

FIRST RECONCILIATION POLICY

Catechesis for the first reception of the sacrament of reconciliation is to precede the catechesis for the reception of First Eucharist and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separate preparation. This is done so that the specific identity of each sacrament is apparent, and so that before receiving First Eucharist the child will be familiar with the Rite of Reconciliation and will be at ease with the reception of the sacrament. The sacrament of reconciliation is to be celebrated prior to the reception of First Eucharist.

Parents of children who have reached the age of reason are invited to enroll their children for catechesis in a religious education program approved by their pastor. Catechesis for reconciliation will commence at the beginning of the child's third year of catechesis. Thus, a child is to have attended an approved catechetical program for at least two years. In the case of older children desiring first reception of this sacrament, the pastor and parish director of religious education should decide upon and implement an appropriate program of study which will adequately prepare that person for the sacrament.

Parents will be invited to participate in the preparation and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation with their children. Part of the preparation will entail at least two sessions of sacramental catechesis for parents.

Vatican II's emphasis on the communal dimension of all the sacraments has changed the outward celebration of reconciliation more significantly than any of the other sacraments. Therefore, care should be taken to involve other parishioners in the preparation and celebration of first reconciliation so that the children can experience forgiveness in a communal setting which includes family, parish priests, catechists, and parishioners and which evidences a spirit of joyful celebration.

The pastor has the final responsibility to determine the readiness of a child for the celebration of the first reconciliation. Because pastors are usually not directly involved in the catechesis, parents, in conjunction with the catechists, ordinarily decide if a child is ready for the celebration of the sacrament. Every effort should be made to encourage parents to accept this privilege and responsibility. Interviews with parents of children are appropriate if the interview encourages a process of mutual discernment.

Catechesis for the sacrament of reconciliation in all parishes of the Diocese of Las Cruces shall be in accord with the Revised Rite of Reconciliation.

Catechesis for children should always respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of individuals. It should seek: first, to make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life; second, to help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrong-doing, and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church; third, to encourage the child to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving; and fourth, to encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.

The program for catechesis for first reconciliation is to be one recommended by the Religious Education Office of the Diocese of Las Cruces.

The celebration of first reconciliation is to take place within the context of a communal reconciliation celebration with individual confession. The children should be accompanied by parents, guardians, or whoever is responsible for the religious formation of the child.

Ongoing Catechesis

Continuing life-long conversion is an essential element of growing in faith. Therefore, catechesis for the sacrament of reconciliation is ongoing. Children have a right to ever-deepening catechesis and opportunities for celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation. Parents are to be reminded that catechetical preparation does not end with the reception of first reconciliation and First Eucharist.

Continued catechesis on reconciliation adapted to the level of the person is a part of all systematic catechetical efforts in the parish's religious education program.