**First Reconciliation Information**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Penance and Confession) is an experience of the gift of God’s boundless mercy. Not only does it free us from our sins but it also challenges us to have compassion and forgiveness for those who sin against us. We are liberated to be forgivers. We obtain new insight into the words of the Prayer of St. Francis: “It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.”

Jesus entrusted the ministry of Reconciliation to the Church. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is God’s gift to us so that any sin committed after Baptism can be forgiven.  In Confession, we have the opportunity to repent and recover the grace of our friendship with God. It is a holy moment in which we place ourselves in his presence and honestly acknowledge our sin, especially mortal sins.  With absolution, we are reconciled to God and the Church. The Sacrament helps us stay close to the truth that we cannot live without God.

Each time the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance is celebrated, the priest begins the formula of absolution with these words. They express the profound reality that is taking place. First, there is the recognition that the Church mediates God’s loving activity of forgiveness of sins.  Jesus intentionally created the Church to extend his victory over sin.  Second, this Sacrament, like all the others, begins with God’s initiative. Long before we recognize our need for God’s mercy, he is already calling us to him, extending his offer of grace. That, of course, is what the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance is all about: God’s love which overcomes even our sins. There is nothing that we can do in life that will cause God not to love us. As Pope Francis has said “well, it is not God who tires of forgiveness! But we never should give up on our desire for holiness.  God will forgive us if we approach the Sacrament with sincere contrition.  There is no need to be afraid!”

The mercy and forgiveness gained in Reconciliation can be extended in our families and children.  For children, we introduce the concept of sin within the context of understanding the nature of their relationship with God. They learn about this loving relationship through their experiences of family and of friendship.  Through these experiences and stories about Jesus’ special love of them, young children begin to understand the complexity of sin and the importance of His love for us.  God will show mercy on us if we are truly sorry for what we do.  We tell them about His boundless mercy and how we can be a part of it.  We make sure to tell them we must be like God in granting mercy to those who have wronged us.  Mercy is a tough concept for the children to understand but we hope, with your help as their parents, we can show them Mercy is the greatest gift God has given us.

**To Prepare your child for First Reconciliation, children need to:**

* Be enrolled in our Parish Religious Education program.
* Parents should 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
	+ Sacrament
	+ Reconciliation, Confession
	+ Examination of Conscience
	+ Contrition
	+ Absolution
	+ 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)
	+ Jesus gives His disciples the authority to forgive sins (John 20:21-23)
* Review the Steps of Reconciliation with your child.
	+ **Examination of Conscience**(*thinking of what we have done)*
	+ **Contrition**(*feeling sorry for something we have done wrong*)
	+ **Confession**(*telling what we are sorry for)*
	+ **Penance**(*accepting what we need to do to express our sorrow)*
	+ **Absolution**(*receiving the peace and forgiveness of our sins)*
	+ **Act of Penance**(*praying or performing a action which the Priest had assigned us to show our sorrow)*

**How to Dress**
This is a Prayer Service, and we ask the children to dress as if they were attending Sunday Mass.

**Resources to help prepare your student:**

Below are YouTube videos that help explain the Parables and how to receive Reconciliation :

The Story of Zacchaeus – Luke 19:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uL6FuAE2r
The Parable of The Prodigal Son   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpRh8xedMPE
The Parable of the Lost Sheep  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXLt3JjdmgI
Practicing How to Make a Confession: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvZSgRKnOkg&t=113s
How do I go Confession?:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ib8pzvnnL20

*In addition to our Parish Confession times, students in our Religious Education program (both Sunday and Monday in-person classes) have the opportunity to receive Reconciliation at least twice during the Religious Education year with their class.  This opportunity allows our catechists to focus lessons on God’s mercy and the beauty of forgiveness. Grades 3-6 classes attend Confession during class during Advent and Lent.*