

# First Reconciliation

Dear Parents,

**As the parent is the “primary catechist” for the child, we ask that parents help to reinforce what children are learning about the sacraments in the classroom at home.** Below you will find some helpful information regarding First Reconciliation preparation and our service. As always, if you have any questions, please contact the RE Office at 609-267-6319 or [rel.ed@parishofsacredheart.org](mailto:rel.ed@parishofsacredheart.org). Thank you and we look forward to the celebration of this beautiful Sacrament of joy and healing!

**These are the signs that indicate a child is ready to receive First Reconciliation:**

- ⇒ A desire to receive the Sacrament
- ⇒ Ability to distinguish between “mistakes” (non-intentional) and “on purpose” (intentional) actions
- ⇒ Ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and the effect of actions and omissions upon others.
- ⇒ Ability to feel and express “I’m sorry”
- ⇒ Ability to make amends and change behavior.
- ⇒ Knowing God as loving and forgiving through Jesus Christ
- ⇒ Basic familiarity of stories of forgiveness from Scripture and the prayers and gestures of the Rite of Penance

**Parents have an important role in helping a child become “ready”.**

- ⇒ Use the “teachable moments” in your family’s life to reinforce forgiveness and reconciliation. When arguments and conflicts occur in your home, model and encourage taking responsibility, expressing sorrow and making amends.
- ⇒ Practice forgiveness in your home and avoid re-hashing old arguments; let go of grudges.
- ⇒ Celebrate the “making up” after a family quarrel.
- ⇒ Reinforce the stories of Jesus forgiving others.
- ⇒ Thank God each day for his abundant mercy when we fall short.
- ⇒ Teach children responsibility for others – love takes the form of action.
- ⇒ Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, at least once a year during Lent.

## Examination of Conscience for Children (Elementary School Age)

Do I use God's name for praying, not in anger?

Do I pay attention and participate at Sunday Mass?

Do I pray and thank God for all the good things that He gives me?

Do I obey my parents and other in authority?

Do I show respect for my family, friends and classmates?

Do I show respect for the things that belong to others?

Do I tell the truth?

Do I share the gifts and talents that God has given me with others?

### Act of Contrition

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.

# First Reconciliation FAQ



## *How does the Reconciliation service work?*

The service begins with many of the elements of the Mass – gathering song, reading, Psalm, Gospel reading, a homily by Father John, general intercessions, and the Lord's Prayer. We then have an 'Examination of Conscience,' which a catechist reads from the altar. This is a list of questions that children can think of as they are deciding what to tell the priest in the confessional; these questions are geared to children (you can find them on the reverse of this page). After that, we all say the 'Act of Contrition,' which will be included on your program, together. Then Father and the other priests go to their stations, and the catechists/teachers lead the children to the confessionals.

When children go into the confessional Father will greet them, and after greeting Father, the child will bless him/herself with the sign of the cross and tell Father that this is their first confession (which the priests do already know ☺.) Then the child will tell the priest his or her sins and following that, will receive absolution. Children then return to their seats to join their families.

From the gathering song until the point when the priests go to their stations is typically about 20 to 30 minutes; how long you are there after that depends upon when your child goes to the confessional according to the seating order, and whether you or other family members choose to go as well. The services tend to last about an hour from beginning until the last child receives the Sacrament.

## *Is there a "dress code" for the service?*

Since this is a special celebration, we suggest that the children come dressed as they would for Mass. For boys, slacks and a button down shirt or sweater; for girls, a top or sweater with a skirt or slacks, or a dress.

## *Does he/she need to have the Act of Contrition memorized?*

Children should know the Act of Contrition as a prayer but as mentioned above, we all say the 'Act of Contrition' together during the service. However if your child would like to review or practice this prayer, please note that it is attached to this page. Many of us grew up learning a different Act of Contrition – this is okay! The one on the reverse is the version we are teaching the children.

## *What if he/she gets sick and cannot make it?*

If this happens, please notify the RE Office as soon as possible. We will make alternate arrangements for a Saturday confession for your child's First Reconciliation.

## *Who should come with my child?*

Each child must come with at least one parent/adult; we also encourage the family to attend. Each family has half a pew, which seats roughly 6-7 people. Consider inviting godparents as well! We do suggest that you celebrate as a family in some way (going out for ice cream, a special dinner, etc.).

## *Can other family members also receive the sacrament?*

Yes! In fact, it is very good for the children to see adults going to Reconciliation as well. If you would like to go but need to "brush up," you may want to check out this link, which has an FAQ and a lot of good information:

<http://www.thelightisonforyou.org/confession/faq/> and/or read through the reverse of this page. ☺