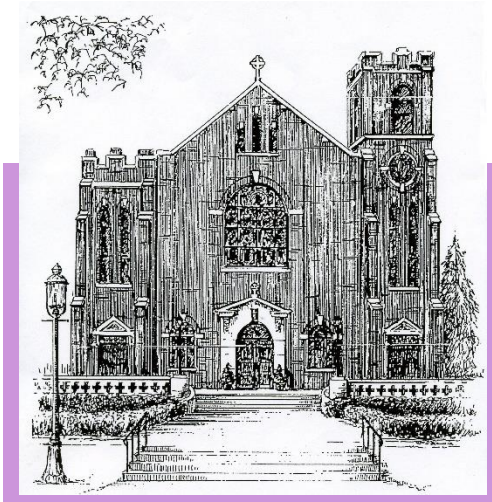
Church of St. Mary Catholic Church

Sacrament of Reconciliation

PARENT HANDBOOK

Year 2: Immediate Preparation



Welcome

This is the year your child(ren) will prepare to experience God's love and forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to receive Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the first step in this sacramental journey. Please take the time to review the preparation materials included in this parent guide. Mark your calendars for the preparation events and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our clergy, parish staff, Religious Education catechists, and St. Mary's School teachers are all here to assist your family as you prepare your child(ren) for their first Reconciliation. We continue to pray for you and your family as you make this sacramental journey.

Family Prayer

Dear God, our Father,
You love us so much that You sent us
the gift of Your only Son, Jesus.
You allowed Him to join the human family, and to grow in wisdom, age, grace and obedience with a mother and father.
In so doing, You have made all families holy and special.
During this special time, as we prepare to receive the Sacraments, help us as a family to remember our call to grow in holiness.
Help us to have a happy home founded on unselfishness.
Help us to show our love through our everyday actions and words.
Help us to pray together and to remember one another in prayer.
Help us to worship You and to turn to You in Reconciliation.
Then, with Your help, we will be a living example of Your love in our world.
Amen.

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I baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

(Rite of Baptism)

By Our Baptism

We are all children of God by our Baptism. "Baptism is the first of the seven Sacraments, and the "door" which gives access to the other Sacraments. Baptism is the first and chief Sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins." (CCC 977) Through our Baptism, we are cleansed from Original Sin. "The forgiveness we received then is so full and complete that three remained in us absolutely nothing left to efface, neither original sin or offenses committed by our own will…" (CCC 978)

Archdiocesan Guidelines for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

"Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion." (CCC 1422)

i. The Archdiocese of Chicago requires all children to complete two years of formal catechesis prior to receiving the Sacrament. Children must be in the second grade or older in order to receive the Sacrament.
ii. "Sunday…is to be observed as the foremost holy day of obligation in the universal Church. On Sundays and other holy days of obligation the faithful are bound to participate in the Mass. (CCC 2192) ***As your child's primary educator in the Catholic faith, you are expected to attend Mass with your children every Sunday and on holy days.***
iii. Parents and/or guardians are to attend ALL parent meetings and retreats.
iv. A copy of each child's Baptismal Certificate is to be submitted and kept on file. If your child has not been baptized, you must contact the Religious Education Office. If your child was baptized in a Christian church, but not the Roman Catholic Church, please contact the Religious Education Office to arrange a Profession of Faith ceremony.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

"It is through the Sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God and with the Church." (CCC 980)

The primary purpose of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to restore a state of peace and friendship in our relationship with God and the Church. It is a way to become reconciled with God and the community when our poor choices have led us to be alienated from both. Alienation can take on two forms, as through a broken relationship, (the result of mortal sin) or a wounded relationship (the result of a venial sin).

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing and strength. "Through faith we discover that we are God's children and that God makes us strong. When God gives us His strength, we call this **grace**." (YouCat pg. 161). Through grace, we are empowered to turn away from sin and focus on living in relationship with God.

Lord You are good and forgiving…Psalm 86: 5

What is grace? The free and undeserved gift that God gives to each of us. It is the help we need to follow His will by sharing His love with others and resisting temptation to sin. We receive God's grace at Baptism and the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores us to that state of grace when we have sinned.

