

Sacrament of Penance Family Information Booklet



**St. Francis of Assisi
2025-2026**

+Dear Parents,

This Parent Handbook is provided to you to help you prepare your child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The Catholic Church teaches that the task of forming children in the faith is the primary responsibility of parents. We find this role of parents in the Rite of Baptism when the priest says to you, the parents, “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training them in the practice of faith. It will be your duty to bring them up to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?” You responded “Yes.” This parent handbook will assist you in carrying out the “Yes” you professed at your child’s Baptism.

During this preparation your role will not be so much about “informing” your child. The church asks of you to be models, modeling a reconciling relationship with God and others that will lead your child to develop similar relationships. Your focus should not be only on the first celebration of reconciliation in church, but on the time that follows this celebration- the ongoing, lived experience of becoming a disciple of Christ.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel. “Be not afraid.” The Holy Spirit will give you the grace you will need. You can learn together with your child. Remember that learning our faith is a lifelong process.

May Our Lord, who forgives us our sins, grant you and your child a love for this Sacrament of God’s mercy.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Madelyn McBride

Madelyn McBride

First Reconciliation 2025-2026



Parent Meeting

Monday

January 12, 2026

The Church

7:00PM

First Reconciliation

It will not occur on a Saturday!

Thursday, March 12, 2026

6:30PM

Parents/Guardians should bring their child to their classroom.

Parents then go over to Church...no reserved seating.

The children will be brought to Church by their catechist.

Details Concerning First Penance

1. The Prayer Service

- Gathering Hymn
- Greeting
- Opening Prayer
- Gospel
- Homily
- Examination of Conscience
- The Our Father
- Concluding Prayer
- **Individual Confession and Absolution:**
 - When the priests have reached the place of confession, the children will be led by their Catechist to a priest for individual confession...Face to Face or in a Confessional.
 - When each child has had their confession heard he/she will return to the pew to pray their penance.
 - Once they are finished each child will remain in his/her pew until one parent comes to the pew to take him/her home.



In order to foster the sacredness of this sacrament, we request that all parents refrain from all speaking and take no pictures during confessions.

Any parent who wishes to go to confession is invited to do so after all the children have celebrated their First Penance. You will find an Examination in the pew for you.

Please prepare your children to celebrate their First Penance by using the information in your Parent Handbook...Form for Confession and Act of Contrition.

What is a Sacrament?

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life (grace) is dispensed to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions.”

What is Grace?

All Sacraments give grace. Grace is both God’s life and God’s help. See grace as life in Christ. Thus, receiving grace means growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ and his family, the Church.

Sacrament of Penance

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is called the *sacrament of conversion* because it makes sacramentally present Jesus; call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from whom one has strayed by sin.”

“It is called the *sacrament of Penance*, since it consecrates the Christian sinner’s personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance and satisfaction.”

“It is called the *sacrament of confession*, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a “confession” – acknowledgement and praise- of the holiness of God and his mercy toward sinful man.”

“It is called the *sacrament of forgiveness*, since by the priest’s sacramental absolution God grants the penitent “Pardon and peace.”

“It is called the *sacrament of Reconciliation*, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles: “Be reconciled to God.” He who lives by God’s merciful love is ready to respond to the Lord’s call: “Go; first be reconciled to your brother.”

Understanding Sin

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

“Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason, conversion entails both God’s forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.”

Communal Aspects of Sin

The church is the family of God. We became part of this family at Baptism. At Baptism, we became children of God.

Anytime a member of God's family sins, the whole family is touched by this separation. That is why the sacrament is sometimes a communal celebration where the parish family comes together asking for forgiveness.

The Effects of this Sacrament

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

"The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God's grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship. Reconciliation with God is thus the purpose and effect of this sacrament. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation "is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation." Indeed the sacrament of Reconciliation with God brings about a true "spiritual resurrection," restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God."

The spiritual effects of the sacrament of Penance are:

- reconciliation with God by which the penitent recovers grace.
- reconciliation with the Church.
- remission of the eternal punishment incurred by mortal sins.
- remission, at least in part, of temporal punishment resulting from sin.
- peace and serenity of conscience, and spiritual consolation.
- an increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle.

Moral Conscience

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

"Every person is created with a conscience within his innermost being where the voice of God calls him to love, to do what is good and to avoid evil."

"Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act."

