INSTITUTE FOR *Evangelization*

August 3, 2026

Since 1986, the Archdiocese of Baltimore has been committed to providing our children and their parents/guardians a holistic catechesis for family life. This catechesis involves age-appropriate development of the themes of social-emotional learning, child protection, human development and reproduction, and morality.

In accordance with the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, since 2002, safe environment training for children and education about child abuse prevention has been integrated into the Family Life curriculum in our parishes and Archdiocesan schools. Experts recognize this kind of training as an important component of keeping children and young people safe. Its aims include encouraging children/youth to speak freely and frequently with their parents and other trusted adults, teaching children/youth to express their feelings appropriately, and teaching children/youth that abuse is never the fault of the child/youth.

In our Catholic schools, Loyola Press' *Growing with God: Safe and Sacred* is the only approved Family Life Curriculum. However, for those **implementing the required Family Life Catechesis in the parish faith formation process**, there are several options for curriculum. Parishes *must* use one of these approved curriculum and incorporate the material into faith formation gatherings:

APPROVED FAMILY LIFE CATECHESIS CURRICULA - PARISH USE:
FOR GRADES K-5: • *Loyola Press *Growing with God* (skip Ch. 4 and include Ch. 7) -OR- • RCL Benziger *Family Life*
FOR GRADES 6-8: • *Loyola Press *Growing with God* (skip Ch. 4 and include Ch. 7) -OR- • RCL Benziger *Family Life* -OR- • Archdiocese of Baltimore *Created to Love* for middle school
FOR GRADES 9-12: • *Archdiocese of Baltimore *Created to Love* for high school. • *If you choose to supplement the above with other materials, please contact the Office of Family, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry for guidance.*

* *denotes preferred option*

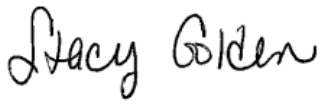
SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

Contact the Office of Family, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry for guidance on various methods of incorporating the family life catechesis component into your formation scope and sequence. Example integrations include:

- One chapter per session incorporated into basic catechetical lessons*
- Additional sessions added to regular faith formation schedule
- Monthly family life class; basic catechesis on other weeks
- For middle and high school: retreat format

Regardless of which approved curriculum option your parish chooses to use, the material requires accompaniment of children and families, and therefore may not be merely "sent home" for families to complete on their own. Parishes should encourage parents/guardians who have concerns about the Family Life Catechesis curriculum content to review the materials and should invite conversation in order to better understand and hopefully alleviate any concerns. This sharing of content and compassionate discussion should take place *prior* to making available the declination form, which serves to document a parent/guardian's refusal to have their child(ren) participate in Family Life Catechesis. Parishes report annually to the Office of Child & Youth Protection regarding Family Life Catechesis and should be prepared to describe how they have implemented this component.

Sincerely,



Stacy Golden, Director of the Office of Family, Youth, and Young Adult Ministry



Edward Herrera, Executive Director, Institute for Evangelization



Jerri Burkhardt, Director Office of Child and Youth Protection

ADDENDUM: Overview of topics included in Loyola Press' *Growing with God*.

All of these important and necessary topics are presented with great attention to the developmental needs and abilities of each grade level, and are tailored appropriately, especially with regard to the most sensitive topics.

- **Lesson 1: God Creates Us** helps students build confidence
- **Lesson 2: Boundaries** helps students understand appropriate boundaries
- **Lesson 3: Friendship and Bullying** helps students understand the importance of building healthy relationships
- **Lesson 5: Digital Discipleship (Digital Safety)** helps students build safe and healthy habits online
- **Lesson 6: My Sacred Self** helps students to learn about practicing healthy habits, about family structure, and about the ways in which human beings, body and soul, reflect the Image of God, especially in our potential to create new life
- **Lesson 7: Trust and Secrets** helps students recognize people in their lives who are worthy of their trust

You may have noticed that Lesson 4 is not included. Teachers in the Archdiocese of Baltimore are required to skip Lesson 4 because the lesson emphasizes the concept of "Stranger Danger". We do not teach this concept to students at the recommendation of national and local experts, who explain that focusing on strangers creates a dangerous sense of safety with adults in their community. Statistics tell us that 90% of harm to children is done by someone the child knows and trusts. Instead, students are taught how to identify a safe adult by their actions, which applies to all adults in their lives.

Parents/guardians are warmly invited to explore the materials of the curriculum their parish and/or school has chosen to implement, and are encouraged to engage their children in ongoing conversations in tandem with the catechesis occurring on parish/school grounds.