



SACRAMENT OF FIRST CONFESSION: PREPARATION NOTES FOR PARENTS & CANDIDATES

ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE, MOUNTVIEW & BLAKESTOWN

Greetings from the parish office in Mountview & Blakestown.

Welcome to this time of 'unusual' preparation for the Sacrament of First Confession. We hope that the notes below, which replaces the customary meeting with parents before the First Confession, will give you and your child some understanding as well as make your child's Sacrament of First Confession a meaningful faith experience.

It is always the primary responsibility of the parents to prepare the children and instruct them in matters of faith. Therefore, please prepare the children at home to understand the importance of the Sacraments they are going to receive in a few weeks' time. Please go through their religion book 'Grow in Love' and help them complete the pending works and lessons. Again, I am sure you will find a number of useful resources online from the Catholic world in addition to the skimpy notes that I have prepared below and their school religion book.

Let me begin by offering you our heartfelt congratulations on in assisting your child to understand about Catholic faith, Mass, forgiveness, sharing the Eucharist and above all making Jesus their friend and guide. This is a time of new beginnings for everyone, especially for your child as s/he takes another step in the faith formation. The Church rejoices with you in this most wonderful time!

After reading this carefully, please do not hesitate to contact the parish office if you have any questions or other needs.

May God bless you and your family!

Celebrating Your Child's First Confession

What should your child learn about the Sacrament of Confession or Sacrament of Reconciliation?

The Sacrament of Confession emphasises preparing your child for this sacrament based on times when they did not live as Jesus asked them.

Parents need to teach your child about the relationships. Your teaching might focus on the fundamental goodness of us all as God's children. The children learn how, despite their own uniqueness, they need relationships. If they do not make an effort, if they are selfish, bully or generally misbehave they break these relationships. They become disconnected from their own goodness, from the group and from God. To re-establish these relationships, they are challenged to see where they have gone wrong or where they could have done better (examination of mind), they acknowledge it and say sorry. So, in a very concrete way they learn what the Sacrament of Reconciliation is about.

Examination of Conscience

Teach your child how to pray an Examination of Conscience each night before bed, or as often as time allows. Some families do this together as a family before bed, silently reflecting on their days while mom or dad read the Examination out loud.

Talk about the Sacrament of Reconciliation Together

Before your child receives the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it's important they understand what it is and why we do it. Spend time talking with your child about this great healing Sacrament.

Read together with your child about when Jesus instituted the Sacrament and gave his apostles the authority to forgive sins in His Name in the Gospel of John chapter 20:19-23. The Healing of a Paralytic in the Gospel of Mark chapter 2:1-12, is also a good example of Jesus's authority to forgive sins and an example of faith and trust in His healing power.

Explain to your children that going to Confession is not about getting into trouble; it's about asking God for forgiveness and receiving God's Grace to do better. Listen to your child's questions and encourage them to learn more by asking more questions.

How can you help prepare your child for and support your child during the Sacrament so they are not nervous?

Go over the prayers they have learned in school or at home these days with them. Bring them into the Church during the week and say the prayers with them there. Assure them that you will be close by during the Confession. It's also important that you practice with the child at home the prayers and how the confession actually takes paces in the church.

Practice, practice, practice! Like with any sport, musical instrument, or other skill - continuous practice is essential. The same is true for preparation for all the Sacraments. As your child's first reconciliation approaches, take time to role play with them what they will do in their real confessions. Except, you can tell them they don't have to really tell you their sins - unless of course they really want to. Maybe you'll finally find out who really took that item you've been searching everywhere for.

Go to Confession as a Family

Aside from practicing how to go to confession with your child, practice actually *going* to confession as a family. As parents, we are the first educators for our children when it comes to our Faith. However, the best way to really teach our children about the Faith is to *practice* it by living it out in our every day life. Showing your child that you can take the time to go to confession makes a deeper and longer-lasting impression than all the hours you might spend talking or reading about it with them.

Pray Together

Aside from all the talking, reading, and practicing, the most essential step in preparing your child - and yourself - for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is *prayer*. Through prayer, we join in an intimate conversation with God. We ask Him to open our hearts to Him, show Him our weaknesses, and ask for His infinitely merciful forgiveness. Pray with *and* for your child, asking God to prepare him or her for this great Sacrament.

Together, you can pray the Act of Contrition with your child and also the Prayer to Your Guardian Angel to help them make good choices and be ready to receive God's mercy.

How do I talk about sins to my child?

Use the idea of showing God's love and not showing God's love. them to think about times when they did not show love or to think of something they were not proud of doing or indeed think of something they could have done better. This will help them think (i.e. do an examination of conscience), acknowledge it, plan to do better and ask forgiveness. There are some suggestions below to help your child think of some ways they have not shown God's love. You may have ones that are specific to your child and family life and values that you could include. If you feel

that your child will be nervous on the day you could write the main points and prayers on a card which they can bring with them to the Priest.

Suggestions for ways of considering how we have not shown God's love:

I didn't show love when:

- I didn't do what I was told,
- I took something that didn't belong to me,
- I used bad language,
- I lied to my parents,
- I fought with my brother/sister,
- I didn't listen very well,
- I didn't play fairly,
- I had a fight with my friend,
- I didn't say my prayers,
- I was mean,
- I didn't share,
- I hit someone,
- I called someone names,
- I could have been better doing this or that....

Children truly understand that they are forgiven when they say sorry. They have no problem accepting the unconditional love of God.

What will happen on the day?

On the day of First Confession, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place in the Church. The child's confession will be heard by a priest in the open but in private. Confession boxes are not used for First Confession.

Our priests will be sitting on a chair and your child will sit opposite them. The parent or guardian brings the child forward and introduces the child to the priest. They stand back and wait for the child to finish. The child returns to the parent and gives them a hug.

Confession – Step by Step

Parent: Father, this is my daughter/son N.

Priest: N. you're very welcome. (parents/guardian steps back)

Priest: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Child: Bless me Father for I have sinned; this is my First Confession.

Priest: What ways have you not shown God's love?

Child: I didn't show love when.... (see suggestions above)

Priest: Thank you (and he will say a few words of encouragement to your child) and now will you pray your Act of Sorrow?

Child: O, My God. Thank you for loving me. I am sorry for all my sins. For not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen.

Priest: N. God the Father forgives you and I absolve you of all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Priest: Congratulations, you have made your First Confession.

Child: Stand up and go back to their parents and parent/s give a hug.

Practical tips and information

- Hand sanitisers will be available at entrance and at the back of the church
- A prayerful atmosphere needs to be maintained while in the church
- Need to follow social distancing and other regulations and guidelines of HSE.
- The Sacrament of First Confession this year will be celebrated in small groups according to their respective classes. Each group is given 30 minute slot and there will be no liturgy around the sacrament.
- When you come to the church there will be priests already seated to hear the confession and you may send your child straight to the priest for confession. Please train them according to this document.
- Once the confession of your child is over, you may leave the church after spending a short while in prayerful silence.
- The candidate will be accompanied only by parent/s or guardians. Other members or family may **NOT** be invited to this celebration
- It's important that you arrive within your time slot.
- Toilet facilities will **NOT** be provided these days of restrictions
- All are **asked to refrain from taking pictures** during the celebrations.

Thank you.

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