

PREPARING FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION

CONNECT FAITH AND FAMILY

Preparing to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time presents wonderful opportunities to strengthen the faith of both children and their parents. This time of preparation really is a journey in faith, a journey that is greatly influenced and shaped by how your family chooses to live out your faith each and every day. Keep in mind that parents play a critical role during the time of preparation. Think about ways you can make this coming year a “holy year” for your family. Here are some simple suggestions to get started.

START WITH YOURSELF!

The best place to start is with yourself! Promise yourself to take time for quiet, for prayer, and for reflection during this special year. Make this quiet time a part of every day. Even if it is just 10 minutes, you will notice a greater awareness of God’s presence throughout the day.

Read the Gospel for the coming Sunday and reflect on it before you go to Mass.

INVITE OTHERS TO JOIN YOU IN THE JOURNEY!

Include your child’s godparent(s) or others who have served as significant Christian models to join you in this time of preparation. Invite them to dinner and ask them to talk about their memories of your child’s baptism—or about what their faith means to them.

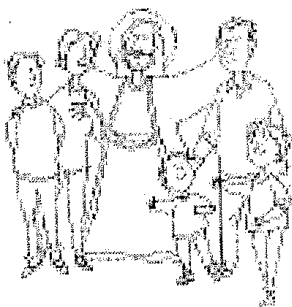
Ask friends or family to write a letter of support to your child in this important time.

Ask a friend or family member to serve as a prayer partner for your child.

FOCUS ON FAMILY!

Attend Sunday Mass regularly with your children. Sit in front. Talk about the Mass afterward. What was the message of the Gospel? Who did we pray for in the intercessions? Invite everyone’s response to the Question of the Week.

Rediscover the “magic” and holiness of Sunday as “family day.” Take a walk after Mass with your children, read books together, play board games. Take time to make a meal and eat together. Pray before the meal. End the day with a simple prayer thanking God for the gift of the day.



CONNECTING FAITH AND FAMILY LIFE

One of the best ways for parents to help their children prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is to pay close attention to the way of forgiveness and reconciliation are experienced within the family. Too often, with our hurried schedules and hectic lives, we skip important parts of true reconciliation. Consider taking time this year to help your child experience and learn about the simple, but very important, parts of asking for forgiveness and celebrating reconciliation.

Consider the following scenario: A mother has had a frazzling day at work. On her way home she picks up her seven-year-old son Danny at a friend's house. As they continue home through heavy traffic, Danny is eager to connect with his mom and asks one question after another. Suddenly, in the middle of one of Danny's questions, Mom snaps and says, "Danny, that's it! Just be quiet. I've had enough!" Mother and son finish the ride in silence. How can Mom ask for Danny's forgiveness?

Acknowledge the wrong you have done.

Name what you did. Be specific.

When they get home, Mom says to Danny, "I'd like to talk with you about something, please." Mom and Danny go to a quiet room and when Mom has Danny's attention she looks at her son and says, "I want to apologize to you for being so crabby today in the car. I had a frustrating day at work, but I shouldn't have been so short with you."

Look at the person and say the words, "I'm sorry."

Mom looks at Danny and says, "I'm sorry. I really am. I am going to try to be more patient next time."

Ask for forgiveness.

Mom asks Danny, "Will you forgive me?"

Respond to the person who asks for forgiveness.

Danny looks at Mom and says, "Yes, I forgive you." (Encourage your child to respond to a person asking for forgiveness with the words, "Yes, I forgive you." instead of simply saying, "Yes," or, "It's okay." Model this for your children when they apologize to you.)

Acknowledge the gift of forgiveness.

Mom says to Danny, "Thank you, Danny. Thank you so much!"

Celebrate the gift of reconciliation!

Mom and Danny give each other a hug. Mom promises to play one of Danny's favorite games with him after dinner.

As you and your child practice this way of asking for forgiveness, you will be able to show your child how these steps are also part of celebrating this sacrament.

At home with our family

We acknowledge the wrong we have done.

We say, "I am sorry."

We take an action to show we are sorry.

We receive forgiveness from one another.

We celebrate reconciliation in our family

Celebrating the sacrament

We confess our sins.

We pray an Act of Contrition.

Through prayer & penance we make a commitment to change.

