

First Reconciliation Reflections

The ritual sacraments we celebrate were born through the mission and ministry of Jesus. We convey this in a simple way as we say the sacraments were “instituted by Christ.” The sacraments convey, in some way, the mystery of God and changes lives!

Jesus was real and present to his disciples during his earthly ministry and they experienced the presence of God with, and through him. He is still real and present today in our daily lives and in significant moments in our lives; moments which offer deep and personal encounters with God that transform lives. These significant or sacramental moments in our lives afford a grace (God’s favor, or free and undeserved help) that we can realize and accept which enable, or strengthen us in a particular fashion.

Jesus continually instructed his disciples to do as he has done. He entrusted his mission and ministry to the Church as a whole and, in a particular way, to those who shepherd and act on his behalf for, and to, the Church. The Holy Spirit empowers all the baptized to share in this ministry and to experience the presence of the Risen Christ in the Church and through the sacraments. We believe The Holy Spirit affords a special grace to those who shepherd and act officially in Christ’s name on behalf of the Church and at the invitation of Jesus.

All of the sacraments make us sharers in the life and love of God. They make us one with God and with our Church family. We receive grace to live holy lives as children of God and as followers of Jesus when we experience them. The sacrament of reconciliation helps restore our oneness with God and with each other.

Jesus’ ministry was one of “making people whole;” of calling and encouraging people to remove from their lives attitudes and actions that prevented them from experiencing God and Community as fully as possible (Matt. 9:9-13). Having mercy and offering forgiveness (of self and of others) were key points in his ministry (Matt. 18: 21-22).

After he was raised from the dead, Jesus gave the apostles the gift of the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins (John 20:21-23). They were entrusted to continue to do what he had done in his name. The Church does this today through the power of the Holy Spirit and the ministry of bishops and priests. One important way they do this is in the sacrament of Reconciliation. It affords us an opportunity to reconcile ourselves with God and with Community when personal actions and attitudes have disrupted those relationships.

Reconciliation is a freeing and healing sacrament. God loves and forgives us!

First Reconciliation Program Information

The book St. Edith uses is called *Reconciliation* from RCL Benziger and has 6 lessons. Each has a particular theme and ends with a section called "Together as a Family." The main theme of the chapter will be presented in the classroom each week, and we ask that parents share the "Together as a Family" section at home each week. Your child will bring the book home each week to enable you to do so.

Please have them bring the book back to class each week.

- Chapter 1: We Belong to God
 - In this chapter children learn of the special ways we belong to God.
- Chapter 2: We Follow Jesus
 - In this chapter children learn about the Great Commandment.
- Chapter 3: We Listen to the Holy Spirit
 - In this chapter children learn that followers of Jesus are Good Samaritans.
- Chapter 4: We Are Sorry
 - In this chapter children learn about Zacchaeus and what it means to be sorry for our sins.
- Chapter 5: We Are Forgiven
 - In this chapter children listened to the story of the forgiving father
- Chapter 6: We Are Peacemakers
 - In this chapter children hear the Bible story of Jesus giving the disciples the gift of peace and that we receive that gift of God's peace in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

The "Together as a Family" section at the conclusion of each chapter includes four parts:

- *Remembering Together* - allows you to share what your child has learned as well as sharing stories of your own faith.
- *Sharing Together* - provides suggestions for family activities.
- *Praying Together* - offers a simple prayer for your family to pray together.
- *Getting Ready Together* - gives practical suggestions for ways your family can prepare for first Eucharist together.

This time at home may, at times, be hard to find, but it offers lasting rewards. The role of parents in the religious formation of children is first and foremost. It can't happen without you! When we presented our child for baptism we accepted the understanding of "raising them in the practice of the faith." This is not simply an obligation and privilege, but an opportunity to share with our children the greatest gifts of life. Additional information can be found at www.rclbsacraments.com by following the "Sacraments" link.

Important Information for the Reception of the Sacrament

First Reconciliation will be celebrated on **Saturday, February 15, 2020 at 10:00am**. Please have your son or daughter in the Church by 9:45am (information will be sent home). It will be a Communal Rite with individual confession and absolution. Fr. Jim will be present with visiting priests. The final section of the book contains the form for celebrating reconciliation, both individually and communally as well as offering help and prayers.

The order of the First Reconciliation Rite will be:

- Opening Prayer
- Scripture Reading
- Homily
- Examination of Conscience
- Act of Contrition (expressing our sorrow together)
- Individual Confession and Absolution

When your son or daughter has received the sacrament, they will meet you by the Baptismal Font and they are free to leave. It doesn't have to be long and involved, but try to plan something afterwards to celebrate your child's first reconciliation; perhaps a stop at their favorite dessert place. This will help reinforce the importance of the sacrament at this moment and for moments into the future.

2020 First Eucharist Dates to Note

First Eucharist Prep Session 1: Saturday, February 22nd 9:30-11:30am. At this session your son or daughter will focus on Baptism and how we are all part of God's family – the Church. At least one parent needs to come with your son or daughter for the first 30 minutes of the session.

First Eucharist Prep Session 2: Saturday, March 21st, 9:30-11:30am. At least one parent needs to come with your son or daughter for the first hour of the session. This is our banner making session! The banners will be used to mark the family pew for the First Eucharist Mass. The session will include practice with a tasting of unconsecrated hosts and wine.

First Eucharist Rehearsal: Monday, May 4th, 6:30-8:00pm. The room they are to meet in will be noted on their name tag (A.V. Room or School Library).

First Eucharist Mass and Celebration: Saturday, May 9, 2020 10:30am. Please have your son or daughter in their designated room by 10:00am (A.V. Room or School Library).

We are looking forward to a truly blessed and happy experience with you and your child as we walk this path for the preparation and reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and First Eucharist! Please feel free to call or email cmisiak@stedith.org or 734-464-2020 with any questions.

Some Parenting Notes

All too often parents do not feel adequate, or comfortable to share their faith and enter into discussion with their children about the faith. Don't worry! The Holy Spirit is there to draw on for support. The parish community is, also, available to help so please call the Religious Formation Office for helps and resources which are available. The following offers a few parenting notes and helps about reconciliation from the RCL Benziger web site.

Right & Wrong

- A child needs to know the difference between right and wrong.
- The child needs to understand that accidents or mistakes are not sins.
- When we deliberately choose to do what is wrong and turn away from God, we sin.
- 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.

Reconciliation Readiness

There are many indicators of readiness for first reconciliation, most of which are intangible. As a parent, listen carefully to what your child says about wrongdoing and misbehavior. Encourage the child to take responsibility for his/her behavior rather than blaming others. Watch to see if your child is capable of being sorry and asking forgiveness of others without your prompting. Then, ask yourself the following:

- Is prayer a part of your child's life?
- Does your child have the capacity for sincere sorrow and make an honest effort to do better?
- Can your child express sorrow and describe wrongdoing in his/her own words?

Family Involvement

- Plan a family party to celebrate your child's first reconciliation. By acknowledging the importance of this event, you convey its value into the future.
- During this time of preparation, you are talking with your child about what constitutes a sin. Continue these conversations as your child grows older. Initiate discussions about the temptations in your child's life. How can those temptations be addressed? As children grow into adolescence they are faced with many decisions and temptations, and they need their parent's guidance to help them make good choices and avoid sin.
- As a family, plan to participate in parish celebrations of reconciliation during Lent and Advent each year. If you make this a serious commitment, and plan ahead, even your teen-agers can arrange their schedules accordingly.

Parental Reflections

- What is your attitude toward this sacrament?
- What is your participation? If you participate in the sacrament of reconciliation, your child will most likely want to do so as well.