

Grades 6-8 Safe Environment lesson 2025-2026

Theme: Our Dignity as Children of God

Read Psalm 139:1-18 together in class:

For the leader. A psalm of David.

*LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.*

*You sift through my travels and my rest;
with all my ways you are familiar.*

*Even before a word is on my tongue,
LORD, you know it all.*

*Behind and before you encircle me
and rest your hand upon me.*

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
far too lofty for me to reach.*

*Where can I go from your spirit?
From your presence, where can I flee?*

*If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
if I lie down in Sheol, there you are.*

*If I take the wings of dawn
and dwell beyond the sea,*

*Even there your hand guides me,
your right hand holds me fast.*

*If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me,
and night shall be my light"—*

*Darkness is not dark for you,
and night shines as the day.*

Darkness and light are but one.

*You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.*

*I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;
wonderful are your works!*

My very self you know.

My bones are not hidden from you,

*When I was being made in secret,
fashioned in the depths of the earth.*

*Your eyes saw me unformed;
in your book all are written down;
my days were shaped, before one came to be.*

*How precious to me are your designs, O God;
how vast the sum of them!*

*Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sands;
when I complete them, still you are with me.*

Objectives:

1. Students will understand their dignity as children of God.
2. Students will understand virtue and vice.
3. Students will know practical steps for protecting themselves from inappropriate actions.
4. Students will know how to communicate their concerns.

Our Dignity as Children of God

Every human person is created in the image of God. This amazing dignity bestowed on the human race was raised even higher when God became man and died out of love for the salvation of every person. Because of the dignity with which we were created, and the love by which we were redeemed on the cross, all people deserve to be revered and treated with dignity. We have an obligation to uphold the dignity of ourselves and of one another, especially the most helpless among us (children both before and after birth, the sick, the poor and the elderly).

Virtue

***Human virtues** are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good.*

The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1804)

The Cardinal Virtues

The Cardinal Virtues are the virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude. The word Cardinal comes from the Latin word *cardine*, which means hinge. They are called the “hinge” virtues because every other natural virtue is based upon and grows from the Cardinal Virtues.

Prudence: discovering our true good and choosing the right means of achieving it

Fortitude/Courage: firmness in the pursuit of the good

Justice: giving the proper due to God and neighbor

Temperance: moderating the attraction of the pleasures of the senses

Vice

“A vice is a bad moral habit. Technically a vice is the strong tendency to a gravely sinful act acquired through frequent repetition of the same act. Qualities that characterize a vice are spontaneity, ease and satisfaction in doing what is morally wrong” (Modern Catholic Dictionary, John A. Hardin, S.J., 561). While virtue forms a person, vice “de-forms” a person.

“A habit acquired by repeated sin in violation of the proper norms of human morality. The vices are often linked with the seven capital sins. Repentance for sin and confession may restore grace to a soul, but the removal of the ingrained disposition to sin or vice requires much effort and self-denial, until the contrary virtue is acquired.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Glossary)

The seven capital sins are: pride, covetousness, envy, anger, gluttony, lust and sloth.

Students should avoid adults who seek to do the following:

1. Discourage other adults from participating or monitoring youth activities.
2. Frequently want to be alone with young people.
3. Are more excited to be with young people than adults.
4. Give gifts to children or young people, often without permission.
5. Seek contact that is not respectful of a young person’s comfort zone, for example with unwanted hugs.
6. Frequently want to wrestle or tickle.
7. Think the rules do not apply to them.
8. Allow young people to engage in activities their parents would not allow.
9. Use bad language or tell inappropriate jokes and stories.

10. Show or share inappropriate pictures.

Avoiding Potential Danger

Avoiding potential danger means that we must be careful to avoid situations that could make us vulnerable to harm. How can we avoid potential harm?

1. By using the "2 by 2" principle. When with an adult or with people your own age (including dates) always be with a friend on whom you can depend.
2. By making sure your parents know of any meetings or correspondence (such as email) with an adult.
3. By talking to your parents. Let them know where you are at all times.
4. By avoiding drugs and alcohol. You are never less safe than when you are intoxicated or impaired. Avoid others who are intoxicated or impaired. Even people you know well cannot be trusted in that state.
5. By dressing modestly.
6. By being visible when you are with someone, whether someone your age or an adult, other people should be able to see you.

Communicating Your Concerns

Communicating your concerns means telling someone in authority when you are uncomfortable with a situation or a person.

Pay attention to your own intuitions/feelings. Only by communicating concerns can we use our knowledge to create a safe environment. Remember the following:

1. If you are worried that someone is being inappropriate with a friend, tell someone in authority. Be a true friend even at the risk of upsetting him or her by "overreacting".
2. If you have sought help from someone in authority and that person does not take action, tell another person in authority.
3. If someone acts inappropriately with you, it is not your fault. Do not fear being blamed.
4. There is a network of help at home, at school, in the Church, and in various other organizations. Specifically:
 - Talk to your parents or a trusted adult family member about your concerns
 - Talk to a church official, school principal, coach, counselor, police officer or someone else in authority whom you trust