

First Reconciliation Preparation: A Guide for Parents

*Welcome to this important time in your family's life with Jesus Christ and His Church. This preparation time for First Reconciliation marks another important step in your child's formation in the Catholic faith. This preparation is not just for his/her "first" Reconciliation; it is preparation for a lifetime that only **begins** with First Reconciliation. It is our hope that your child will experience the forgiveness and healing of our loving God through this sacrament many times! Your parish is your partner in this preparation, and is committed to supporting you in your responsibility as Christian parents. May God bless you on this faith journey!*

Parents – You Are #1

Parents, you are the #1 influence on your child's faith, and what you do to nurture that faith at home and in your parish are vitally important. The Second Vatican Council noted the importance of the home in nurturing faith in its reference to the family as "the domestic church" or the "Church of the Home". In essence, **the family is the most basic foundation of the Church.**



Parents, you have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so, you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of the faith..." (Rite of Baptism)

During this time of preparation for First Reconciliation, you will have the opportunity to grow in your own understanding and appreciation of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Penance. Your parish will provide you with many opportunities to learn along with your children, and to nurture faith at home with prayers and practices, family activities for the home and in the parish, print and web resources, opportunities to love and serve others. We urge you to take advantage of these many opportunities as you are able.

What Does First Reconciliation Preparation Look Like?

A child who was baptized Catholic and is at least seven years of age is eligible to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation after sufficient preparation. **In fact, a baptized child must receive preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance) and have the opportunity to receive it before s/he begins preparation for First Communion.** This preparation most often takes place in the Fall of the year, with the celebration of First Reconciliation taking place normally in the Advent Season, just prior to Christmas.

It is important to enroll your child in your parish's faith formation program as early as possible (most parishes begin children's programs in Kindergarten or Grade 1) so s/he can have a basic catechesis before preparing for the sacraments.

The format of the preparation varies from parish to parish, so check with your parish to find out the particulars. Generally, there will be sessions for children or for parents/children together; a retreat; at-home activities.



The goal of the preparation period is to

- Nurture a child's relationship to Jesus Christ as the one who loves us and showers God's mercy upon us
- Nurture an appreciation of the sacrament of reconciliation as a way to experience God's mercy and forgiveness
- Nurture the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation as a way of living

How will I know if my child is ready to receive First Reconciliation?

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.

**This guide was developed by
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