

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. There are 6 sections to this preparation exercise.
2. Budget your time and work on one or two sections each day
3. Read each section before you begin with your child.
4. Download all of the activity and resource sheets before beginning each part.
5. Use a tablet, a laptop computer, or a desktop computer to activate the links and read the Scripture Stories with your child.
6. There is an “Excerpt from the Catechism” and a “Flyer for Parents” for your own edification
7. It is not necessary to submit any completed activity sheets to the religious formation office.

SECTION ONE: WE ARE CALLED BY GOD

REFLECTION: *God knows and calls each of us by name. In our spiritual lives, the practice of naming is traditionally associated with Baptism. In Baptism, we receive the name Christian that marks our identity with the community and then our own first name, as each of us is called by God. Baptism is about being called by name by God and the Christian community. Who you are in Christ and the lifetime journey of growing into his image and likeness are what we celebrate in Baptism*

1. Share with your child why you chose to have him/her baptized and share some memories of that day. Bring out your Family Photo Album. Show your child his/her baptismal garments. Light his/her Baptismal candle and talk about the day s/he was baptized. (What was the name of the church where you were baptized? What was your child wearing? Who bought the clothes? What color was the outfit? Who were his/her godparents? Why did you choose those people?)

2. Names are important to us. Tell your child why you gave him/her their name. (Did you name him/her after a saint, relative?) Use a blank sheet of paper to work together with your child to create a **poster** of his/her name using both words and pictures that illustrate something about him/her.

3. Ask your child how s/he knows that they are loved and cared for by others. How is this apparent to him/her? (Your child might respond as follows: “they take care of me, they play with me, they hug me...”)

4. Explain to your child that God’s love for us infinitely exceeds the love that anyone else has for us. Now, **click on the link** and read **The Story of Saul - Acts of the Apostles 9:1-2**.

http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/english/From_Persecutor_to_Preacher_English.pdf

<http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/spanish/From%20Persecutor%20to%20Preacher%20Spanish.pdf>

Before you read, remind your child that “Sacred Scripture” is God’s inspired Word. When we read scripture, God is present to us and speaking with us in a special way. Before you begin to read Scripture ask your child to close his/her eyes and ask God to open your hearts and minds to His Word as you read. **Read the Scripture Story and then ask your child to describe the story back to you.**

5. Discussing the following questions:

- “What does Paul’s experience teach us about God?” (Possible responses: God loves us because we are his children. God loves us so much he created this beautiful world for us to live. He sent Jesus to show us how to better love each other.)
- “How do you answer God’s call to love him?” (Possible responses: follow Jesus; serve others; love others as God loves me.)
- “How have you and your family come to know God?” (Possible responses: through other people, attending Mass, prayer.)

6. Recall for your child a time when s/he disobeyed you. Remind them of the consequences that came from that action. (For example: Failed to do their homework when you told them to; didn’t do well on a quiz; weren’t not allowed to watch their favorite TV program for a week).

7. Explain to your child that God always lets us face the consequences of our choices, just like our first human parents – Adam and Eve. Still, God chose to save us from our sins by sending us Jesus. The sacraments are Jesus’ gift to us to help us know he is with us.

8. Take out the “**We Are Called**” **Activity Sheets A** and **B** and work with your child to complete it.

SECTION TWO: WE ARE CALLED TO GROW IN HOLINESS

REFLECTION: *From the moment of our Baptism, we begin a lifelong journey of growing in holiness, opening our hearts to God and allowing Him to help us become all He imagined us to be. Sometimes we make unloving choices and damage our relationships. No matter what unloving choices we make, God is always ready to begin again. The Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation) helps us recall God’s endless love for all people. The priests who celebrate this sacrament reflect the care, acceptance, and mercy of Christ. The church hopes that all who celebrate this sacrament hear Jesus speaking to them in loving forgiveness.*

1. Discuss the **REFLECTION** above with your child.

2. Ask your child to tell you what makes something a sin. Be sure that s/he understand that sins are deliberate, wrong, and hurtful actions – and that mistakes and accidents are not sins.
3. Using the **“Accident, Mistake or Sin?” Activity Sheet**, discuss the scenarios to help your child determine which ones are sins and which are not. Be sure to discuss **why**.
4. Sum up by explaining to your child that an action is sinful when we know something is wrong and do it anyway.
5. Explain to your child how Jesus welcomed everyone, whether they were sinners or not. **Click on the link** and read the Story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector (*Luke 19:1-10*) –

http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/english/Jesus_and_Zaccheus_English.pdf.

