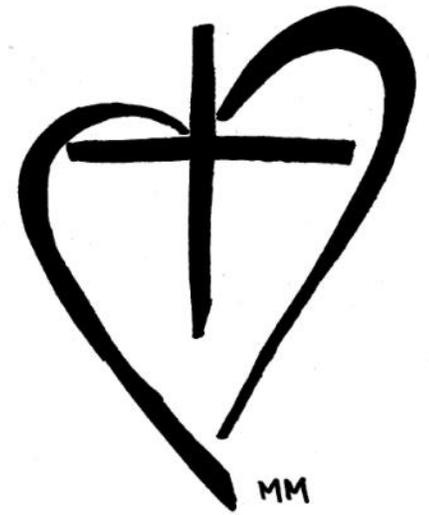


St. Matthew Catholic Church

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Parent Handbook

Sacraments YEAR 2 and MACS



Welcome

This is the year your child 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, Faith Formation catechists and staff, and St. Matthew School teachers are all here to assist you as you prepare your children for their first reconciliation. We continue to pray for you and your family as you make this sacramental journey.

With joy,

Lori Mathews

A Parent’s Prayer

Loving God,
You are the giver of all we possess, the source of all of our blessings. You love us unconditionally and undeservedly. Thank you for the gift of our children. Help us to set boundaries for them, and yet encourage them to explore. Give us the grace to show Your mercy and the wisdom to share Your light. Grant us strength and courage to let them see us walking in the steps of Your Son.

As they receive this precious sacrament of reconciliation, May our children come to know you, the one true loving and merciful God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. May your Holy Spirit help them to grow in faith, hope, and love, so they may know Your peace, truth, and goodness.

Amen.

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Contact Information

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Diocesan Guidelines for the Sacrament of Reconciliation



I baptize you in the
Name of the
Father and the
Son and the Holy
Spirit.
(Rite of Baptism)



1. The Diocese of Charlotte 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.
2. "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. (CCC2192) ***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.***
3. ***Parents and/or guardians are required to attend ALL parent meetings and retreats.***
4. The Diocese of Charlotte requires a copy of each ***child's Baptismal Certificate*** to be submitted and kept on file. If your child has not been baptized, you must contact the Faith Formation Office. If your child was baptized in a Christian church, but not the Roman Catholic Church, you must contact the Faith Formation Office to arrange a Profession of Faith ceremony.
5. Those students with excessive unexcused absences and who do not attend Mass on a regular basis will not be eligible to receive the sacrament. Each case will be evaluated, individually, by the Coordinator of Faith Formation. Unexcused absences are any absences other than illness, family emergency, injury or other serious situations.

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." (CCC977) Through our Baptism, we are cleansed from Original Sin. "The forgiveness we received then is so full and complete that there remained in us absolutely nothing left to efface, neither original sin nor offenses committed by our own will..."(CCC978)

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

“It is through the sacrament of Penance that the baptized can be reconciled with God and with the Church.” (CCC980)

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.

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

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” CCC774

Sacraments of Initiation

- ◇ Baptism
- ◇ Holy Eucharist
- ◇ Confirmation

Sacraments of Healing

- ◇ Reconciliation
- ◇ Anointing of the Sick

Sacraments of Service

- ◇ Holy Orders
- ◇ Matrimony



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, life long 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 has 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.

For additional information and explanation of the Sacrament , check out [Preparing to Celebrate the Sacrament](#) on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) website.

What does your child need to know in order to receive the sacrament of reconciliation?

- ⇒ 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.

Taken from: RCLBsacraments.

☑ Check out this sketchpad video on [Making Confession](#)

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, Monsignor and Bishop
 - ◆ 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. Some examples:
 - ◆ Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)
 - ◆ The Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)
 - ◆ The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 13:1-7)
 - ◆ Zacchaeus is forgiven (Luke 19:1-10)
 - ◆ The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32)
 - ◆ Jesus forgives a sinful woman (Luke 7:36-50)
 - ◆ Peter asks Jesus how many times do we need to forgive (Matthew 18:21-22)
 - ◆ 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 or performing a action which the Priest had 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 whom 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 the **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 both 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) don't.

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. The 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 guide us. Page 7 provides you with a child's version of an examination of conscience, based upon the Ten Commandments. Use this aid for reflection and to help them understand how to examine their conscience. There are links to additional examination of conscience on page 8 of this guide.

God's Laws

God desires for us to be in a relationship with Him. To help us do this and to know what is right, He has given us laws. From The Ten Commandments, The Great Commandment and Jesus' Law of Love, we come to 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

I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange gods before me.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

Remember to keep holy the Lord's day.

