



# Preparing for First Reconciliation

St. Matthew Catholic Church  
2023-2024

## Welcome

This 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 for the first time. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the first step in this sacramental journey. We hope this guide will serve you in preparing your child for this beautiful sacrament. Please take the time to review the materials included in this guide. Mark your calendars for the preparation events and the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our clergy, Faith Formation catechists, staff, and our Catholic school teachers are all here to assist. Please do not hesitate to call on us with questions or concerns. We continue to pray for you and your family.

With joy,

*Lori Mathews*

## 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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## God’s Gifts to Us...the Sacraments

A **sacrament** is “an efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit.” CCC774

**Efficacious** = the ability to produce a desired or intended result

**Grace** = Grace is the gift God gives to us to strengthen, heal and feed us. This is the help we need to live as a child of God and to follow His will.

“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).

Jesus gave us seven Sacraments. Seven gifts through which we can have personal encounters with Him and receive His grace. **He loves us and desires for us to deepen our relationship with Him.** “We cannot see God’s grace but the outward signs of the sacraments, i.e. the rites, symbols and actions make visible to us the grace we receive. For additional information see [Seven Sacraments](#) at USCCB and [Seven Sacraments](#), at Loyola Press.

### Sacraments of Initiation

- ◇ Baptism
- ◇ Holy Eucharist
- ◇ Confirmation

### Sacraments of Healing

- ◇ Reconciliation
- ◇ Anointing of the Sick

### Sacraments of Service

- ◇ Holy Orders
- ◇ Matrimony

## By Our Baptism...We are Children of God

We receive the gift of God’s grace at 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) At Baptism, we are washed clean of Original Sin.

By our Baptism, we become **children of God**, created in His image and called to be like Him and love as He loves.



## The Sacrament of Reconciliation

Although we strive to be our best selves, God knows that we often times do not act as He would want us to. It is for these times, that Jesus gave us the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is a sacrament of healing and strength, through which we can be reconciled with God by the forgiveness of our sins.

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 separated from both. That separation 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**).” [Penance, USCCB](#)

Remember, we receive God’s grace at Baptism and the Sacrament of Reconciliation restores us to that state of grace when we have sinned. Through **grace**, we are empowered to turn away from sin and focus on living in relationship with God.



## In Scripture...

The Sacrament of Reconciliation was instituted by Jesus so that we can be reconciled. On Easter Sunday night when our risen Jesus appeared to his disciples in the upper room He said to them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.’” John 20:19-23

## Sacrament of Reconciliation may be 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.

The **Sacrament of Penance**, since it consecrates the Christian sinner’s personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance and satisfaction.

The **Sacrament of Confession**, since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament.

The **Sacrament of Forgiveness**, since by the priest’s sacramental absolution God grants the penitent “pardon and peace.”

The **Sacrament of Reconciliation**, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles. CCC 1423,1424, 1449, 1442



## Preparing Your Child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Faith formation is an ongoing, life long process. Children are primarily experiential learners, and as such, learn attitudes, values, and ideals through day to day experiences.

### Parents...

As you share your faith with your child and encourage them in their prayer life and the reception of this beautiful sacrament, we hope that your faith grows deeper as well. 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.

We recognize that you are your child's primary teacher and model 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 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 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. 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.

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 Ballantyne Campus:        *Wednesday at 9AM*  
     *Sunday 10AM & 11:45AM*  
     *By appointment*

Parents, if it has been awhile since you have received the Sacrament of Reconciliation, check out the video from Ascension Press, [Going to Confession for the First Time after a Long Time](#),

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

## Guiding Your Child

Calling on Jesus in prayer, opening the Word of God, worshiping together and receiving the sacraments are all important aspects in preparing your child for the sacraments. Talk with your child about the sacrament. Help them understand what the Sacrament of Reconciliation is, why we have the Sacrament, and how it works.



## Call on Him in Prayer

Prayer is a gift from God. Through prayer we come to know Him. Jesus taught us much about prayer. He demonstrated the importance of prayer and showed how to pray through His words and actions. Pray with your child the prayers of our faith and help them understand what they mean. Memorization is not the goal. Understanding the words and praying the prayers repeatedly leads to knowing them by heart.

- ◆ Sign of the Cross
- ◆ Hail Mary
- ◆ Our Father
- ◆ Glory Be
- ◆ Act of Contrition

**Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”**  
Philippians 4:6-7

## Open the Word of God

Jesus taught us much about forgiveness through His parables and His interactions with the people. Open your family Bible and read the stories that speak to God's love and forgiveness.

