

Principles for Child Protection Catechesis

NOTE: References to related Church documents for each principle are included as endnotes.

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.ⁱ
2. God lives in relationship as the community of divine persons in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that we call the Blessed Trinity. Human 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. Parishes and schools are partners with the family in educating, nurturing and protecting children.ⁱⁱ
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 (especially for children) must be a hallmark of our lives as followers of Jesus. Personal dignity for each person includes our right to privacy, especially privacy for our own bodies. Our right to respect necessitates age-appropriate teaching over time regarding our bodies.ⁱⁱⁱ
4. The human person is both corporal and spiritual. Touch is an integral part of being human. Touch can be safe, unsafe or unwanted. Safe touch is that kind of appropriate physical affection which the Catholic Church teaches as being good for the person's body and makes one feel cared for, loved and respected. Unsafe and unwanted touch makes a person feel uncomfortable and unhappy.^{iv}
5. God has blessed every person with the gifts of reason and free will. This human freedom does not, however, entitle the person to say or do just anything. Personal choices affect other people and sometimes bad choices harm innocent people through no fault of their own.^v
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 grievously sinful. Helping young people recognize this sinful behavior is part of the Church's responsibility of shaping well-formed consciences.^{vi}
7. Divine pedagogy includes the gradual formation of the whole person. Distinct yet equally important components of moral formation are chastity education and child protection catechesis. Through both of these complementary efforts, young people come to understand that good and loving human relationships and friendships help us understand ourselves, God and others and that some people misuse friendship and harm others.^{vii}
8. 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. The faith community has a responsibility to be part of a team response to the lasting harm caused by abuse, focusing in a particular way on the spiritual harm abuse may cause in young people.^{viii}
9. Significant, age-appropriate messages children need to understand if we hope to create sacred *and* safe environments are "There are good secrets and bad secrets, as well as good play and bad play. Good secrets and good play experiences do not hurt people and can be joyously shared. Bad or confusing secrets or play experiences need to be reported to a trusted adult so you can feel safe again."^{ix}
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 they know of bad secrets or inappropriate relationships they need to persist in telling trusted adults until they are helped. Children also need to be reassured that reporting such things is morally good.^x

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ENDNOTES

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- i Gen 1:26-27; 1 Jn 4:8; CCC 362, 1604, 1766, 2105, 2319; FC 11; NDC 41.A, 42.E; CFCL Part 1 A.1
- ii Lk 2:51-52; CCC 2205-2210; FC 26; GDC 226, 255; NDC 42.A, 42.E, 43.A; CPCYP Art.12; CFCL Part 2 B.2, B.6, B.8
- iii Mt 5:3-12; Mt 25:31-46; Lk 18:16; FC 26; NDC 28, 42.C, 43.B; CPCYP Preamble; CFCL Part 1 A.19
- iv 1 Cor 6:19; CCC 362; CPCYP Art.12; CFCL Part 1 A.24
- v Gen 2:16-17; CCC 1700, 1704-6, 1730-1738; CFCL Part 1 A.2; VS 35, 40; NDC 41.A, 42.C, 42.E; CPCYP Preamble
- vi Ex 20:1-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 18:6; CCC 1033, 1739, 2351, 2354, 2356, 2389; VS 83; NDC 42.D; CPCYP Preamble, Art.12; CFCL Part 1 A.19, A.27, B.6
- vii Mt 28:19-20; Jn 14:6, 16:13; 1 Th 4:1; 1 Cor 6:19; CCC 2347; GDC 18, 24, 139; VS 27-28, 30, 88; NDC 41.3, 45.F; CPCYP Preamble, Art.12; CFCL Part 1 A.24
- viii 2 Tm 4:1-2,5; Jas 1:25; CCC 1930, 2007-2009, 2211; VS 30, 83; NDC 21.B, 21.C, 42.E; CPCYP Preamble, Articles 1-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-15, Conclusion
- ix CCC 2488-2492; GDC 146, NDC 41.B; CPCYP Art.12; CFCL Part 1 B.6, Part 2 C.3
- x Mt 19:14; 25:40; CCC 1755, 1932, 2221, 2228, 2223-2234, 2388-2389, 2489; FC 26, 36; GDC 255; NDC 42.C, 42.E, 45.F, 54.C, 61.A-3; CPCYP Preamble, Art.12; CFCL Part 1 B.6

Abbreviations for Church Documents

CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Vatican, 1997, 1994.

CFCL *Catechetical Formation in Chaste Living: Guidelines for Curriculum Design and Publication*, USCCB, 2008.

CPCYP *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, USCCB, 2002.

FC *Familiaris Consortio*, Apostolic Exhortation "On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World," Pope John Paul II, 1981.

GDC *General Directory for Catechesis*, Vatican, 1997.

NDC *National Directory for Catechesis*, USCCB, 2005.

VS *Veritas Splendor*, Encyclical "The Splendor of Truth," Pope John Paul II, 1993.

Sacred Scripture references are from the *New American Bible*, USCCB, 2011, 1991, 1986, 1970.

"Through scripture and Catholic teachings we are all called to protect the life and dignity of all human persons. Preventing child abuse is a necessary response to what we are called to do as Church, God's Church." *Magisterial Teachings on the Protection of God's Children*, Carol Martin for USCCB Office of Child and Youth Protection