

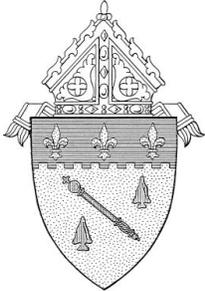
WHAT IS A VIRTUAL WORLD WEB SITE?

VIRTUAL WORLD WEB SITES are similar to gaming in that users create an account and then use an avatar (a picture or drawing) to represent themselves and move around. These sites differ from gaming in that **the user isn't there to play a game, but rather to interact with other users**. Examples of such sites include Blue Mars, Active Worlds, Second Life, and Parallel Kingdom. Latest technology, including the Oculus Rift, brings the thrill of virtual reality to another level with virtual world experiences becoming even more life-like. The activities and temptations in virtual worlds are plentiful and limited ONLY by one's imagination.

RISKS: Virtual worlds provide easily accessible places that allow users to simulate (do) anything, including that which would be considered immoral and/or illegal in the 'real world.' Over time, people can have difficulty separating their virtual activities and personas from that which is real. Gaming can lead to isolation as well as exposure to gratuitous violence and sexual images. The following are some questions that can help guide decisions regarding games that youth under your care are playing. *Note, these questions are taken from the USCCB Committee for Communications document titled "Family Guide for Using Media."*

Ask yourself whether the games respect human dignity.

- Do they reverence lasting commitments within the context of marriage and the family?
- Is exploitation, oppression, or neglect of any group of people condoned or even promoted?
- Is respect shown for the variety of cultures?
- Do they glorify attitudes such as excessive consumerism, promiscuity or other exploitative relationships, prejudice, or violence?



Reflect on the ethical standards of the games.

- What is portrayed and why?
- What is it saying about human existence?
- How does it relate to Christian faith and moral belief?
- Is your child benefiting from them?

**OFFICE OF CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION-DIOCESE OF BATON ROUGE
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Proverbs 3: 21- 23

²¹ My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion;

²² they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck.

²³ Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble.