

# Parents First

*Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223)*

## Church Teaching *Made in His Image*

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.

Parents are essential in assisting children to recognize God’s love by helping them to understand that

each of us lives and moves in a Circle of Grace. You can imagine your own Circle of

Grace by putting your arms above your head then circle down in front of your body including side to side. This circle, front to back, holds who you are in your body and through your senses. It holds your very essence in mind, heart, soul, and sexuality.

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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 them to protect the special person they are and to be respectful of others.

## Growing in Virtue

Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and His Church (CCC 1814). But a child cannot believe in a Jesus Christ whom they do not know. Kindergarten is a good time to introduce your child to Jesus through Bible stories, as well as family stories about the role of Jesus in our lives. While the biblical stories will help them learn salvation history, the story of their families faith will help them connect these events to their own lives.



Charity is the virtue of love and self-sacrifice. While most people have a natural inclination to want to spoil their children, this can often have the effect of destroying charity in your little one. Teaching children to make small sacrifices, giving a used toy to charity or sharing with a sibling, can help them begin to develop the skills that they will need to be able to make larger sacrifices when they are older. In this way they can learn the joy that only love can bring.

### Culture Alert...

“81% of the time children ages 2-7 spend watching TV is spent alone and unsupervised”

[www.tvturnoff.org](http://www.tvturnoff.org)

## Guidelines for Answering your Child's Questions

- Ask for more information before answering, (i.e. "Why do you ask?", or "Tell me more"). Your child's response will provide you with insight, context and time to think.
- Pause to ask God for the wisdom and grace to provide an appropriate answer.
- Phrase your answer in the context of your family's Catholic values (i.e. "When you are grown and married..." or "As Catholics, we believe...").
- Keep your answers short and simple.

### Example: Where do Babies Come From?

*Know the context of the question, i.e.: Did they see something on TV, or is a relative pregnant? This information will help frame your answer in a way that is meaningful to your child.*

#### Possible Response:

- "Babies are gifts from God."
- "Babies grow in a special place in a mommy's tummy."



## Practical Suggestions



- Be aware of how you express your own masculinity or femininity and how it may be interpreted by your child.

- Openly express gratitude to God for giving you such a special girl or boy
- Resist the temptation to allow the child to partake in more mature activities/ expressions because "it's cute" especially when it relates to sexuality; i.e. *Allowing your daughter to wear lip gloss or pop star clothing to school or allowing your son to watch action movies or listen to music that is too mature.*

- Remind them to talk to you about any uncomfortable feelings or situations that enter in their Circle of Grace.

*Children many times mirror their parents' behavior, good and bad. They do this because they trust their parents as all-knowing and look to them for guidance.*

## Parent Resources

- *Simple Truths with Mary Flo Ridley* Parent Resource, DVD, and study guide: A step-by-step resource for the process of establishing healthy guidelines in the home and answering tough questions young children have about

sex. <http://www.justsayyes.org/resources/display.php?cat=3>

- Circle of Grace Parenting and Sexuality Handout