Life-long helps to forming one's conscience:

- faith
- prayer to the Holy Spirit
- a life of charity
- interior reflection of self-examination of conscience in light of the Lord's Cross (CCC)
- the witness and advice of others
- the teaching of the Catholic Church (CCC)

Stumbling blocks to a healthy conscience according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

- ignorance of Christ and his Gospel
- bad example given by others
- enslavement to one's passions
- assertion of a mistaken notion of autonomy of conscience
- rejection of the Church's authority and her teaching
- lack of conversion and of charity

Importance of Regular Reconciliation

The Code of Canon Law states, "All the faithful who have reached the age of discretion are bound faithfully to confess their grave sins at least once a year. The faithful are bound to confess, in kind and in number, all grave sins committed after baptism, of which after careful examination of conscience they are aware, which have not yet been directly pardoned by the keys of the Church, and which have not been confessed in an individual confession." According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, yearly confession is the second precept of the Church and thus is one of the ways the faithful are guaranteed to be doing "the very necessary minimum...in the growth in love of God and neighbor. According to the Code of Canon Law, "The faithful are recommended to confess also venial sins."

Responsibilities of Parents

Parents:

- ❖ are primary educators of their children
- ❖ are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life
- ❖ serve as models for their children by being moral Christians
- ❖ receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharist regularly
- ❖ help their children in forming a good conscience and a Christian code of morality
- ❖ model forgiveness
- ❖ attend Sunday Mass and Holy Days of Obligation with your children
- ❖ have family prayer time together daily
- ❖ have religious articles in the home

Preparing Your Child for First Penance

This preparation should be one that seeks:

- ❖ to make clear the relationship of the sacrament to your child's life
- ❖ to help your child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrongdoing, and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church
- ❖ to encourage your child to see that in this sacrament faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving
- ❖ to encourage your child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly, and to understand that Christian faith is expressed in forgiving others and seeking forgiveness when necessary

How Can I Help My Child in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

- know, love, and receive the sacrament yourself
- talk to your child about their understanding of the sacrament, sin and forming their conscience
- practice the form for confession with your child
- help your child memorize the Act of Contrition
- take them to church and show them the confessionals and the Reconciliation Room
- read stories from the Bible to your child concerning God's forgiveness
 - Luke 15: 1-10 The Lost Sheep
 - Luke 15: 11-31 The Lost Son
 - Luke 7: 36-50 The Pardon of the Sinful Woman
- practice the Sacrament regularly as a family



Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the privilege and responsibility of evangelizing their children.

CCC 2225

RECONCILIATION

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Your child is being taught the fundamentals for his age to meet Jesus in the Sacrament of Penance. It is the Sacrament through which we come to express our sorrow for failing to be like Jesus. God assures us He still loves us, believes in us and trusts us. He then promises to help us become better people. Sorrow is the most important part of the Sacrament of Penance.

This page will involve your role in preparing your child. The fact that you care and show that you care is what counts with God. He did not call you to be professors or theologians to your children; He called you to be Christian parents, in other words, to live in the knowledge of His love for you and to do your best to imitate Him.

Possibly the greatest contribution parents can offer their child is loving forgiveness. Because the child experiences this at home, he or she can understand that God willingly loves and forgives in the Sacrament of Penance.

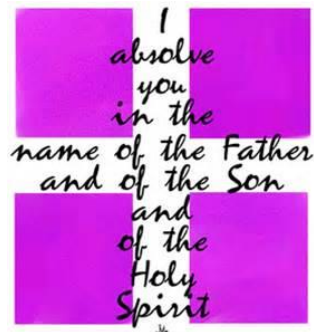
Children see how hard we parents and other adults close to them are trying to live in the most generous and loving way. When they see us fail, forgive one another, and try again, they are having the deepest learning experience of what Christianity is all about.

Your child's first Confession has a special significance in his or her life. The preparation and your interest will affect a lifelong attitude towards this sacramental encounter he or she has with Christ's forgiving love.