The rite of this sacrament focuses on ***conversion, reconciliation,*** and the ***reception of God's mercy***. The focus is not so much on the frequency, or number of sins, but on a desire for God's forgiving love.

In order to more fully communicate God's love, the use of the reconciliation room and scripture is incorporated to allow for a divine-human encounter, face-to-face, with God's representative, the priest. It provides the penitent with a human experience of God's mercy. Through the voice of the priest, the penitent hears God saying your sins are forgiven.

Sacrament

"An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us the work of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 774)

Sacraments of Initiation

- † Baptism
- † Eucharist
- † Confirmation

Sacraments of Healing

- † Reconciliation
- † Anointing of the Sick

Sacraments of Service

- † Holy Orders
- † Matrimony

As a parent, you are encouraged to take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation as often as possible so that you may experience the divine love, forgiveness and mercy of God, and lead your child by example.

The Lord's Prayer

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 in to

temptation, but deliver us

from evil.

Amen

The Rite of Reconciliation: Role of Parent/Guardian

Faith formation is an ongoing, lifelong process. Children are primarily experiential learners, and as such, learn attitudes, values and ideals through their day-to-day life experiences. You are your child's primary teacher in all things especially when it comes to teaching them about our Catholic faith. When you presented your child to the Church for Baptism, you were reminded that you have the responsibility of "raising them in the practice of the faith." (Rite of Baptism)

Jesus, the greatest teacher, taught not only in word, but in deed as well. He demonstrated in a variety of ways the unconditional love of God the Father. Jesus healed, comforted, prayed, and listened. As a parent, you also demonstrate God's love to your child through your own unconditional love for them. By the way you demonstrate God's love through word and deed, you, like Jesus, are teaching your child. You live out the message of Christ, and share our Catholic faith through coming to Mass, celebrating the sacraments, praying, and simply telling them about God's love.

By the time your child receives the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they should be aware that God cares about them, He created them and calls them into a relationship with Him. As a parent you answered that call for them through their Baptism. Now, as they grow, they begin to respond to that call for themselves.

What does your child need to know in order to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

The USCCB gives us three guidelines to help assess 'readiness' for reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

1. Knowledge of the person of Jesus and the Gospel message of forgiveness.
2. Knowledge of sin and its effects (knowing right from wrong)
3. Understanding and experience of sorrow, forgiveness and conversion

-God is loving and merciful. God will always forgive us if we ask.
-Jesus has given us the Sacrament of Reconciliation through which our sins are forgiven and we receive the grace to live as God's Children.
-We must be willing to forgive others, just as God forgives us.

Preparing for the Sacrament: Teaching your child about the Sacrament

Talk with your child about the Sacrament. Help them understand what the Sacrament is, why we have the Sacrament, and how it works.

- Teach and pray with your child the prayers of our Faith. (Sign of the Cross, Hail Mary, Our Father, Glory Be, the Act of Contrition)
- Help your child become familiar with these terms:
  - Priest, Bishop, Archbishop
  - Reconciliation
  - Contrition
  - Absolution
  - Sacrament
  - Examination of Conscience
  - Confession
  - Penance
- Read the stories in the Bible that speak to God's love and forgiveness. Jesus taught us much about reconciliation through His parables and His interactions with the people.
  - Peter asks Jesus how many times do we need to forgive (Matthew 18: 21-22)
  - Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2: 1-12)
  - Jesus forgives a sinful woman (Luke 7: 36-50)
  - The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 13: 1-7)
  - The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15: 8-10)
  - The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32)
  - Zacchaeus is forgiven (Luke 19: 1-10)
  - Jesus gives His disciples the authority to forgive sins (John 20: 21-23)
- **Review the Steps of Reconciliation with your child.**

1. **Examination of Conscience** *(thinking of what we have done)*
2. **Contrition** *(feeling sorry for something we have done wrong)*
3. **Confession** *(telling what we are sorry for)*
4. **Penance** *(accepting what we need to do to express our sorrow)*
5. **Absolution** *(receiving the peace and forgiveness of our sins)*
6. **Act of Penance** *(praying our performing an action which the priest has assigned us to show our sorrow)*

The Sacrament is Called:

It is called the **sacrament of conversion** because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from who 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.

It is called **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.

CCC 1423, 1424, 1449, 1442

Peace be with you! Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them.

-John 20: 19-23

When Jesus appeared to the apostles on the evening of Easter Sunday, He gave the apostles the authority to forgive sins.

Examination of Conscience

Teach your child how to examine his/her conscience.

An examination of conscience is a reflection on our actions to identify our sins before we sit with the priest. We take some time in quiet reflection to think about our actions, words, thoughts and the things we failed to do.

What is sin?

For a child, **sin** occurs when the child knows and understands that something they do is wrong, but they choose to do it anyway.

Rather than presenting the child with a list of sins, as a parent you guide your child to the realization that they are a child of God called to live in the Spirit of Jesus. This means they (and we) are expected to act lovingly, obediently and behave as such. For the most part, children (and we) live up to those expectations. But, sometimes, they (and we) do not.

When haven't I lived the way God has asked me to?

Help your child understand that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not a "listing of their sins", but an opportunity to express sorrow and receive forgiveness. This child's genuine and spontaneous description of their sin is much more desirable than an artificial, precise recitation of sins. It is sufficient when they approach the Sacrament that they have an awareness of their need of forgiveness and have a deep trust in God's forgiving love.

To help make a good examination of conscience, we can use the 10 Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Great Commandment to guides us. The next page provides you with a child's version of an examination of conscience, based upon the Ten Commandments, the Great Commandment and Jesus' Law of Love. Use these aids for reflection and to help them understand how to examine their conscience.

God's Laws

God desires for us to be in relationship with Him. To help us do this and to know what is right, He has given us laws. It is from The Ten Commandments, The Great Commandment, and Jesus' Law of Love – that you know what is right and how to live as a child of God. "My Actions" questions can be used as an Examination of Conscience.

God's Laws	**My Actions**
I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.	Do I believe in God and love God with all my heart?
You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.	Do I use the names of God, Jesus, Mary, and the saints with respect?
Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.	Do I attend and participate during Mass on Sunday?
Honor your father and mother.	Do I respect and obey my parents?
You shall not kill.	Do I treat all God's creatures with respect?
You shall not commit adultery.	Do I take good care of my body and respect the bodies of others?
You shall not steal.	Have I taken something that belongs to someone else?
You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	Do I sometimes lie?
You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.	Do I treat other families with respect?
You shall not cove your neighbor's goods.	Am I ever jealous or greedy?

Blest Are We, RCL Bezinger.

Peace be with you. -John 21: 19

The Great Commandment

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

Luke 10: 27

Jesus' Law of Love

This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

John 15: 12

Pope Quote

The confessional is not a torture chamber, but the place in which the Lord's mercy motivates us to do better.

-Pope Francis

Resources: Children's Books about Forgiveness

Look on your bookshelf for stories that speak of forgiveness.

- Lily's Purple Plastic Purse, K. Henkes
- No, David, D. Shannon
- We All Need Forgiveness,
- I Love My New Toy, M. Willems
- I Am Extremely Absolutely Boiling, L. Child
- Enemy Pie, D. Munson

Teach me Your ways, O Lord: make them known to me.
Teach me to live according to Your truth.
Psalm 25: 4-5

An Examination of Conscience for Children

Responsibilities to God:
Have I prayed every day?
Have I prayed my morning prayers and night prayers?
Have I prayed with my parents and family?
Have I been moody and rebellious about praying and going to church on Sunday?
Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me whenever I have been tempted to sin?
Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me do what is right?

