

Hello Parents!

I wanted to lay out some extra supplemental things you may do with your children at home in our lead up to the Sacraments of Reconciliation (Confession) and Communion. Thus far we have discussed the Sacraments of Healing and of Initiation; the difference between mortal, venial, and original sin; practiced saying the Act of Contrition; and practiced how we go to confession.

We will have our First Reconciliation Retreat at the end of this month. Due to various holidays + events, I want to make sure that you feel confident practicing some more at home! Your child is coming home today with 3 handouts: 2 give directions for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and have the Act of Contrition on them; the 3rd is a list of questions to ask to "Examine our Conscience" and understand where we have sinned.

In the next few weeks, try to do the following 2-3 times a week:

- Pray together and ask God how we can be better friends/siblings/parents to each other or to people in our life. How should we be saying sorry to them? How do our actions also make God sad?
- Practice the Examination of Conscience
 - When talking about sins, I suggest allowing your child the space to share these mistakes and potential sins without judgement if they'd like, but do not force them to tell you what their sins are. Journaling is also a good choice.
- Practice what "going to confession" looks like using the handouts.
 - Practice by saying "These are my sins: sin 1, sin 2, sin 3..." ... but don't say the sins out loud!
- Practice saying the Act of Contrition!
- Review 1 of the Bible stories below or the readings from Mass.

BIBLE STORIES TO REVIEW IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

- Mark 2:1-12
 - The Paralytic is healed by his friends' determination to get him to Jesus and by his and their faith that he is the Lord.
- Luke 19:1-10
 - Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (an unpopular person in ancient Israel) is saved by Jesus; his encounter with Jesus leads him to change his life and help others!
- Luke 15:11-32
 - The Parable of the Prodigal Son

An Examination of Conscience for Children

Have I missed Sunday Mass through my own fault?
Did I pay attention at Mass? Have I fooled around in Church?
Did I say my prayers every day?
Did I put my trust in superstitions, good luck charms, rather than God?
Did I say mean things to my mom or dad? Have I respected them?
Did I always say "Please" and "Thank You" to people?
Have I used the names of "God" or "Jesus" in anger? Have I cursed?
Have I used foul language? Have I wished evil on another?
Am I hard to get along with...during school, at Grandma's, at home...?
Did I do what my mom and dad told me to do? My teacher?
Was I lazy around the house?
Did I do my chores?
Did I hurt others people's feelings by calling them bad names or making fun of them?
Did I say mean things about others behind their backs?
Have I started fights with my brothers and sisters at home?
Have I blamed other people for things I do?
Did I get other people into trouble? Did I try to get others to do bad things?
Do I hit people when I get mad?
Have I forgiven people? Or am I holding a grudge?
Have I cheated or been unfair in games?
Did I refuse to play with someone for no good reason?
Was I was lazy about my schoolwork?
Did I fail to do my homework?
Did I cheat in school?
How many times did I lie to my parents? My teachers? My friends?
Did I lie to make myself look good? Avoid punishment? Get another in trouble?
Did I take anything that didn't belong to me?
Did I destroy or misuse anything that didn't belong to me?
Did I sneak food or candy when I wasn't supposed to?
Did I avoid medicine? Did I refuse to eat food I didn't like?
Do I treat my body and other people's bodies with purity and respect?
Do I look at television shows, movies, or pictures that are bad?
Have I been jealous of the things or abilities that others have?
Are there people I avoid because they are different?
Have I been thankful to God and my parents for the things they have given me?
Do I share with my family, friends and those in need the things I have been given?
What other sins have I committed?

How to go to confession

Don't be afraid! God the Father is so happy you're coming back to Him! Here are the steps:

1: Pray to the Holy Spirit to help you, then examine your conscience. Plan what sins you will tell the priest.

2: Enter the confessional. When the priest greets you and says "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," make the Sign of the Cross.

Say: "**Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [say how long] since my last confession. These are my sins.**"

3: Tell your sins simply and honestly to Jesus, who acts through the priest. Feel free to tell why you did what you did if you need to!

4: Listen to the advice the priest gives you and remember the penance he tells you to do.

5: Say: The Act of Contrition:

**Oh 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.**

6: The priest will then dismiss you, often with these words: "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good," or, "The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace."

Say: "**Thanks be to God.**"

7: Do the penance the priest gave you, then thank God for his mercy.