



FIRST RECONCILIATION PREPARATION

“GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS” **in Preparing Their Children for First Penance**

Your child's First Penance is a special event in his/her life. The preparation for receiving the Sacrament and the interest of his/her parents will affect a lifelong attitude towards this Sacramental Encounter with God's forgiving love.

The role of the parent preparing the child for reconciliation begins before a child starts school. The parent consciously and unconsciously, instills in their child a hierarchy of values, a sense of right and wrong, an understanding of the words "sorry", "apology", and "forgiveness". These are important elements in a child's preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation.

Here are a few guidelines to help you in preparing your child:

1. A child needs love and security.

Forming a child's conscious begins (and continues) with a parent's love. Your affection, firmness and encouragement can teach your children that they are good. If a child grows up with the impression that their parents (or God) will stop loving them when they misbehave, their conscious development will be crippled. They learn to love and trust when they are loved.

2. A child needs to experience forgiveness.

If a child is to believe in God's forgiveness and mercy, he/she must experience the forgiveness of parents. Your child needs to feel pardoned by you.

3. A child needs to experience the fact that God is a loving Father.

Be careful not to present an image of God as a "law enforcer" in order to pressure the child to obey. Rather, let us teach our children that God loves us always - His love never changes regardless of what we do.

4. A child needs to understand the reason for Rules and Laws.

Does your child realize that there is love behind your rules at home? Does he/she see that the commandments are rooted in love of God and of our neighbor?

5. A child needs a true understanding of sin.

Sin is failing obey God on purpose. It is very important for us to help the child recognize the difference between sins (deliberate acts done on purpose) and temptations, accidents, or making mistakes. Sin is doing wrong on purpose and choosing not to love.

6. A child needs to learn to make choices.

In this area of moral development, the parent can help his/her child learn how to make good choices by discussing some of the simple choices he/she makes each day. This will lead the child to see what the results might have been if different choices had been made. It is important that the child recognize his/her responsibility for words and actions.

7. **A child needs to understand the reason for Reconciliation.**

Reconciliation is the process of making up and becoming friends again. Encourage your child to understand that we feel happier and much better about ourselves and others after we have apologized and been forgiven.

8. **A child needs to understand why we go to receive the Sacrament of Penance.**

We receive the Sacrament of Penance to confess our sins to the priest for the purpose of being forgiven and restored to friendship with God's family. The priest is a sign of Jesus' presence and is also a sign that the Church, the family of God, is happy to see us back home. *(We'd like your input as to how you can implement these in your home)*

9. **Please be sure to review the Examination of Conscience several times with your children.**

Your child's readiness to receive the Sacrament of Penance manifests itself in the child's ability to relate to others; in his/her daily experience of forgiving and being forgiven; in his/her attitudes towards sharing and accepting responsibility.

But perhaps the most important element of readiness is the child's experience of your love, which is the foundation for understanding a loving God.

PRAYER OF SORROW

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.

Our Savior Jesus Christ
suffered and died for us.
In His name, my God, have mercy.
Amen.

Please Note:

Penance at St. James is celebrated every Saturday morning at 11AM in the Church.

FIRST PENANCE - EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Here are some questions that the children need to reflect on now in order to make a good confession: *(these can be found on pages 68-69 in 2nd grade textbook)*

- **Caring for God**

Do I listen to God?

Do I talk to God?

Do I thank God for making me special?

Do I thank God for all the gifts He has given me?

Do I tell God I'm sorry when I am selfish and don't share what God gave me?

- **Caring for Others**

Do I always tell the truth?

Am I kind to other people, especially to people who are different from me?

Do I help others?

Do I listen to others?

Do I forgive people who hurt me?

Do I obey my parents and others who care for me?

Do I thank other people for what they do for me?

- **Caring for Myself**

Do I take care of my health?

Do I try to learn new things from my family, my teachers, and my friends and neighbors?

- **Caring for Things**

Do I take care of what I have?

Do I share my things?

Do I respect what belongs to others?

Do I treat animals and the earth with care?