We receive absolution and the gift of God's ever-present forgiveness.

We receive the blessing of God's peace & celebrate God's love!

Sacramental Preparation

General Expectations for Children, Parents and Families

Children

- Children must be baptized.
- Children must be of sufficient age.
- Children must attend Holy Family School or St. Anthony Religious Education.
- Children must know or be learning simple prayers.
- Children must begin, if not already doing so, attending the Sunday Eucharist regularly.

Parents

- At least one parent should be a baptized Catholic.
- Parents must attend mass regularly.
- Parents must participate in parent sacramental meetings.
- Parents must participate as fully as possible in the spiritual and sacramental life of the Catholic Church.

Family Life

- Families should pray together regularly especially at meals and bedtime.
- Families should use prayers and simple rituals in family celebrations.
- Families should observe the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent in their homes.
- Families should develop habits of reading, watching and telling Bible stories and other stories depicting Christian values.
- Families should spend time and resources in efforts to help the less fortunate.



Helping Children to Prepare for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The sacrament of Reconciliation should not make us frightened or sad. We should think more about the goodness of God than our sinfulness. It pleases God to forgive us!

1. Preparation

The first thing we do to get ready for this sacrament is to grow quiet, think of how much God loves us, how happy God wants us to be, how much we mean to God, and how much we should love God in return. Then we ask God's Holy Spirit to help us know how we have failed to love God and others as we should. Here are some questions that we can ask ourselves:

- Do we always respect God's name?
- Do we make fun of holy things?
- Do we purposely miss Mass?
- Do we pay attention at Mass?
- Do we bother other people at Mass?
- Do we pray at other times: when getting up, at mealtimes, before going to bed?
- Do we ask for God's help?
- Do we thank God for the gifts we have been given?
- Are we grateful to be God's child?

Besides God, the most important part of our lives is other people. They are also children of God. So they are our sisters and brothers in God's family. They are important to God as we are. How do we treat them?

- Do we love our parents and help them, and pray for them?
- Do we respect our teachers and help them and thank them?
- Do we love our sisters and brothers, and help them and share with them?
- Do we help keep the environment in God's family happy and healthy by stopping fights, by being a good sport, and not telling tales?

- Everything we do makes us better or worse, so...
- Do we tell the truth or gossip?
- Do we cheat or steal, or destroy?
- Are we patient, kind, forgiving?
- Do we work at home and/or school?
- Do we share our gifts: our possessions, our talents, our time, our friendship, our money?

In the sacrament of Reconciliation we are sorry for our sins. They hurt our friendship with God and other people; and they keep us from being what God wants us to be.

Part of being sorry for our sins is to make plans not to do the same sins over again. Maybe we need to pray more, study more, or complain less. Maybe we need to be careful about what we say, what we think, what we look at. But most of all, we should be simply grateful that God forgives us, that God does not hold things against us, that God is happy that we admit our sins, that we are sorry for them, and plan to become better persons.

Now we are ready to tell our sins to the priest, who takes the place of Jesus in the sacrament of Reconciliation. And since our sins also hurt the people of the church, the body of Christ, the priest also represents the Church.

2. Greeting

We begin confession by saying: Bless me, Father, my last confession was...(or this is my first confession)

3. Confession and Penance

Then we will tell the priest our sins-very simply and sincerely. The priest will give us a penance: a prayer or a good deed. This is a sign that we accept forgiveness and want us to give something back.

4. Prayer of Sorrow and Absolution

Then we will make an act of sorrow. We may make up our own or use the following:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you, whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Amen.