- ◆ 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)
- ◆ Centurion Asks Jesus to Heal His Servant
- ◆ Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)
- ◆ Jesus forgives Peter (John 21:15-19)

## How the Sacrament Works

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.** Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we encounter Jesus to receive forgiveness of our sins. Through God's representative, the priest, we have a human experience of God's mercy. Through the voice of the priest, the individual hears God saying your sins are forgiven. The priest forgives us in the name of Jesus.

## Understanding What Sin Is

God gives us the ability to make choices — good ones and not so good ones. We call this ability **free will**. When we make a choice that goes against how God wants us to live and act, we call that 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. Sin is disobedience to God's law. Sin may be serious (mortal) or less serious (venial).

## Elements of the Sacrament

There are five steps in the receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

- ◆ **Examination of Conscience** (*thinking of what we have done*)
- ◆ **Contrition** (*feeling sorry for something we have done wrong and being determined to avoid sin in the future*)
- ◆ **Confession** (*telling our sins to the priest*)
- ◆ **Penance** (*accepting what we need to do to express our sorrow*)
- ◆ **Absolution** (*receiving the peace and forgiveness of our sins*)

Here are additional on-line resources explaining the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

[Sophia Sketchpad: Confession](#)

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

[Can I sin on accident?](#), Ascension Press

[Busted Halo's Guide to Confession](#)

Sacraments 101: [Penance](#). [Why we Confess](#) at Busted Halo.



## Examination of Conscience

The first step to a true reconciliation is to examine our conscience. Our **conscience** “is the inner voice in us that moves us to do good under any circumstances and avoid evil by all means. At the same time, it is the ability to distinguish the one from the other. In the conscience, God speaks to us.” (CC1776-1779)

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.

### How do you teach your child how to examine his/her conscience?

Rather than presenting the child with a list of sins, as a parent, 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.

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. Encourage them to pray to the Holy Spirit for help in determining how well they love God and love others.

To help make a good examination of conscience, we can use the **10 Commandments**, the **Beatitudes**, and the **Great Commandment** to guide us. You can find examination of conscience aids on the following pages of this guide:

- The Ten Commandments: Page 8
- The Great Commandment: Page 10
- The Beatitudes: Page 10

For His mercy endures forever.  
PS 136:1

## Additional Resources for Examination of Conscience

- ◆ [Let the Children Come](#) at USCCB for an examination of conscience for children.
- ◆ [Celebrating Reconciliation](#) at Teaching Catholic Kids.org
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ [The Light is On for You](#), examination of conscience



# 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 below can be used as an Examination of Conscience.

## For Kids: Using the Ten Commandments to Examine your 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?





# For Teens: Using the Ten Commandments to Examine your Conscience

## Examination of Conscience

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

Have I given time every day to God in prayer? Have I put my trust in superstitions, good luck charms, astrology, etc. rather than God alone? Have I rejected any Church teaching or denied that I was a Catholic?

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

Have I used “God” or “Jesus” in anger or irreverently? Have I used foul or ugly language? Have I wished evil on another?

### III. Remember to keep holy the Lord’s day.

Have I missed Mass on Sunday or any Holy Day of Obligation? Do I often arrive to Mass late or leave early? Do I try to be reverent and pay attention during Mass? Have I avoided unnecessary work on Sunday? Have I made Sunday a day of prayer and rest?

### IV. Honor your father and your mother.

Do I respect and obey my parents? Have I dishonored or mistreated them by word or action? Am I willing to help around the house or must I be constantly reminded?

Have I tried to get along with my brothers and sisters? Have I given a good example, especially to younger siblings? Have I respected others in authority: priests, nuns, police, teachers, etc.?

### V. You shall not kill.

Have I beat up or physically harmed others, even jokingly? Have I said cruel things or make fun of others to hurt their feelings? Have I said mean things about others behind their backs? Have I stopped speaking to anyone in order to hurt them? Have I encouraged others to do bad things? Have I loved all people, born and unborn, like me and unlike me, my friends and my enemies?

### VI. You shall not commit adultery.

Have I treated my body and other people’s bodies with purity and respect? Have I looked at television shows, movies, websites or pictures that disrespect the purity and dignity of others? Am I modest in my speech and in the clothes I wear?

### VII. You shall not steal.

Have I taken things that were not mine from a store or another person? Have I taken, destroyed, or misused another person’s property for fun? Do I return things that I borrow? In good condition?

### VIII. You shall not commit false witness against your neighbor.

Am I honest in my schoolwork and on tests? Have I told lies to make myself look good? Have I told lies to protect myself from punishment? Have I told lies that make another person look bad or get them in trouble?