<http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/spanish/Jesus%20and%20Zaccheus%20Spanish.pdf>

In Jesus’ time, tax collectors were known as sinners because they did undesirable work for the Romans, the people who occupied their country. Not only did they collect taxes for the enemy, but they often took extra profit for themselves.

Remind your child that you are about to hear God speak to you in his word, the Bible. Stop and silently ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart as you listen to his word. **Read the story and have your child tell it back to you.**

Discuss the questions:

- a. Why do you think Jesus decided to stop at Zacchaeus’ house? (Possible responses: he liked Zacchaeus; Zacchaeus had worked hard to see Jesus, Jesus felt sorry for him; Jesus wanted to show his disciple that God loves everyone.)
- b. How would you feel if Jesus came to your home? How would you change?

SECTION THREE: WE EXAMINE OUR CONSCIENCE

REFLECTION: *When a person looks at something through a prism, the angle at which the prism is held determines the colors that will cover the object being viewed. When Christians review their sins and failures, they are able to view them through the prism of God’s love and compassion, whose perfect sign of that love is the cross. All the laws and teachings of the Church flow from the great command of Jesus to love God, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Because the love of God is made visible in Christ and in the love that Christians have for others, sin also becomes visible through the breaks caused in these relationships. The awareness of sin in one’s life is a great opportunity for conversion. When people take the time*

to acknowledge their failure, God's response is always an ever more powerful grace that both forgives and calls for a change of heart. The Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrates that forgiveness and change of heart.

1. Share what part you liked best. Make sure you each explain why you liked the part you chose.
2. Read the following Scripture Passage below (*Mark 12:30-31*). Before you read, remind your child that you are about to read from Scripture, the word of God. As Catholics, we believe that God's word helps us to grow as his disciples (followers). Before you begin to read His holy word, quietly ask the Holy Spirit to help you hear what God wants to share with you.

One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing. He saw how well Jesus had answered them. He asked Jesus, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus said, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Ask your child to tell the story back to you.

Now, discuss the following questions:

- a. What was Jesus trying to tell the man? (Possible responses: If we love God and our neighbor we will go to heaven; if you keep these two laws you will keep all the others.)
- b. When does following a commandment make you happy? (Possible responses: When I honor God by praying; when I am kind; when I share; when I obey.)

3. Take out the **"The Ten Commandments" Study Sheet**. Notice that the first three commandments help us to understand how we can love God. Notice that the remaining seven commandment help us to understand how God wants us to love each other. Jesus summed up all of the commandments into the Great Commandment to love God and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

4. Take out the **“The Ten Commandments Cut Outs” Activity Sheet** and the **“Stone Tablets” Activity Sheet**. Read through the instructions with your child, then cut and paste the Commandments in the right order on the Tablets Activity Sheet.

5. Explain to your child that we need to *examine our conscience* in order to know the times and ways in which we sometimes do not love as God asks. Explain that it takes courage to admit that we have done something wrong. Think of a time your child has admitted to something they have done wrong. Share that memory with him/her and tell him/her how proud you are of him/her when they do so. Tell your child about a time when you did something wrong and how difficult it was to admit (For example: a time when you over-reacted in anger, when you told a lie for convenience, or perhaps ignored a request for help).

6. Work with your child to create an Examination of Conscience that is specific to his/her life. (For example, Do I share with my brother? Do I help my sister without complaining? Do I do what my parents ask the first time they ask me? Do I respect my teacher?) If you need more help, use the **Examination Conscience for Young Children** provided.

7. Let your child think of the questions with your prompting. (For example, what would Jesus want you to do if your sister asked to borrow your favorite toy? How would Jesus want you to act when you are playing a game with your friend?) Turn their statements into questions and write the questions on a large index card to take home. (Do I cheat when I play with friends? Do I share with others?) Using **Activity Sheet “We Examine Our Conscience”**, write down a list of least ten Examination of Conscience Questions.

