

Safe Environment Curriculum Alignments with Roman Catholic Theological & Catechetical Guidelines

*Approved by Archbishop John C. Nienstedt on November 20, 2008 for use in the
Catholic schools and parishes of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.*

INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the foundational doctrinal and catechetical principles common for all of the educational materials that support the Protection of Child and Youth Initiative for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. It also includes specific content alignments for the recommended age-specific safe environment curricula. These are offered to assist catechists, parents, pastors, and catechetical leaders in parishes and schools as they continue to incorporate the safe environment lessons as natural opportunities to connect faith and life through their ongoing efforts in religious education and faith formation.

This section is composed of the following subsections and documents:

1. Common Doctrinal and Catechetical Foundations for Safe Environment Materials
 - a) Principles for Child Protection Catechesis
 - b) National Doctrinal and Catechetical Guidelines Common for Recommended Safe Environment Materials: the *National Directory for Catechesis*; the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*; and *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living: Guidelines for Curriculum Design and Publication*.
2. Content Alignments with the *Religion Standards for Catholic Education in Kindergarten through Grade 8 in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis* (2005) and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994/1997) unless otherwise noted
 - a) *Talking About Touching*, Committee for Children, 2001 (Preschool through Grade 4)
 - b) *Family Safety Fair Kit*, KidWISE, Inc, 2006 (Preschool through Grade 4)
 - c) *NetSmartz: Know the Rules*, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (Preschool through Grade 6)
 - d) *Out of Harm's Way*, KidWISE, Inc, 2006 (Grades 5 through 8)
 - e) *Power of Parents: Real World and Internet Safety*, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (Grades 7 and 8)
 - f) *Breaking the Silence*, Diocese of Orange, 2004 with the *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*, USCCB, 2008 (Grades 9 through 12)
 - g) *Creating Safe and Sacred Places*, St Mary's Press, 2003 with Catholic theological teachings (Grades 10 through 12)

All of the items listed above are also available in an electronic version through the Archdiocesan Website at www.archspm.org/pcyi/. See "Reference Key" at end of this section for explanations of acronyms.

Principles for Child Protection Catechesis

1. Each person is uniquely made in the image and likeness of God. God is love; therefore, each person is made in the image of love and created to act in love. Our bodies are sacred and holy.
2. God lives in a family or a community which we call the Blessed Trinity. Persons are created to live in community, the smallest and most intimate of which is family. Family, in God's image, respects and cherishes the uniqueness and life of each of its members. The Church supports parents as the first educators in faith through their home. Parishes and schools are partners with the family in educating, nurturing and protecting children.
3. Each person has dignity and must be treated with respect. We show our respect for each other in our language, behavior, and interactions with each other. Caring, concern and empathy for each other must be a hallmark of our lives as followers of Jesus. Because of the dignity of each person, our right to respect includes the right to privacy, especially privacy for our own bodies. Our right to respect also includes age-appropriate teaching regarding our bodies.
4. Touch is an integral part of being human. Touch can be safe, unsafe or unwanted. Safe touch, appropriate physical affection, is that kind of touch which is good for the person's body, makes one feel cared for, loved and important. Unsafe and unwanted touch makes a person feel uncomfortable and unhappy.
5. God has blessed every person with the gift of choice. This human freedom does not, however, entitle the person to say or do just anything. Our choices affect other people and sometimes bad choices harm innocent people through no fault of their own.
6. Some actions or behaviors are wrong. Some actions or behaviors between adults, between adults and children, and between children are wrong. Some behavior that harms self or others physically, psychologically, emotionally, or spiritually is sinful.
7. There are good secrets and bad secrets. There is good play and bad play. Good secrets and good play experiences do not hurt people and can be shared. We never hide bad or confusing secrets or play experiences.
8. Good and loving human relationships and friendships can help us understand ourselves, God and others. Some people misuse friendship and harm others.
9. Every person has the right to be safe. Children have the right to be protected from anything and anyone who may harm them. Adults have the responsibility to make the environment in which children live as safe as possible. That includes teaching children and young people proper, adequate coping and safety skills which will enable them to be safe and healthy.
10. Parents and teachers have the responsibility to assist children to identify a number of people in their lives to whom they can talk openly and honestly. Children must be taught that if help is not received to keep telling other trusted adults until someone helps them.