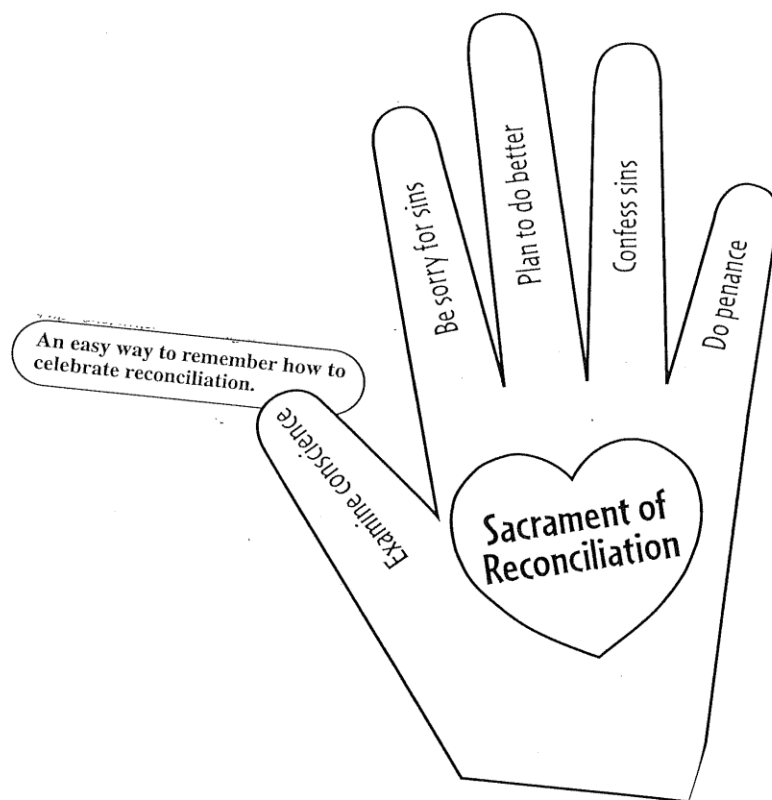
God the Father sends the Holy Spirit to us and forgives us. As the priest forgives us in God's name, we will listen to the prayer of absolution:

God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church may God grant you pardon and peace; and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

5. Blessing and Dismissal

When the priest blesses us, we will make the sign of the Cross and answer, "Amen."

We will pray our penance and start all over again because we really do want to become the persons God made us to be.



Examination of Conscience For Adults

Examination of Conscience

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 22: 36-40

“Teacher, what is the most important commandment in the Law?” Jesus answered: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.’ This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is, ‘Love others as much as you love yourself.’ All the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40 CEV)

Reflection Questions

- + Is my heart set on God, so that I really love God above all things and am faithful to God’s commandments? Are the things of this world like money, prestige, or status truly secondary to my faith in God?
- + Am I continuing to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ? Do I pray regularly and read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, to learn how to be a more faithful disciple of Jesus? Am I growing in my understanding of my Catholic faith?
- + Do I worship God regularly by celebrating the Eucharist with an active and conscious participation? Do I celebrate the healing and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year?
- + Have I been loving and faithful in my relationships, especially with my family members and significant relationships?
- + Do I live my life guided by Catholic values, such as respect for dignity of others, respect for creation and the environment, love, care and compassion, forgiveness, honesty, integrity? Which values have I neglected to live faithfully?
- + Do I take seriously the call to serve those in need, to alleviate suffering, to share my gifts, talents, and possessions with others? Do I work for justice for victims of oppression, discrimination, and poverty?

- + Am I ready to forgive and work for peace in my relationships and in my world?
- + Do I live my Catholic faith and moral principles at school and in the community? Are my decisions guided by Catholic moral principles?

Prayer for Forgiveness The Prayer of the Penitent

*My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love
above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads to sin.*

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Prayer for Forgiveness

Forgiving God, we are sorry for the wrong choices we have made. We are sorry for the times that we have been lost from you. We know that you forgive us and that you rejoice when we come back to you. We thank you for the feeling of peace that comes from your forgiveness.

Help us to forgive others. Help us to share your peace with the people around us. Amen.

**St Anthony Family Sacramental Program
2011-2012**

October 15 - 4:00 Mass October 23 - 10:30 Mass	Enrollment ceremony for children and parent
October 17 or October 18 - 6:30 P.M.	First Reconciliation Parent Meeting
November 14, 15 or 17	Reconciliation Centers
January 15 – 2:00 P.M. January 17 – 6:30 P.M.	First Reconciliation
February 12 or 13 – 6:30 P.M.	First Communion Parent Meeting
March 19, 20 or 22	Eucharist Centers
April 22, 28, 29 May 5, 6, 19, 20	Individual First Communion (any Mass)
May 11 – 5:00 P.M.	Practice for Group First Communion
May 13 – 10:30 A.M.	Group First Communion