SECTION FOUR: WE ARE SORRY FOR OUR SINS

REFLECTION: *It is difficult to admit that we have done something wrong. Yet, when we can admit that we are wrong, we experience the sorrow that comes from recognizing the pain that our harmful choices have caused. Sorrow for sin, called contrition, is a moment of growth in the life of a Christian. Sorrow is the second step in reconciling any relationship, and clearly needed in restoring our relationship with God. The source of joy for all Christians is our conviction that God is always waiting for us to return to his embrace.*

1. Read the Scripture story below of the **Woman Who Was Sorry** (Luke 7:36-48). Before you read the **Woman Who Was Sorry** remind your child that this story comes from the sacred words of Scripture. Ask him/her to prepare for this word by silently asking the Holy Spirit to open his/her heart so that God’s word will plant itself within like a seed planted in a garden.

A man named Simon invited Jesus to have dinner at his house. Simon was a member of a very strict religious group called Pharisees. He

invited Jesus into his home because he had heard about all of the miraculous things that he had been doing and that many people thought that he was a prophet. No doubt, he wanted everyone to know that Jesus had visited in his home so it would make him look important in the eyes of his friends.

As they began to eat dinner, a woman with a very bad reputation in the town came into the house. She had heard that Jesus had been invited to eat there and she wanted to see him and be near him. She stood behind Jesus, and because she loved him so much, she began to cry. Her tears fell on the feet of Jesus and, since she had nothing with which to dry his feet, the woman knelt down and began to dry the feet of Jesus with her hair. Then she took some expensive perfume and began to rub it on his feet.

Simon was upset by what he saw and said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him and would have nothing to do with her. She's a sinner!"

Jesus could see that Simon was upset, but his response to Simon was quite surprising. He said to him, "Look at this woman kneeling here. When I came into your home, you didn't offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You didn't give me the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love."

Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

by Linda Sue Pochodzay Edwards

Now, ask him/her to describe the story back to you.

Now, discuss the questions:

- a. How did the woman show Jesus she was sorry for her sins? (She cried, washed Jesus' feet with her tears, dried his feet with her hair, kissed Jesus' feet, and poured oil on them.)
- b. How do you tell Jesus you are sorry? (Possible responses: I tell him; I say a prayer; I say it to another person)

NOTE TO PARENT:

The writer of the Gospel of Luke tends to pair people in his stories, contrasting their reactions and inviting the reader to make his or her own judgement. In this story, a Pharisee, a religious figure, is contrasted to a woman labeled as sinful. Yet, this woman performs the acts of hospitality that should have been done by the host who invited Jesus to eat at his house. This woman shows faith in Jesus' forgiveness

SECTION FIVE: WE ARE CALLED TO FORGIVE AND BE FORGIVEN

REFLECTION: *When two people love each other, they use words such as "I love you," and concrete signs, such as embracing each other, in order to express their love. If one of the persons stopped using these signs, the other might begin to wonder if he or she were still loved.*

In the Sacrament of Penance, God forgives us through the words of absolution or forgiveness and the imposition of hands upon the penitent. The words of the prayer reveal that this forgiveness comes through the death and Resurrection of Jesus. The cross is a central sign of forgiveness because it shows God's willingness to give his only Son to atone for our sins.

1. Share with your child an example from your own life of a sign that showed God's love and forgiveness toward you.
2. Using the **"Steps for Going to Confession" Sheet**, discuss what happens during the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Discuss the sacramental signs of penance with your child. (Example: confession of the penitent, the penance given by the priest to the penitent, the priest's prayer of Absolution; and the effects of the sacrament, which are forgiveness of sins, reunification within the Church and the cleansing of conscience). *(For more information on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, see the **Excerpt from Catechism of the Catholic Church**)*

Prayer of Absolution:

God, the Father of mercies,
 through the death and the 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 give 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.

