outstretched arms slowly down.

Extend your arms

in front of you

embrace all of the space around you,

then slowly

reach down to your feet.

Knowing God is in this space with you,

this is your

Circle of Grace.

you are in it.

2. **For the main part of the meeting (1 hour), you should have parents and students separate.**
 - **Students** could be separated by grades if you have enough adult catechists or leaders, or by age groups (K-3, 4-5, 6-8). If you are doing mixed-age groups, you would pick the

appropriate lesson for the ages of the students that you have. If you have a very small group of students and need to keep them in one group, you would still choose the lesson that is most appropriate. (Ex. four children in K, 2 in gr. 3, 1 in gr. 6, you might pick 2nd or 3rd grade lesson.) It's important to remember that whatever lesson you choose, they need to teach it as it is written, in its entirety, so the lesson can count for the USCCB audit. So if you have a multi-age group, choose a lesson for one grade, don't combine or alter lessons. Being able to have multi-age groups can provide flexibility to meet the needs of different size parishes and programs.

- **Parents** could discuss a broad range of topics, depending on the parish needs.
 - i. This could be a time of teaching the parents on an adult level about
 - The importance of child protection
 - Helping their child realize that God is always with them and wants them to be safe more than we can imagine.
 - How to help your children learn and practice healthy boundaries.
 - Teach parents about who 'Trusted Adults' are and explain that their children will be asking for their help choosing adults they could go to for help in case their parent isn't available. The parent needs to make sure the Trusted Adults chosen by the child are appropriate (no superheroes, pets, grandparents who have passed away or adults who don't have good judgement themselves!) It is okay to choose an adult who doesn't live in the city if the child has regular contact by phone or social media.
 - Pass out the parent letter for their children's grades that talk about what their children are learning with their grades or small groups.
 - It's a great time to pass out the appropriate Parents First newsletters for their children's grade levels.

OR

- ii. This is also an opportunity to have an expert speaker come talk to the adults about any type of safety that the pastor/DRE think would be good for the adults. Examples- bullying, sexting, pornography and youth, safeguarding your children on the computer, etc. (Sometimes police departments, sheriffs, CPS, your diocesan staff and other community institutions have speakers who can help. Or you may choose to show a really great video or YouTube from a national speaker on one of the topics.)
 - If you want to give the full time to the speaker, still cover #4-6 from above, even if it is only by passing out handouts.

3. For the closing of the evening (Parents and children together):

- Please have parents and children share what they have learned, followed by a closing prayer and dismissal.

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