

Dear Parents,

It is in our homes — within our families, our everyday lives — that most people experience God and all the realities of our faith life.

We can never really understand and celebrate any of the sacraments if we haven't already lived them in our daily lives.

That is so true for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We live reconciliation continually day in and day out. The sorrow, apologizing, understanding, forgiveness, making up, sharing peace, making things better — and then starting all over again — that happens constantly in families is how children learn about God's unconditional love and forgiveness.

This poster isn't just for the days and weeks preceding the first celebration of reconciliation. Keep it handy to frequently share your thoughts, faith, and prayer as you reflect on the gift of God's forgiveness, and your desire to be a person of peace and forgiveness in your corner of God's world.



Immediate Preparation for the Sacrament

Talk with your children about his/her faith formation session and his/her thoughts and feelings about the sacrament.

Pray acts of sorrow (contrition) frequently with your family.

Read Scripture together and talk about what Jesus is telling us for our lives today.

How to Celebrate the Sacrament

Welcome your child warmly with a hug and kiss as he/she comes from the reconciliation room.

Talk happily about God's forgiveness and willingness to help us start over.

Make her/his favorite dinner or go out for ice cream after the sacramental celebration. During dinner pray in thanksgiving for God's love.



Ways to Use the Poster

Act of Contrition: Use this prayer as part of your family dinner or night prayer. Include an examination of conscience and sign of peace.

How I Celebrate Reconciliation: This is a step-by-step description of how the Church celebrates Rite I of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Talk about them with your child so that they feel very comfortable with the steps.

An Examination of Conscience: These questions can be used during family prayer at dinner or bedtime. All shouldn't be used at one time; pick and choose a few for each occasion. Include a Scripture reading, a prayer of sorrow and a sign of peace.

After the Celebration of the Sacrament: Warmly welcome your child as he/she returns from celebrating the sacrament. Offer encouragement to complete the penance given by the priest — often a prayer or kind action. Together, give thanks to God for His forgiveness.

The Lord's Prayer: This prayer is constantly important in our lives as Catholics. It has a unique place in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Pray it often and beyond these days of sacramental preparation. Use the ideas here to talk together and pray.

Daily Reflection: This is a practice that has been important in our Catholic tradition for hundreds of years. Change it to fit your family, and use it at dinner or bedtime. You will not only grow in God, but you will grow together.

Family Sharing Questions: In the car, at the dinner table, and/or before bed, share a simple (but deep!) question or open-ended sentence. And don't stop once reconciliation is celebrated for the first time. Continue to talk about your God-moments with one another.

Things that Parents Can Do to Help Children Prepare/Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- Model forgiveness in your relationships with your spouse, family, and your friends so your children will witness it.
- Encourage (don't force) your children to make up and/or say "I'm sorry" when there has been a disagreement.
- Help your children recognize a few simple faults for which they are responsible and can be sorry.
- Watch for opportunities to forgive your children when they have done wrong and are sorry.
- Give example by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation yourself.
- As a family, participate in a parish reconciliation service, especially during Advent and Lent.
- Occasionally during your family dinner prayer include a family examination of conscience.
- As you watch TV together, talk about the actions and events that are portrayed. Where do you see the need for forgiveness and reconciliation?



Examination of Conscience for Parents

Do I make an effort to see everyone in my family as good people? When we disagree, do I step back and look for the goodness in them?

How much time do I spend with my family? When I am with them, do they have my full attention?

Do I show my appreciation and gratitude to my family? Do I compliment them, thank them — or do I spend more time concentrating on what I don't like?

Am I ever sarcastic with family members? When we argue, do I say things intentionally to hurt them?

Am I careful about using things that belong to other people in the family?

Do I take time to pray with my family?
Do I talk with them about God?

Do I make time to really listen to other family members?

Examination of Conscience for Families

Do people look at us and say, "See how they love one another ... and others?"

As a family, do we care for creation?

Are we interested in and care for others beyond our own family circle?

How did we respect one another this week? How do we reach out to those who are needy, to those who are lonely, to those who might be different than we are?

How do we make peace in our family? How do we spread peace around? What can we do about world peace?

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