2. **Click on the link** and read the Scripture passage about the **Parable of the Lost Son** (*Luke 15:11-31*)

http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/english/The_Prodigal_Son_English.pdf

<http://bibleforchildren.org/PDFs/spanish/The%20Prodigal%20Son%20Spanish.pdf>

3. Discuss the following questions:
- When the son returns, what does he want from his father? (Possible responses: food, work, a safe place to live, his Father’s forgiveness and love.)
 - What does this story tell us about God? (Possible responses: God will always forgive us; God is happy when we say we are sorry.)
4. Review with your child all that happens – from the very beginning – in the Sacrament of Reconciliation: (Possible responses: We think about our sins, feel sorrow for them, confess them to a priest, accept our penance, pray the Act of Contrition, and receive absolution. God forgives our sins. We are reconciled with the Church). Review the Act of Contrition using the **Act of Contrition Study Sheet**.
5. Role play the Sacrament of Reconciliation with your child.

PART SIX: WE GO FORTH

REFLECTION: *Now, we will reflect on the meaning of penance, the final movement in the Sacrament of Penance. When someone is genuinely sorry for a wrong they have done and has asked for forgiveness, they often go to great lengths to show the other person how sorry they truly are. Penance can be understood in that light. Penance has a two-fold purpose; it serves as atonement (amends or reparation) for sin and as a sign of conversion (willingness to change). When we celebrate this sacrament, we leave with the firm resolve to change what needs to be changed in our lives in order that we would grow in holiness—that we would become the person*

that God created us to be. The penance we carry is a sign of both our desire to make amends and the hope of our becoming more authentic disciples of Christ. Those who experience God's loving forgiveness in this sacrament, offer mercy and love in their actions and relationships.

NOTE TO PARENTS:

The holy water used in the Sacrament of Baptism makes us one with Christ. Holy water is used at other times to bless people and objects. The water helps us to remember God's place in our lives. Just now, in our ritual you were sprinkled with water to remind you of your Baptism. The other ritual action we performed was the Sign of Peace. When we offer peace to one another, it is always the Lord's peace we give—a peace that begins with our trust that Jesus can turn all darkness into light.

1. Review with your child that conversion means to grow and change so we become more like Jesus. Think of a way you have seen your child grow emotionally or spiritually in the last year. Children often say, "When I was little..." to describe their own growth in understanding. Share what you have noticed with your child and tell him/her how proud you are when he/she does something good. (He has learned to take his turn. She shares with others. He is doing better at handling anger or disappointment.) Now, share a way that you hope to grow. (Make more time to be at home. Volunteer in your local community. Pray more.)
2. Read **Jesus Appears to the Disciples**, (*John 20:19-29*). Remind your child that you are about to hear from Scripture, the Word of God. We are Jesus' disciples in this world and so Jesus is speaking to us right now in this place. Sharing God's word is one of the most special things a parent and child can do. Take a moment before you read, and silently ask the Holy Spirit to help you to hear what you need to hear in order to help you to grow in faith, hope, and love. Read the Scripture story to your child.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

The disciples were frightened. Jesus had been killed. They were hiding in a room with the door locked. They were afraid that they would be killed like Jesus was. Suddenly, Jesus stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." Then He showed them his hands and side where He was wounded on the cross. The disciples were so happy to see Jesus alive. Jesus told them that He was sending them to tell others about God's love. He told them they would receive the Holy Spirit to help them with this task.

3. Ask him/her to tell the story back to you, then discuss the questions: What do you think Jesus was sending the disciples to do? (Possible responses: to share God’s love, to forgive sins, to teach about God.) How are you forgiving of your friends? (Possible responses: I say “You are Forgiven; or “It’s OK”, I do not hold a grudge.)

NOTE TO PARENTS:

Despite their betrayal, denial, and inability to remain faithful, the first words of the Risen Jesus to his disciples are, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). John tells us that the risen Jesus not only speaks a message of peace to his disciples, but also affects that peace in the relationship he has with them. Jesus’ words teach us that nothing the disciples could say or do could change God’s desire for them—everlasting life with him.

Discuss with your child what kind of commitment to forgiveness are you and your child willing to make.

Help each other complete the ending of each sentence:

I, _____ (name of parent) promise to be a forgiving person who

I, _____ (name of child) promise to be a forgiving person who

Now, offer each other a **Sign of Peace** as you go forth to live out your promises and prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance.