

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.