



### *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 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 understand how very special they are and how relationships in life are called to be sacred. Understanding this can help protect the special person they are and to be respectful of others.

As adults, we strive to provide a safe and protective environment for our children, and we are responsible to help children understand and respect their own dignity and that of others. A truly safe and protective environment is one where children recognize when they are safe or unsafe, and know how to bring their concerns, fears, and uncertainties to the trusted adults in their lives.

### *What do our children need to know about the Circle of Grace?*

First, they need to know where their Circle of Grace is, and we demonstrate this by raising our hands above our heads, bringing our arms slowly down, extending our arms in front of and then behind us, then reaching down to our feet. In essence we are creating a “bubble” around us – a Circle of Grace.

Next, they need to know that God is “present” in this Circle of Grace and that He helps us know what and who does and does not belong in our Circle of Grace.

Our children need to know that any behavior that disrespects the dignity of themselves or others does not belong in our Circle of Grace (hitting, slapping, pushing, bullying, and of course any inappropriate sexual behaviors.) And they need to know that they can and should speak to a trusted adult about any person who comes into their Circle of Grace uninvited and makes them feel uncomfortable.