

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Parent's Handbook

Celebration the Gift of Forgiveness



Holy Cross Parish First Reconciliation Handbook

This handbook is designed to be a guide as we prepare for the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation on _____, at _____, at _____ Church.

The children of our parish have been working diligently on memorizing the Act of Contrition and learning what they will be saying and doing when they first talk to a priest during Reconciliation. Here are a few things for parents to do and think about:

- No matter what your child learns at school or on Wednesday nights during PREP, your involvement is vital to their understanding of what the sacrament can mean to them.
- First and foremost, attend Mass together as a family on a regular basis. The Mass provides an opportunity for the community to gather together and be reconciled with one another and with God.
- Show forgiveness and reconciliation in your own life. Your child will never learn what it means to forgive if he or she is witness to unforgiving attitudes toward others. Our lives as Christians should be models of reconciliation in all that we do.
- Pray together as a family. Ask God's forgiveness as a family. Prayer itself can be a powerful means of achieving reconciliation with God, with one another, and within ourselves.
- Know what your child is learning in class. Maintain regular communication with your child's catechists or religion teacher. Ask your child to bring home his or her work each week. Try to reinforce at home what your child is learning in the classroom.
- Read and discuss scripture stories about forgiveness from children's Bibles or books. Those might include the story of the Good Shepherd, Zacchaeus, the Prodigal son, Joseph and his brothers, etc.
- Listen carefully to your child. Discuss the process of the sacrament, concerns your child might have, and practice with he or she will do at Reconciliation.
- Remember to reinforce that your child's conversation with the priest is private, and they don't need to tell you (or anyone) what was said.
- Finally, celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation yourself! You will have that opportunity on the night of First Reconciliation.

Understanding the Sacrament

Reconciliation is the sacrament of forgiveness and peace. It is one of the ways in which God chooses to forgive our sins. Whenever people sin, they separate themselves from God's love. In the sacrament of reconciliation, we return to God, our loving parent.

Understanding Sin: Children are introduced to the concept of sin within the context of understanding the nature of their relationship with God. They learn about the loving relationship through their experiences of family and of friendship. Through these experiences and stories about Jesus' special love for them, young children begin to understand the complexity of sin. Sin is presented in terms of how these relationships are changed as a result of willful wrongdoing.

In human friendships, there are serious disruptions in these relationships. There are also less serious offenses which pave the way to carelessness about their relationship. In coming to understand this, children learn that there are offenses that can affect their relationship with God in a similar way.

Communal Aspect of Sin: The church is the family of God. We become part of this family at Baptism. At Baptism we become children of God.

Any time a member of God's family sins, the entire family is touched by this separation. That is why the sacrament of Reconciliation is sometimes a communal celebration where the parish family comes together asking for forgiveness before individual reconciliation.

Sorrow for Sin: Parents teach children to be sorry for their sins by helping them understand the meaning of the words, "I am sorry." This is begun in ordinary family situations. Parents help children experience apology situations by letting the children witness a loving sincerity of words and actions when spouses apologize to one another. Parents should not hesitate to apologize to their children when the occasion arises. This is done not only with words, but also through actions and behavior.

Words Associated with The Sacrament of Reconciliation

(Discuss these words and their meanings with your child.)

Absolution	God's forgiveness received through the words and actions of the priest.
Act of Contrition	A prayer we can say when we need to say "I am sorry" to God.
Catholics	Catholics are Christians whose home in God's family is the Catholic Church.
Examine our Conscience	Think about the loving and unloving choices we have made.
Forgive	To make friends again
God	God is our Loving Creator who made us and loves us.
Great Commandments	"You must love God with all your heart. "You must love others as you love yourself."
Holy Spirit	God the Holy Spirit gives us peace, love, and joy.
Jesus	Jesus is God's own Son who became one of us. He is our Brother.
Penance	A prayer we say or something we do to make things right again.
Prayer	Prayer is talking and listening to God with love.
Reconciliation	The sacrament in which Catholic celebrate God's love and forgiveness.
Sin	Sin is doing wrong on purpose. It is choosing not to love God, not to love others, not to love ourselves.

Receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation

I prepare to go to confession: I think of my sins. I am sorry for my sins.

I am greeted by the priest: I go into the confessional or reconciliation room. I receive a warm and kind welcome from the priest.

We pray and talk: I make the sign of the cross. The priest invites me to trust God. Sometimes the priest reads something from the Bible. I tell my sins to the priest. I accept the penance the priest gives me.

I receive God's forgiveness: Sometimes the priest says a few words to me. The priest gives me absolution.

I leave: I promise to try to do better. say "thank you" and leave.



Examination of Conscience

- Have I kept God in my mind and prayed to Him?
- Have I missed Mass on Sundays without a good reason?
- Have I used the name of God with disrespect?
- Have I obeyed my parents?
- Have I tried to be helpful to my parents?
- Have I fought with my brothers, sisters, or friends?
- Have I shared with my brothers, sisters, or friends?
- Have I tried to be helpful to people who asked me for help?
- Have I lied to anyone?
- Have I taken anything which did not belong to me?
- Have I destroyed another person's things?
- Have I used the things of God's world with care?
- Why did I do things which I should not have done?

Act of Contrition

My God,
I am sorry
for all 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

Completion Form

As you go through the Learning Center Stations, please fill out this form and return by **January 18th** to the Parish Office at 3012 Jackson St., Sioux City, IA. 51104. Thank you!

Parents Name _____

Students Name _____

Learning Center	Date Completed
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Parents Signature _____

Date _____