National Doctrinal and Catechetical Foundations Common for Recommended Safe Environment Materials

In every age the Holy Spirit invites people to know and love Jesus Christ more deeply through the Church. This is accomplished in how the Church lives out her mission as well as in what she teaches. “Availing herself of the human sciences, which are always necessary, the Church seeks to discover the meaning of the present situation within the perspective of the history of salvation. Her judgments on reality are always a diagnosis of the need for mission” (GDC, 32). The Protection of Children and Youth Initiative is situated within this mission of evangelization and catechesis for our time.

The following excerpts from three key documents from United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) highlight the elements of Catholic teaching and catechetical process that are echoed in the safe environment resources. The national guidelines quoted are the:

- a) *National Directory for Catechesis* (USCCB, 2005)
- b) *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (USCCB, revised June, 2005)
- c) *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living: Guidelines for Curriculum Design and Publication* (USCCB, 2008)

References to other related Church documents are also included as they were provided in the original USCCB documents.

Note on Construction: The following are excerpts from the full document from the USCCB that most directly relate to the content and process of the safe environment programs. The numbering and language of the experts are direct quotes from the original documents.

National Directory for Catechesis (USCCB, 2005)

Inculturation of the Gospel

Just as “the Word became flesh / and made his dwelling among us” [Jn 1:14] so too the Good News, the word of God proclaimed to the nations, must take root in the life situations of the hearers of the word. Inculturation is precisely the insertion of the Gospel message into cultures. Inculturation is a requirement for evangelization, a path toward full evangelization. It is the process by which “catechesis ‘takes flesh’ in the various cultures [CT, no. 53]” (NDC, 21.B).

Inculturation involves listening to the culture of the people for an echo of the word of God. It involves the discernment of the presence of authentic Gospel values or openness to authentic Gospel values in the culture (NDC, 21.C).

God’s Own Methodology

God’s Revelation is the self-disclosure of the loving communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in which he makes known the mystery of his divine plan. Since the ultimate purpose of his plan is human salvation [GDC, no. 139], God’s own methodology engages persons and communities in light of their circumstances and their capacity to accept and interpret Revelation. God’s self-communication is realized gradually through his actions and his words. It is most fully achieved in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. The history of this self-

revelation itself documents the method by which God transmits the content of Revelation as contained in Scripture and Tradition. This is the pedagogy of God. It is the source and model of the pedagogy of faith [cf DV, no. 15]. (NDC, 28).

The Dignity of the Human Person

The dignity of the human person is initially rooted in our creation by God in his image and likeness. The divine image is present in every person. The Father has created human beings in Christ, and in Christ we come to know ourselves and our exalted vocation. Our redemption in Christ intensifies our inherent dignity...In Christ, God reveals how we human beings are to live our lives. God created human beings with the freedom to initiate and direct their own actions and to shape their own lives...This human freedom does not, however, entitle the person to say or do just anything. Human beings are not fully self-sufficient. We are capable of sin. Yet Christ redeemed us from the sin that held us in bondage and set us free...Human freedom, therefore is the capacity to choose good or evil. The more one chooses to do evil, on the other hand, is an abuse of freedom and leads to the “slavery of sin [Romans 6:17]” (NDC, 41.A).

Moral Formation in the Gospel Message

The Church has the responsibility to form the members of Christ’s Body in the light of the Gospel message and to teach them how to apply Christian moral principles to contemporary problems in specific and practical ways... (NDC, 44).

Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (USCCB, 2005)

PREAMBLE

Let there now be no doubt or confusion on anyone’s part: For us, your bishops, our obligation to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse flows from the mission and example given to us by Jesus Christ himself, in whose name we serve.

As we work to restore trust, we are reminded how Jesus showed constant care for the vulnerable. He inaugurated his ministry with these words of the Prophet Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. (Lk 4:18-19)

In Matthew 25, the Lord, in his commission to his apostles and disciples, told them that whenever they show mercy and compassion to the least ones, they show it to him.

Jesus extended this care in a tender and urgent way to children, rebuking his disciples for keeping them away from him: “Let the children come to me” (Mt 19:14). And he uttered a grave warning that for anyone who would lead the little ones astray, it would be better for

such a person “to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Mt 18:6).

ARTICLE 12

Dioceses/eparchies are to maintain “safe environment” programs which the diocesan/eparchial 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 children, youth, parents, ministers, educators, volunteers, and others about ways to make and maintain a safe environment for children and young people...

Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living: Guidelines for Curriculum Design and Publication (USCCB, 2008)

SPECIAL NOTE: Safe environment education is related to catechetical formation for chaste living, but is not equated with “sex education” or “chastity education.” These distinct areas of education and formation are considered complementary elements of comprehensive catechesis.

Note on Construction: Material omitted in the full *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living* guideline is indicated by “***” at the appropriate level in the outline format. Also assume there is omitted, unrelated material prior to each major heading of the quoted material. The numbering and language of the experts are direct quotes from the original USCCB document.

PART I. THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

A: The Received Teaching of the Church Regarding Chaste Living

1. Human beings are created in God’s own image and created for love: to receive God’s love in order to love God, ourselves and our neighbor; and to receive love from others. To love is to will the good of another (Genesis 1:26-27; CCC 1604, 2093, 2105, 1766; *Familiaris Consortio*, 11).

5. The effects of Original Sin include:

- Reduced ability to love one another unselfishly (Romans 1:18-32);
- Experience of shame (*Truth & Meaning*, 11);
- Confusion about the nature and purpose of the human body (CCC, 1707, 1869, 1008);

B: Church Teaching on Special Issues of Concern

6. Sexual Abuse (CCC, 2388-2389)

Any sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult on children, young people or other vulnerable individuals causes grave harm to the victim’s physical, psychological/emotional and moral integrity. Such actions are grave violations of God’s Law. They are also criminal acts. Any occurrence of sexual abuse of minors must be reported to the proper civil authorities according to the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” as

implemented in each diocese. Further, reporting of abuse or suspected abuse must be done in adherence with local law... In addition, children need to be instructed, in age appropriate ways, that they must never keep secret inappropriate actions by adults.

PART II: PASSING ON THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

A. The Role of Pastors

4. Some of the serious duties of a pastor include providing for catechesis of the Christian faithful; instructing and assisting parents/guardians on their role as primary educators of their children in the ways of the faith consistent with Church teaching; providing formation of those who catechize others—including parents/guardians involved in the catechesis of their children—in the area of chaste living; and providing ample opportunities for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Canons 528.1, 773, 776 NDC, 54:B, 1-2).

5. The Church holds that it is her duty to instill confidence in parents in their own capabilities and help them to carry out their task (*Truth and Meaning*, 47).

B. Role of Parents

6. Christian parents/guardians are the primary but not the exclusive educators of their children. They carry out their role in communion with the Church and her pastors who have a responsibility to insure that the education offered the young is in accordance with Church teaching (*Familiaris Consortio*, 36, 40; *Truth and Meaning*, 20, 22).

7. Parents/guardians are assisted by their pastors from the spiritual riches of the Church to receive ongoing Christian formation and to choose the means and institutes which can best promote the Catholic education of their children (Canons 213, 217, 529 #1, 776, 793, 851 #2, 1063 #1; CCC, 2229; *Familiaris Consortio*, 37).

C. The Role of Teachers and Catechists References

1. Content on instruction

- Teachers and catechists are obliged to use only those textbooks which have received the requisite ecclesiastical approval (NDC, 68 A).

2. Relationship of educators to parents

The Church teaches that:

- Since the Church recognizes that parents are the first educators of their children, Catholic educators do well to focus on providing assistance to parents or guardians. Suitable materials need to be developed and provided to assist parents in their important responsibility (*Truth and Meaning*, 145).

Reference Key

Scripture from New American Bible, © 1991, 1986, 1970, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC.

Canons	<i>Code of Canon Law: Latin-English Edition.</i> Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1983.
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church.</i> The United States Catholic Conference- Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994/1997.
CT	John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, <i>On Catechesis in Our Time (Catechesi Tradendae)</i> , October 16, 1979.
DV	<i>Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum).</i> Second Vatican Council, 1965.
<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>	John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, <i>The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World (Familiaris Consortio)</i> , November 22, 1981.
GDC	<i>General Directory for Catechesis.</i> The United States Catholic Conference- Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997.
NDC	<i>National Directory for Catechesis.</i> Washington: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005.
RS	<i>Religion Standards for Catholic Education in Kindergarten through Grade 8 in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis (2005)</i>
<i>Truth and Meaning</i>	Pontifical Council for the Family. <i>The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family.</i> Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1996.
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Acknowledgements

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