Honor your father and your mother.

You shall not kill.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

You shall not covet your neighbor's goods,

My Actions

Do I believe in God and love God with all my heart?

Do I use the names of God, Jesus, Mary, and the saints with respect?

Do I participate in Mass on Sunday?

Do I respect and obey my parents?

Do I treat all God's creatures with respect?

Do I take good care of my body and respect the bodies of others?

Have I taken something that belongs to someone else?

Do I sometimes lie?

Do I treat other families with respect?

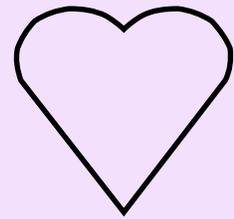
Am I ever jealous or greedy?

Blest Are We, RCL Benzinger

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

"Peace be with you." John 21:19

God Loves Us So



Even though I don't
deserve it
No way that I could earn it
He loves us, God loves us so
With grace and full
forgiveness
He washed away my sins,
'cause
He loves us, God loves us so

This is why He loves us so
A love that's unconditional
Not because of what we do
or what we've done
This is why He gave His life
Gave the greatest sacrifice
Jesus loves us more
than we could ever know
God loves us so

This is how He loves us
This is how He loves us so

Even though I don't
deserve it
No way that I could earn it
He loves us, God loves us so

Resources: Children's Books about Forgiveness

Look on your bookshelf for stories that speak to forgiveness.

- [Lily's Purple Plastic Purse](#), K. Henkes
- [No, David](#), D. Shannon
- [We All Need Forgiveness](#), M. Mayer
- [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*

Additional Resources for Examination of Conscience

- ◆ [Let the Children Come](#) at USCCB for an examination of conscience for children.
- ◆ [Using the 10 Commandments for examination of conscience](#), John Paul Center.
- ◆ [Using the Beatitudes for examination of conscience](#), John Paul Center
- ◆ [Celebrating Reconciliation](#) at teaching Catholic Kids.org
- ◆

Resources: On-line

FORMED

On Formed you will find preparation resources for both you as a parent and for your child. To access FORMED click on this link: [Formed](#). You'll need to set up a free account to access Formed.

- Parents check out the **FORGIVEN Series** under the Sacramental Preparation tab. There is an informative segment entitled: *Forgiven—For Children: How to Make a Great Confession*.
- 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 kids really like Brother Francis!

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.

[Reconciliation](#) This video at Catholic Central provides a great description of the elements of the Sacraments, especially if you haven't gone in awhile.

“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.

Penance: [What It Is and How To Do It—Part 2](#) at Busted Halo.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art 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

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because of your just punishment, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of Your grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

The Rite of Reconciliation

Before you sit with the priest to make your Reconciliation, first 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 OR you fill in the blank for how long it's been since your last reconciliation) 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.

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 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.

Guidelines

- Seating: Children will be seated with you in the Church
- Photography: allowed during the service, however to respect your child's privacy, please do not photograph the actual reception of the sacrament.
- Children will be escorted by an adult volunteer to the priest to receive the sacrament. During this time, we ask the families present to remain in their pews, in prayer for all the children receiving the sacrament. Once your child has completed their penance, you may quietly leave the Church.

An optional surprise for your child...

LOVE BAG



What a beautiful year for your child, as they experience God's awesome and amazing love for them through the forgiving cleansing of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and in the spring through the loving sacrifice of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

To remind each child of how much God loves them, you can show them how much they are loved by family and friends. ***Each parent may prepare a LOVE BAG for their child to be opened after reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.***

A LOVE BAG is simply any type of bag, and is filled with ***love***, by the way of notes, letters, pictures, prayer cards, etc. that express love for your child. (therefore, no toys or games please) Invite grandparents, siblings, godparents, aunts, uncles, etc. to let your child know how much they mean to them by writing a note or letter to them.

Again, this can be presented after they have received the Sacrament and honored their Penance. You do not have to bring the Love Bag into the church; some families elect to share this at home after the service or even over ice cream on the way home! Make it a family evening to remember.

We encourage you to allow your child to see you going to receive the sacrament of reconciliation sometime prior to their first reconciliation. St. Matthew offers the sacrament on:

At the Main Campus: *Wednesday at 9AM*
 Sunday 10AM & 11:45AM
 By appointment

If you have any questions please contact Lori Mathews at 704-541-8362 x4 or lmathews@stmatthewcatholic.org

We look forward to supporting you and your family on this sacramental journey!