Preparing Your Child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

A Parent's Guide

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish
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It is with great joy that we anticipate the events of this year. We invite you to be a part of the planning and celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion with our second graders.

The First Reconciliation + First Communion Committee (FR+FCC) is always seeking more volunteers to assist in this very important task. For more information please contact the parish office.

*God bless you!*
Dear Parents,

Welcome and thank you for taking seriously the promise you made at your child’s baptism to “keep the flame of faith burning brightly” in his or her heart.

This second grade year is a very special one for your family. Your children are now considered of an age where they can understand the concepts necessary to learn about and experience Jesus fully in the celebration of the Eucharist. Likewise, they have an understanding of right and wrong and are able to recognize the need for forgiveness. Together we will prepare them to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist for the first time. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish is happy to assist you in this task.

So it is with great joy that we welcome you to this year-long process of preparing and celebrating with these youngsters this next step in their faith life.

In Christ,
Father Michael Cordier
INTRODUCTION

Let's consider what a sacrament is. The traditional Catholic definition of a sacrament states that it is "an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace." In the Catechism of the Catholic Church it refers to sacraments as "the signs and instruments by which the Holy Spirit spreads the grace of Christ throughout the Church." *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* # 774

This "grace" is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God. *CCC # 1996*

The Rite of Penance, has many dimensions. It is the sacrament of conversion, penance, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Once we realize the need for conversion we move through the different aspects of the sacrament.

- **Conversion** because it makes sacramentally present Jesus’ call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from whom we strayed by sin.
- **Penance** since it consecrates the Christian sinner’s personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction.
- **Confession** since the confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. It is also an acknowledgement and praise of God’s holiness and mercy toward sinful man.
- **Forgiveness** since by the priest’s sacramental absolution God grants "pardon and peace."
- **Reconciliation** because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles. *CCC #1423-1424*

Prayers for Everyday

"Be Faithful in Prayer" *Romans 12:12*

We learn prayers to say together in community and as individuals. The rosary is a powerful prayer we are encouraged to pray often. We can also be spontaneous and make up our own prayers. It can be a special blessing to include family prayer time in your home. Here are a few prayers your family might like to pray together:

**Guardian Angel Prayer**

Angel of God, my guardian, dear,
To whom God’s love commits me here.
Ever this day be at my side;
To watch and to guard, to rule and to guide. Amen

**Grace Before Meals**

Bless us, O Lord, and these Thy gifts,
which we are about to receive from Thy bounty,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Grace After Meals**

We give you thanks, O Almighty God, for all Thy benefits, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.
And may the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

**Prayer to the Holy Spirit**

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.
Prayers for Penance

We are often asked to pray these prayers for our penance after confession.

The Lord’s Prayer

This is the prayer Jesus taught us.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and
forgive us our trespasses as
we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil. Amen

Hail Mary

We use this prayer to honor Mary, Mother of God.

Hail Mary,
full of Grace
the Lord is with you.
Blessed are you among women
and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners now and at the hour
of our death. Amen.

Glory Be to the Father

This is a prayer in praise of one God,
in three divine persons.

Glory to the Father,
and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall
be world without end Amen

RULES

We live in a world of laws and rules. If we abide by the law and obey rules, we will live well and at peace with our neighbor. If we break the rules, we hurt not only our ourselves, but also others. Good laws and rules help all of us.

God has given us laws and rules, too. The Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and the Beatitudes, are some of the rules of our faith. They are meant to guide and protect us.

When we sin, we break the rules God has given us. We offend God and hurt our neighbor and ourselves. The Sacrament of Reconciliation was instituted by Jesus Christ and given to us, the Catholic Church, as a means to reconcile sinners to God and their neighbor and to help us become a better, holier person.

Reconciliation is best achieved if we understand why rules exist. Parents, tell your child about some rules in your home and why they are important. (Bedtime, brushing teeth, picking up, chores, homework, etc.) They will better understand the consequences of their actions if they understand why the rule is in place.

Tell or read to your child a story of rules and what the sad consequences are when people disobey them. Relate this story to your own family and discuss ways that the your family reconciles.
IMPORTANCE OF MAKING GOOD CHOICES

Sometimes the consequence of choices are best understood by children from hearing stories about decisions made by others and the consequences that came from making them. Other times the consequence of choices are best learned from "lived" examples that come from our own families.

From a real experience in your family explore what happened, talk about the consequences of the decision that was made, and what could have been done differently to achieve a better result for all.

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A valuable source of stories to help your child understand choices and reconciliation is the Bible. The story of the Prodigal Son (or Forgiving Father as some books refer to it) is a wonderful one to help children understand God's love for them and how He waits for us to return to Him when we have strayed. This story can be found in Luke15:11-32.

The story of the Good Samaritan, also in Luke10:29-37 is a story that children can relate to. The choice to be compassionate and helpful is easily understood by youngsters.

The story of the Lost Sheep in Matthew18:10-14 also demonstrates God's care for each one of His children. If you do not have a family Bible you might consider purchasing one at this time.

Prayers Used in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Act of Contrition

This prayer expresses our sincere sorrow for having offended God and a firm desire, with God's grace, to avoid sin in the future.

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

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Sign of the Cross

Tracing with our hand the figure of the cross, we bless ourselves as follows:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Order of the Individual Rite
(Adapted)

Greet the priest

Make the Sign of the Cross

The second graders say, “Bless me Father for I have sinned, this is my first confession.