Here are some guidelines:

- 1.** See to it that your child approaches Confession without fear, but with love and confidence. He/She should confess out of assurance of God's forgiving love rather than out of fear of God's anger. Encourage him/her to be frank with God and with himself/herself. Children are born without fear. Fear is something learned, perhaps from others, or unconsciously from stories of ourselves, for example, fear of darkness, etc. You know your child; you can eliminate these fears.
- 2.** Give your child the opportunity to experience the forgiveness of Christ in your forgiveness of others.
- 3.** Point out to the child the opportunity he/she must forgive his/her brothers, sisters, playmates.
- 4.** Instill in him/her a right concept of sin as failure to love God and a failure to love others. Breaking the Commandments is a sign that he/she does not love God or his/her neighbors enough.
- 5.** Be continually aware that your child is affected by all you do and say, by your reaction to his/her faults at playtime, in school and at home.
- 6.** Help him/her realize the distinction between sin and mistakes and common courtesy. He/She must learn from you that there is a considerable difference between an accident and a deliberate act of meanness.

7. Make your child aware of the presence of the priest in the confessional. He is there as a friend and most especially, as a representative of Christ.
8. Give special attention to the social aspects of sin and repentance. The good or evil he/she does affects his/her family and his/her relationships in the world in which he/she lives. Sin disrupts these relationships, for example, Adam and Eve.
9. Develop the practice of the family occasionally approaching the Sacraments together. As they grow older, they must feel free to do this more apart from the family.
10. Put emphasis on Mass and Communion, rather than Confession and Communion. Reason? They are two distinct Sacraments.
11. Do not give your child the impression that the Sacrament of Penance is the only means of purifying his/her heart from sin. The forgiveness of God is always available whenever we pray for forgiveness. Sacramental Confession is needed for serious sins.
12. Do not frighten your child with the unreasonable fear of having committed serious sins. Young children are usually not capable of complete refusal to love God. The stress should be on the failure to love.
13. Do not scold in a manner harmful to the formation of a healthy conscience. Never, under any circumstances, correct him/her by saying "God will punish you for that". Such statements are not only poor psychology, but represent a vicious and untrue image of our God of Love.
14. Do not create moral confusion in your child by telling him/her the right action or attitude and then have them witness the opposite in your life. Be the example of the virtues you wish him/her to practice. Stress the positive rather than the negative aspects of life. Show him/her the importance of doing good, rather than merely avoiding evil. Teach him/her about apathy...not what I did, but what I failed to do.





An Examination of Conscience for Children

- 1. I am the Lord, your God. You shall have no other gods beside me.**
(Make God most important in your life.)
Have I put God first, or have I sometimes made other things in my life more important than God?
Do I remember to pray to God?
Do I choose what God wants for me over what I want for myself?

- 2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.**
(Use God's name the right way.)
Have I used God's name with care?
Have I used God's name in the wrong way? For example: Saying "God" when I wasn't really talking to him or talking about him.

- 3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath Day.**
(Make Sunday a day to worship God.)
Did I miss Mass on Sunday through my own fault?
Have I tried my best to worship God at Mass by singing, praying and listening?
Have I misbehaved during Mass?

- 4. Honor your father and your mother.**
(Love your parents and follow their rules.)
Have I obeyed my parents - even when they are not looking?
Have I talked back to them?
Have I obeyed my teacher and other adults in charge of my care?

5. You shall not kill.

(Be kind to people and animals God made.)

Have I been kind to others?

Have I solved disagreements in a peaceful way?

Have I fought with anyone?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

(Be respectful in the things you do.)

Have I been respectful in my actions.

Have I followed God's rules in how I treat my body and respect the bodies of others?

7. You shall not steal.

(Take care of other people's things; don't take what belongs to others.)

Have I respected other people's things?

Have I taken something that does not belong to me?

Have I cheated in my dealings with others?

8. You shall not lie.

(Tell the truth.)

Have I told the truth?

Have I told a lie or things that were partly true?

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

(Keep your thoughts and words virtuous.)

Have I been virtuous in the things I think and speak?

Have I watched any movies or shows that I should have not see?

Have I tried to keep my mind on good things?

10. You shall not desire your neighbor's good.

(Be happy with the things you have.)

Have I been happy with the things I have?

Have I been jealous of others?

Vocabulary for Understanding the Sacrament of Penance

Absolution

Comes from the Latin word which means “to wash.” It is the prayer the priest says while making the sign of the cross over the person receiving God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Act of Contrition

A prayer expressing sorrow for sin and the intention to do better

Contrition

Sorrow for sin.