Responsibilities to others:
Have I been obedient and respectful to my parents?
Have I lied or been deceitful to them or to others?
Have I been arrogant, stubborn or rebellious?
Have I talked back to parents, teachers or other adults?
Have I pouted and been moody?
Have I been selfish toward my parents, brothers, and sisters, teachers, or my friends and schoolmates?
Have I gotten angry at them? Have I hit anyone?
Have I held grudges or not forgiven others?
Have I treated other children with respect or have I made fun of them and called them names?
Have I used bad language?
Have I stolen anything? Have I returned it?
Have I performed my responsibilities, such as homework and household chores?
Have I been helpful and affectionate toward my family?
Have I been kind and generous with my friends?

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Online Resources

FORMED
On Formed you will find preparation resources for both you as a parent and for your child. To access FORMED go to formed.org.

- Parents: check out the FORGIVEN SERIES under the Sacramental Preparation tab
- In addition, the Brother Francis videos are also available under the WATCH tab. As part of your preparation, watch Brother Francis "Forgiven" to review the steps of Reconciliation. The children really like Brother Francis!

HALLOW
Phone App (also accessible online) filled with engaging reflections, prayers, reflections, and music.

- Parents: How to go to Confession: The Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Inside of the Hallow app, they offer resources for confession preparation specific to children ages 7-13 and a separate guide for older teens. Each of these focuses on the examination of conscience.

The love and mercy of our forgiving Father should stand out in the child's mind as the most important part of the preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Examination of Conscience see: Let the Children Come at USCCB.

As parents, the way we examine our conscience is different from how a child prepares. Check out Fr. Mike's video on Making a Good Confession, at Ascension Press.

"Why do I have to tell my sins to a priest?" To help answer the question, check out the video by Fr. Mike Confessing to the Priest at Ascension Press.

Sacraments 101: Penance. Why we Confess at Busted Halo

Celebrating Reconciliation from teachingcatholickids.org

Hail Mary

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

Act of Contrition

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

The Rite of Reconciliation

Before you make your Reconciliation

EXAMINE YOUR CONSCIENCE
Be truly sorry for the times we have sinned.
When it is your turn, go sit with the priest.

GREETING
You make the Sign of the Cross as the Priest says:
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
You say: Amen.

CONFESSION
You say:
Bless me Father for I have sinned. This is my first reconciliation. My sins are _____.

PENANCE
The priest gives you a Penance. This will be a prayer like the Hail Mary or the Our Father; or may be an action to help show you feel sorry or make amends.

ACT OF CONTRITION
Since this is your first confession, we will pray this together before you go to confession. But, when you celebrate the Sacrament next time, this is when you would say the Act of Contrition prayer.

ABSOLUTION
The Priest will say the Prayer of Absolution:

God the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

You make the Sign of the Cross and say: Amen.

Then, The Priest will say: Go in peace.

You say: Thank you, Father.

ACT OF PENANCE
When you leave the priest, return to the pew where your parents are sitting and **pray/do your PENANCE**.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Celebration Expectations

How to Dress

This is a Prayer Service and we ask the children to dress as if they were attending Sunday Mass.

Prayer Service Guidelines

- Seating: Children will be seated with you in the Church. Pews will be marked with their Reconciliation Heart.
- Children will be escorted by you to the priest to receive the Sacrament. Please introduce your child to the priest and return to your pew and pray for your child and family. Following the children, you and other family members will be invited to celebrate the Sacrament.
- Photography: allowed during the prayer service, however to respect your child's privacy, please do not photograph/video the actual reception of the Sacrament.
- When your child(ren) returns to your pew, please encourage them to say a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of the Sacrament and to say/do their penance. We will have an activity book that you and your child may choose to work on.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated every Saturday morning at 8am at the Church of St. Mary's. You may also make an appointment by contacting the parish office.

Important Dates

First Reconciliation Retreats

Sunday, January 10, 2026

† 9:00am-11:30am (Last Names beginning with A-M)

† 1:00pm-3:30pm (Last Names beginning with N-Z)

Both retreats will be held at the UGC Multipurpose Room

First Reconciliation Prayer Services

Saturday, February 21, 2026

St. Patrick (This will be a St. Mary Celebration)

† 11:00am (Last Names beginning with A through M)

† 1:00pm (Last Names beginning with N through Z)

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