The rest of the penitents say, “Bless me Father for I have sinned, my last confession was_________.

Then you tell your sins to the priest.

When you are finished confessing your sins, you say: “I am sorry for these and all the sins of my past life.”

Now you listen carefully as the priest talks with you.

When he is finished speaking with you he gives you a Penance to pray or do.

After receiving your penance you pray the Act of Contrition

Father prays the prayer of Absolution and Forgiveness.

Individual Confession ends with a greeting of Peace.

You go back to your place and pray the penance you received.

IMPORTANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Showing a child love and understanding even when he or she has done something wrong is very important. “I love you, but I don’t like what you did to Sara” assures your child that you value him or her but are not pleased with a choice he or she has made.

Giving good example is very important in teaching about forgiveness. If parents say they are sorry to each other when some act brings anger or hurt to the other, it is a good example of reconciliation for the child. Children are encouraged to say “I’m sorry” and “I forgive you” when they see mom and dad say it to each other.

When a family experiences a moment of reconciliation, it should be acknowledged and celebrated. This can be as simple and spontaneous as a hug or a compliment.

These moments of reconciliation can be used by parents to create in their child an awareness of the joy and peace that comes from the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Just like the joy experienced by the family at a moment of family reconciliation, assure your child that he or she will feel this same joy after celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation in church with the priest.
The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments were given to guide us on the right path. They help us live the Great Commandment: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” Matthew 22:37-40

1. I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me. Put God first in your life and honor Him by living as a child of God.

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. Respect the name of God, the Father, and Jesus. Treat all holy things with respect. Do not use bad language.

3. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s Day. Go to Mass on Sunday and the Holy Days of obligation. Refrain from shopping and doing any unnecessary work on those days.

4. Honor your father and your mother. Obey and show respect for your parents, grandparents, teachers and all who have the responsibility to care for you.

5. You shall not kill. Recognize all life as a holy gift from God. Avoid anger and fighting. Take good care of your body and all of God’s creation.

Examination of Conscience

We prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation by praying to the Holy Spirit to help us look at our life and recognize ways we have not lived up to the Commandments, Beatitudes and Church teachings. Through this examination of conscience we realize how we have offended God and prepare to make a good confession.

Have I shown love and respect for God?

- Have I prayed to God each day?
- Am I listening to God speak to me at Mass?
- Do I always use God’s name with respect?
- Have I misused God’s name when I was angry or trying to impress others?

Have I shown love and respect for others?

- Have I been respectful to my parents, teachers and others who care for me?
- Do I obey my parents?
- Am I taking good care of my body?
- Do I follow all the rules that keep me safe?
- Have I taken care of my own and others things?
- Was I kind to those around me?
- Have I been generous with others?
- Do I share with those in need?
- Have I been careful not to take things that belong to others?
- Do I always tell the truth?
- Have I been fair in my dealings with others?
- Have I been greedy?

After prayerfully considering our life we ask the Holy Spirit to help us make a good confession. By recognizing we have done wrong, having a desire to confess our sins and the will to change the way we have been living, we are ready to ask God for mercy and forgiveness. With God’s grace we are forgiven and start again.
First Reconciliation Service

This is the outline for the celebration of your child’s First Reconciliation Service. When you arrive in Church you should pray quietly as you wait for the service to begin.

Introduction
Opening Song
Opening Prayer
First Reading
Psalm Response
Gospel Acclamation
Gospel
Homily
Prayers of the Faithful
Examination of Conscience
Closing Prayer
Closing Song
Individual Confession
=all family and friends of the children who attend are invited to receive the sacrament
Dismissal

6. You shall not commit adultery. Show respect for marriage and family life. Be faithful to your friends and members of your family. Respect your body and others as well.

7. You shall not steal. Respect things that belong to others. Do not cheat. Always ask permission before using something that doesn’t belong to you and return it when you are finished.

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Be honest, always tell the truth and do not gossip. Do not lie or damage another’s good reputation.

9. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. Respect the family and friends of other people. Do not be jealous of others.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods. Do not envy what other people have. Be grateful to God for the blessings you have received. Share what you have with others, especially those in need. Do not be greedy or seek more than you need.
The Beatitudes
Matthew 5: 1-12

Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount that decisions we make are important. The Beatitudes show us how to live and bring peace to ourselves and others.

**Blessed are the poor in spirit,**
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
*Have faith in God and trust in His love for you.*

**Blessed are those who mourn,**
for they will be comforted.
*Help those who are sad and need comfort.*

**Blessed are the meek,**
for they will inherit the earth.
*Be kind to others and treat them with respect.*

**Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,** for they will be filled.
*Always treat others fairly.*

**Blessed are the merciful,**
for they will receive mercy.
*Forgive others as you have been forgiven by God.*

**Blessed are the pure in heart,**
for they will see God.
*Keep God first in your mind and your heart.*

**Blessed are the peacemakers,**
for they will be called children of God.
*Seek to solve your problems without hurting others and be kind to all.*

**Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,** for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
*Do what God wants, even if people laugh or make fun of you.*

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The Precepts of the Church

The Church has established rules that help us live in accord with the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. The precepts of the church show us what we need to do to show our love for God and our neighbor.

The Precepts of the Church are:

- Attend Mass on Sunday and holy days of obligation and refrain from any unnecessary work.

- Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year.

- Receive Holy Communion at least once a year during the fifty days of Easter.

- Fast and abstain from eating meat on the days of penance.

- Share what you can in support of the church and her efforts to bring the good news to others.