Confession

After examining your conscience, explain my sins to the priest

Confessional

A small, enclosed area in the church that is reserved for confession; it has a place for the priest to sit and a kneeler for the person who is confessing

Confessional Room

A place set aside in the church for individual, private confession where the priest and the person sit together face- to – face or anonymously

Conscience

An inner sense that people must help them recognize right from wrong and to help them make moral decisions

Examination of Conscience

A sincere effort that I make to remember the sins I have committed and the good things I have said or done

Free Will

The power to choose or decide to do or not to do something based on a person’s own wish or desire

Penance

The prayer, good work, or action the priest asks me to do in order to express sorrow for my sin and the intention to become a better person and to be reconciled with God and the Church

Mortal Sin

A serious sin; a complete turning away from God’s love; a serious disruption in my personal relationship with Jesus

Temptation

A pull toward something a person really wants and is sometimes willing to do wrong to have it. Temptation is not a sin, but it can lure a person to sin.

Venial Sin ~ A less serious sin

Form for Confession

1. **In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**
2. **Bless me Father for I have sinned. This is my first confession. These
are my sins.**
3. After you have told your sins say:
I am sorry for these and all my sins.
4. Listen to the penance the priest will give you.
5. Listen to the words of absolution the priest will say.
6. **Make the Sign of the Cross as Father gives you absolution.**
6. When Father is finished, say **“Amen.”**

Act of Contrition

**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you,
and I detest all my sins because of your just punishments.
But most of all because they offend you, my God,
who are all good and deserving of all my love.**

**I firmly resolve with the help of your grace,
to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen.**

7. Proclamation of Praise and Dismissal

Priest: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

You: His mercy endures forever.





Christmas Gift Ideas for



Parents preparing Their Children for First Penance and First Communion

Books

- **Child's Guide to Reconciliation** by Elizabeth Ficocelli, Paulist Press, www.pulistpress.com
- **The Parables of Jesus** by Tomie dePaola
- **The Story of Ruby Bridges** by Robert Cole, Scholastic.com A true story of hatred, prejudice, and a child's forgiveness
- **The Butterfly That Found Her Way Home, A Story of Forgiveness** by Lademan, Brindle, New Hope Publications 800-764-8444
- **Down the Road** - Alice Schertle
- **Chester's Way** – by Kevin Henkes,
- **Where the Wild Things Are** by Maurice Sendak, A wonderful story telling of the prodigal son story
- **Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse** by Kevin Henkes, A story of confessions, penance, reconciliation, and peace
- **The Empty Pot** by Demi, Honesty is the best policy. On You Tube!
- **Even If I Did Something Awful** by Barbara Shook Hazen, A story of unconditional love
- **The Hurt** by Teddi Doleski, Paulist Press, www.paulistpress.com
- **A Peak into My Church** by Wendy Goody and Veronica Kelly
- **Child's Guide to First Holy Communion** – Elizabeth Ficocelli, Paulist Press

- **Child's Guide to the Mass** by Sue Stanton, www.paulistpress.com
- **Patron Saint of First Communicants-** The Story of Blessed Imelda Lambertini by Mary Fabyan Windeatt, Tan Books
- **My First Holy Communion** by Melissa Musick Nussbaum , a new edition, An invitation to learn and love the words that we say and sing at Mass
- **A Walk Through Our Church** by Gertrude Mueller Nelson, Paulist Press, www.paulistpress.com
- **Badger's Bring Something to Party** by Hiawyn Oram and Susan Varley
- **The Caterpillar That Came to Church** by Hooker, Brindle, Lademan
- **We Prepare for Reconciliation/We Share in the Eucharist**, Twenty-Third Publication 1-800-321-0411

DVD

- **First Communion: A Family Journey** – Oblate Media & Communication
- **A Child's First Penance** –Liguori Publications – www.liguori.org
- **A Child's First Communion** – Liguori Publications
- **Kids and the Sacraments-Reconciliation** ~ www.LoyolaPress.com
- **Kids and the Sacraments – Communion** ~ www.Loyola Press.com
- **Forgiven** ~ shop.catholicssupply.com 1- 314-644-0643
- **A Child's First Communion & So Much More** ~ shop.catholicssupply.com

Online Resource

- **Formed...**check out this free parish subscription which offers a wealth of resources.
- **Information of how to connect to FORMED** can be found on the parish website
- **There is always Amazon, EBay and Thriftbooks.**

The following religious stores in the area may carry many of these and they can order them for you:

St. Jude Shop Inc.
21 Brookline Blvd.
Havertown, PA 19083
610-789-1300

Robert Francis Shop
68 State Rd.
Media, PA 19063
610-352-5338