FORMAT FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

1. Go into the room and sit facing Father.
2. Father will greet you.
Make the sign of the Cross and say "Bless me Father, these are my sins."
3. Tell how you have not loved others or yourself.
4. Listen to Father. (He will ask you to say a prayer or do a good deed.)
5. Say the Act of Contrition. (Not for **First** Penance)
6. Father forgives you and blesses you.
7. Say "Thank You Father"

FOR OUR CHILDREN – WORKING WITH PARENTS

Learning about THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

PARENTS: Sit and review with your child

As you prepare to receive the sacrament of reconciliation, you should first spend some time thinking about what you will tell the priest. It's not necessary to tell every sin but you should mention faults and sins that you have the most trouble with.

When you enter the reconciliation room, the priest will greet you, to help you feel at ease. He may say "hello" or "Peace be with you."

Then, you tell the priest your sins and he listens and asks you to do something to show that you are willing to change your behavior. Say "Bless me, father, for I have sinned . . ." Or you may tell the priest your sins in your own words. The important thing is that you want to be a better person, and that you want to follow Jesus in your daily life. After listening to you, the priest will suggest that you do some action or say some prayer as a penance. *(You do your penance after you leave the confessional and sit quietly in your pew. You should also spend time after receiving the sacrament of Penance to talk to God in your own words.)*

Tell the priest that you are truly sorry for your sins, either by reciting a formal prayer, or by saying a prayer of sorrow in your own words. His concern will be that you are truly sorry for your sins.

The priest will extend his hands over you as he prays that you will receive God's forgiveness: "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit . . ."

The priest will help you by saying something like this: "Go in peace, and proclaim to the world the wonderful works of God." Then you simply say thank you and leave the reconciliation room.

TO THE PARENTS:

It is important that children know not only what things are sins, but what things are not sins (accidents, mistakes, bad manners, and so forth). Talk with them about things you have done that were accidents or mistakes. Explain that these things made you feel sorry and tell them what you did to make up for them.

Your children are learning the difference between mistakes and accidents and sins. You can underline this message at home every time your child makes a mistake or has an accident or commits a sin. The important thing is for your child to begin to form a right conscience.

There is a delicate balance between awareness of wrongdoing and a sense of guilt for every little thing that goes wrong. Once your child understands that he or she cannot commit a sin by accident or mistake – and that sin requires a decision – they will know the difference.

To reinforce the difference, each evening discuss the events of the day with your child and make note of both the positive and negative experiences of the day.

Discuss each action with your child. Help make it clear that in order to sin one must first know the difference between right and wrong – and then choose to do the wrong thing. Reinforce the positive actions taken.

Once you have established the difference between accidents and sins, have the children read the stories below, and discuss them with your child.

JANIE FINDS A DOLLAR

Janie and Mary are very good friends. One day at school, Janie was very sad. She wanted to buy her mother a birthday present, but she didn't have any money. Mary was sad too. Her mother had given her a dollar for lunch money, but she had lost it. When Janie put on her coat to leave that afternoon, she saw Mary's dollar on the floor. Mary didn't see the dollar. A dollar would buy a nice present for her mother, Janie thought. Mary would never know that Janie found the money.

What do you think Janie will do? What would you do? What would be the love choice? Would it be a sin if Janie kept the money?

TIMMY TAKES A RIDE

Johnny had a new bike. He asked Timmy if he wanted to take a ride. Timmy was very excited about riding Johnny's new bike. He hopped on and rode around the block twice. Each time he passed Johnny, they waved at each other. The third time around the block, a little dog came running at Timmy, snapping at his heels. Timmy got so scared he tipped the bike over. The beautiful blue paint got all scratched. Timmy felt like crying. Maybe if he didn't say anything, Johnny would never notice.

Did Timmy commit a sin when he damaged Johnny's bike? Should Timmy tell Johnny about the accident? Can you think of something Timmy can do to make up for scratching Johnny's bike?

LUCY FAILS A TEST

Lucy has a hard time with arithmetic. She often gets the answers wrong. One afternoon, the teacher asked Lucy to come up in front of the class and do an example on the blackboard. Lucy was very scared, but she tried. And guess what – she got the answer wrong just like she feared she would. She was afraid the teacher would be angry. She thought the class would laugh or that God would be disappointed in her. Lucy felt like she wanted to cry.

Did Lucy commit a sin when she got the problem wrong? How would you feel if you were Lucy? How do you think God feels about Lucy's mistake?