

5 Ways to prepare your child for First Reconciliation

It's the time of year when many young children are preparing to soon receive their first Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is a beautiful Sacrament, instituted by Christ as a way to offer us His Mercy and Grace. It is a very special time for our children and as parents it's our primary responsibility to help prepare them for this soul-redeeming Sacrament. Here are five simple ways you can help your child prepare for their first reconciliation.

1. Talk about the Sacrament of Reconciliation Together

Before your child receives the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it's important they understand what it is and why we do it. Spend time talking with your child about this great healing Sacrament. Explain to your children that going to Confession is not about getting into trouble; it's about asking God for forgiveness and receiving God's Grace to do better. Listen to your child's questions and encourage them to learn more by asking more questions.

2. Examination of Conscience

Teach your child how to pray an Examination of Conscience each night before bed, or as often as time allows. Some families do this together as a family before bed, silently reflecting on their days while mom or dad read the Examination out loud.

3. Practice

Practice, practice, practice! Like with any sport, musical instrument, or other skill -- continuous practice is essential. The same is true for preparation for all the Sacraments. As your child's first reconciliation approaches, take time to role play with them what they will do in their real confessions. Except, you can tell them they don't have to really tell you their sins -- unless of course they really want to.

4. Go to Confession as a Family

Aside from practicing how to go to confession with your child, practice actually going to confession as a family. As parents, we are the first educators for our children when it comes to our Faith. However, the best way to really teach our children about the Faith is to practice it by living it out in our everyday life. Showing your child that you can take the time to go to confession makes a deeper and longer-lasting impression than all the hours you might spend talking or reading about it with them.

5. Pray Together

Aside from all the talking, reading, and practicing, the most essential step in preparing your child - and yourself - for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is prayer. Through prayer, we join in an intimate conversation with God. We ask Him to open our hearts to Him, show Him our weaknesses, and ask for His infinitely merciful forgiveness. Pray with and for your child, asking God to prepare him or her for this great Sacrament. Together, you can pray the Act of Contrition with your child and also the Prayer to Your Guardian Angel to help them make good choices and be ready to receive God's mercy.