

# **PREPARING for the SACRAMENT of RECONCILIATION**



**The Church of Epiphany**

*Dear Parents and Guardians:*

*We hope this handbook will assist you in preparing your child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the celebration of God's love and mercy. Your child learns best by witnessing your own faith and love. Our parish is pleased to assist you in bringing your child to this sacramental encounter. This booklet has information that will be helpful in this process. Please take the time to review the material and to mark your calendars for Tuesday November 24, 2015. Our priest, catechists, and staff are always willing to help you. Do not hesitate to call on us with any questions or concerns.*

*God Bless you!*

*Fr. Mike Santangelo*  
*Pastor*

*Kim Lorentzen*  
*Director of Religious Education*

**Frequently asked questions about the  
Sacrament of Reconciliation  
"A Little Catechism"**

***What is the Sacrament of Reconciliation?***

It is the Sacrament established by Christ Jesus so that we might be reconciled to God by the forgiveness of our sins. This sacrament:

- Reconciles us with God and the Church;
- Restores, if lost through mortal sin, the state of grace;
- Offers us peace, serenity of conscience and spiritual consolation; and
- Gives us an increase of spiritual strength for the struggle of Christian living

***Where does the Church find this authority in Scripture?***

- The risen Lord instituted this Sacrament on Easter when he showed himself to the Apostles and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. (Jn 20: 22-23)
- The Church is faithful to this commission, assuring us that God is willing to forgive sins as it looks to the words and actions of Christ who come to search out and save what was lost. “Luke 19:10)

***What is the name of this Sacrament?***

Having a number of names, it may be called the sacrament of:

- Penance, because it involves the steps of conversion and satisfaction
- Confession, since one acknowledges sins and discloses these to a priest
- Forgiveness, since through absolution, God grants pardon and peace
- Reconciliation, since it restores our relationship with God.

***What are the five steps necessary to receive this sacrament worthily?***

The five steps are:

- Examining one’s conscience (knowing our sins.)
- Contrition (being sorry for our sins)
- Resolution (being determined to avoid sin in future)
- Confession (telling our sins to the priest)
- Penance (carrying out the action imposed by the priest in restitution)

***What is the “Seal of Confession?”***

The confessional “seal” is the sacred obligation of the priest to keep secret what has been revealed to him in confession. This “seal” may never be broken.

***What happens if I overhear another person’s confession?***

Should this occur, you are strictly bound by secrecy. Regarding one’s own confession, we are not bound by secrecy but it is better not to speak of it.

***What do we mean by “confessor” and “penitent?”***

A confessor is the priest who administers the sacrament of penance. A penitent is the person who confesses his or her sins.

***What is meant by “absolution?”***

The term means “releasing” and refers to the words the priest prays over the penitent that sets them free from sin.

***Does a priest ever refuse to absolve our sins?***

This is only done if the penitent makes it clear that he/she is not truly sorry for sin and has no intention of correcting him/her self. True sorrow is necessary for reconciliation.

***Why should we tell our sins to a priest?***

We tell our sins to a priest because Christ gave to his apostles (the first priests) the authority and power to forgive sins. The priest is also the representative of the Church which we have offended through sin. He is the instrument of God’s merciful love.

***How often can the sacrament be received?***

The Church recommends a regular confession, perhaps even once a week or once a month. However, a Catholic should confess his or her sins whenever he or she is aware of any serious (mortal) sin. This is also important so that one might receive the Eucharist worthily. During the celebration of the sacrament one is bound to confess all sins since the last confession.

***What is sin?***

Sin is disobedience to God’s law. There are two kinds of sins: original and personal (sometimes called actual) Original Sin is that lack of grace with which each of us comes into the world, through the fault of our first parents. Personal (actual) sin is sin that we ourselves commit. One should know the commandments, laws of the Church, and the duties of one’s state in life (vocation).

***What kinds of personal sins do we commit?***

Personal sin may be serious (mortal) or less serious (venial).

***What makes a sin serious (mortal)?***

A sin is serious if:

- It regards a serious matter
- One is clearly aware of its seriousness

## The Role of a Parent

Parents, as primary educators of their children, are responsible for preparing them for the sacraments of initiation. They should strive to be models of moral living and forgiveness.

With the support of our parish religious education program, parents should prepare their child for this sacramental encounter in the following ways:

- Modeling Catholic life by receiving the Sacrament of Penance regularly.
- Maintaining a regular prayer life in the home
- Reviewing the basic prayers, especially the Act of Contrition
- Attending meetings sponsored by the parish in preparation for Penance
- Review the catechetical information of the class regularly. .
- Speaking positively to your own experience of reconciliation.
- Helping their child distinguish between deliberate and accidental acts.
- Encouraging their child to take responsibility for actions rather than blaming others.
- Assessing whether their child has a basic understanding of sorrow, forgiveness and trying to do better.

***Beyond the celebration of first Reconciliation, parents should:***

- Celebrate on Reconciliation Day with a small family party
- Continue their conversations about the great gift of this sacrament
- Bring their child to confession again, regularly.

# The Rite of Reconciliation

## *Before Confession*

- Precede the sacrament by prayerful reflection and examination of conscience.
- Be truly sorry for sin out of love for God.

## *During Confession*

- Enter the confessional and greet the priest. The penitent usually begins by saying: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession.”  
(Or “It has been \_\_\_\_\_ (weeks/months) since my last confession”  
My sins are...(The penitent then tells the priest his/her sins)
- Listen then to the priest who will usually offer some advice and impose some type of penance to carry out. This is usually in the form of prayer, almsgiving, or other good work.
- The Penitent prays the Act of Contrition.
- Remain to receive the Absolution from the priest. Toward the end of the prayer of absolution, the penitent makes the sign of the cross.
- The penitent concludes by saying “Thank you, Father” and departs.

## *After Confession*

- The penitent returns to his/her place in church to thank God for his mercy and pardon and then does the penance imposed.

## **Act of Contrition**

(To be memorized by all children)

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 Parish Celebration of Reconciliation**

### *Attire*

Our dress often denotes the importance we attach to a particular occasion. Parents shall want to convey to their child that Reconciliation is a formal, sacred encounter with the Lord. It is also being celebrated within a group setting. Wearing one's "Sunday best" is a good rule to follow. Jeans, sneakers, athletic attire, tee shirts (however creative) are unacceptable choices. Girls may wear dresses, jumpers, dress slacks, or skirts. Boys should wear dress trousers and dress shirt or turtleneck, a vest or sweater.

### *Arrival*

All children should arrive at church at least ten minutes before the service time. Each student is to "report" to his or her catechist upon entering the church.

### *Seating*

Children will be seated as a group in the front of the church for the celebration. Family members and friends in attendance will be seated just behind the group.

### *Photography/Videography*

The sacred and most private character of this sacrament must be respected and protected. For this reason, the taking of photographs and/or video is strictly forbidden. Should the family like a photo remembrance of this sacrament, this may be done in church following the celebration.

## **Examination of Conscience**

- Do I remember to talk to God and pray everyday?
- Have I made fun of others because they are different from me?
- Do I bully other kids?
- Am I always telling the truth?
- Do I do my best to try to get to Mass on weekends?
- Have I taken something that does not belong to me?

- Have I used bad language or used God's name in a bad way?
- Do I forgive the people who hurt my feelings?
- Do I listen to my parents, even when they are not listening?
- Do I talk back to my parents?