

Dear Parents,

Out of concern for all God's people and in response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, we have a **curriculum for the safe environment education of children and young people supported and mandated by the Diocese of Arlington.**

*Dioceses are to maintain "safe environment" programs which the diocesan bishop deems to be in accord with Catholic moral principles. They are to be conducted cooperatively with parents, civil authorities, educators, and community organizations to provide education and training for minors, parents, ministers, educators, and others about ways to sustain and foster a safe environment for minors. Dioceses are to make clear to clergy and members of the community the standards of conduct for clergy and other persons with regard to their conduct with minors. (Article 12 - Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People)*

**This curriculum is called Circle of Grace.** It is meant to supplement and be integrated into the excellent programs and curricula for the formation of children and young people in our schools and religious education programs. Circle of Grace aims to equip our children and young people by arming them with essential knowledge and skills grounded in the richness of our faith. This curriculum helps children and young people to understand their own (and other's) dignity in mind, body, and spirit.

### **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 children and young people to recognize God's love by helping them to understand that each of us lives and moves in a Circle of Grace.

### **Why is it important to help our children 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 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 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 protection programs?**

Many protection programs focus on “stranger danger”; however, up to ninety percent (90%) of the time the perpetrator of abuse is known to the child or young person such as a relative or family friend. Circle of Grace 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. It has a strong parent component throughout the curriculum.

Circle of Grace is replacing the previous program, Formation in Christian Chastity, which we have taught for years. The Circle of Grace lessons will be presented to students in their Religion classes **during the week of November 17, 2025**. Please review the documents available at the following links, as they should answer any questions you may have:

[Circle of Grace - Key Concepts](#)

[Circle of Grace - FAQ Page for Parents](#)

[Circle of Grace - Parenting and Sexuality, the Basics](#)

[Diocesan Information on Circle of Grace](#)

Thank you, and God bless you,

Danny Costa  
Principal