### IX. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.

Have I been envious of friends in relationships? Have I participated in or caused drama in someone else’s relationship? Do I get mad when I have to share with others? Are there people I will not socialize with or be mean to because they look/act different?

### X. You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.

Am I jealous or envious of the things or abilities that others have? Am I thankful to God and my parents for what they have given me? Do I share the things I have with my family, friends and the poor?



Adapted from

LIFE TEEN

## In the New Testament

Jesus became man for the forgiveness of our sins. He came to show us that our God is a God of Love.

## Using the Great Commandment to Examine your Conscience

When Jesus was asked about which of the Ten Commandments was the greatest, He replied, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments." Matthew 22:34-40

We can use the Great Commandment to examine our conscience. Click on this link to find an Examination of Conscience using the Great Commandment: [Examine of Conscience](#), at Catechist

## Using the Beatitudes to Examine your Conscience

We can use the Beatitudes to examine our conscience.

- **Blessed are poor in spirit:** Do I put my possessions before God, my family, or my friends?
- **Blessed are they who mourn:** Am I a good friend to those who are sad?
- **Blessed are the meek:** Have I disobeyed my parents, teachers, coaches, or God? Have I been gentle and kind towards others?
- **Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness:** Do I sincerely want to do God's will, or have I done only what I want to do instead?
- **Blessed are the merciful:** Have I forgiven those who have wronged me?
- **Blessed are the clean of heart:** Have I been open to others, or am I hiding something inside of me? What have I done that causes me to feel guilty?
- **Blessed are the peacemakers:** When others argue or fight, have I tried to prevent it or end it?
- **Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness:** Am I afraid to do what is right because of what others will think of me?

(taken from [Catechist](#))

This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you.  
John 15:12



# The Rite of Reconciliation

Before you sit with the priest to make your Reconciliation, first **EXAMINE YOUR CONSCIENCE**.

Pray to the Holy Spirit to ask Him to help you determine how well you love God and love others. Be truly sorry for the times you 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.

## ACT of CONTRITION

The priest will ask you to pray the Act of Contrition

## ABSOLUTION

The Priest will say the **Prayer of Absolution**.

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**.

## 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.

## What should your child know before receiving 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: RCLB sacraments.

### Questions Your Child Might Ask You

#### Why do I need to tell the priest my sins?

God can only forgive sins. Jesus forgave sins because He is God's Son. Priests can forgive sins because Jesus gives them the authority to do so. "God wants us to tell our sins and to acknowledge them in a personal encounter." *YOUCAT*, pg. 135

"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.

#### Can the priest tell my sins to anyone?

Never! The priest is under a strict rule that he may never tell what they have heard in confession. It is called the **Seal of Confession**.

#### How often can I receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

The Church recommends a regular confession. We should confess our sins whenever we are aware of any serious sin. We can receive the sacrament again and again, anytime we need to be reconciled to God.

Check out this video for answers to some of your child's questions about the sacrament: [A Kids Guide to Reconciliation](#)

*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.*



# Prayer

## How to pray aloud

- ◇ Make the sign of the cross (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Amen)
- ◇ Chose a name of God that speaks to you. (Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, Savior Above, Holy Spirit) \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◇ We thank you for \_\_\_\_\_,
- ◇ Please help us \_\_\_\_\_,
- ◇ We offer all of this to you ,as together we say (Our Father, Hail Mary, or Glory Be)
- ◇ Make the sign of the cross (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Amen)

## Our Father

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

## 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

## Glory Be

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

## Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, into my soul.  
Show me my sins, both the wrong that I did and the good I failed to do.  
Give me the grace to be sorry for my sins out of love for God,  
so that through Confession my soul might be healed and strengthened to do good. Amen  
(Taken from Teaching Catholic Kids)

## 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.



# Finally...

## Important Preparation Dates

### Parent & Child Retreat

Saturday, November 18

Monday, November 20

## Important Celebration Dates

### First Reconciliation

Tuesday, November 28

Wednesday, November 29

Thursday, November 30

Detailed information will be shared regarding the celebration of your child's First Reconciliation as we get closer to the day.

## Instructions:

### Selection of Parent-Child Retreat & First Reconciliation Celebration Time

- ◆ You will receive an email on the morning of **October 3** with a link to the registration website. Registration will open at **6 PM** that same day.
- ◆ Complete all information on the website form, and submit your selections. You should receive an email confirmation of your selections when you hit "submit".

***Registrations will only be accepted from those who have attended a Parent & Child Sacramental Kick-off Session.***

*If you have any questions please contact:*

*Lori Mathews at 704-543-7677 x 1037 or [lmathews@stmatthewcatholic.org](mailto:lmathews@stmatthewcatholic.org)*

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

