

Roman Catholic
First Reconciliation
Guidelines
And
Customs

St. Cecilia Catholic Church
2159 Highway 195
Jasper, AL 35503

First Reconciliation

Jesus, however, not only exhorted people to repentance so that they would abandon their sins and turn wholeheartedly to the Lord, but welcoming sinners, he actually reconciled them with the Father

In the Sacrament of Penance the faithful "obtain from God's mercy pardon for having offended him and at the same time reconciliation with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, example, and prayer seeks their conversion."

(Rite of Penance: Introduction, nn. 1, 4, [quoting Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Church, n. 11]).

This booklet has been prepared by parishioners of St. Cecilia Catholic Church to help our parish community review the Church's vision, understanding, teaching, and discipline of the Sacrament of First Reconciliation and the local Customs for celebrating the Sacrament at St. Cecilia Catholic Church.

Customs for First Reconciliation at St. Cecilia Church

- A. The reception of the Sacrament of First Reconciliation must be documented in the permanent church records.
- B. The child will ordinarily have attended at least one year of religious education.
- C. The child will have reached the age of reason and ordinarily be in the second grade.
- E. The child will demonstrate a readiness and willingness to participate in the preparation process and regularly attend classes.
- F. Parents must be involved in the preparation process through personal spiritual reflection and growth, and reinforce the religious education lessons with their children at home, and attend at least one catechetical session.
- G. Preparations should provide the opportunity for the child to:
 - A. connect the sacrament with their daily life
 - B. recognize moral good and evil
 - C. feel sorrow for wrongdoings
 - D. desire to grow and become more like Jesus
 - E. become a faithful Christian who is able to forgive and who is able to ask for forgiveness
 - F. approach the sacrament freely and regularly
 - G. be at ease celebrating the sacrament.

The celebration of First Reconciliation is to take place within the context of a communal reconciliation celebration with individual confession. The children should be accompanied by parents, guardians, or whoever is responsible for the religious formation of the child. Parents or capable children should serve as lectors.

Children should be familiar with the reconciliation room. They must be offered the opportunity to confess their sins either behind a screen or face-to-face with their confessor (*Canon 964, p.2 and BLS 103*).

ONGOING CATECHESIS

Continuing life-long conversion is an essential element of growing in faith. Therefore, catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is ongoing. Children have a right to ever-deepening catechesis and opportunities for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Parents are to be reminded that catechetical preparation does not end with the reception of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

Continued catechesis on reconciliation adapted to the level of the person is a part of all systematic catechetical efforts in the parish's religious education program.

Order of First Reconciliation

INTRODUCTION

Catechesis for the first reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to precede the catechesis for the reception of First Eucharist and must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separate preparation. This is done so that the specific identity of each sacrament is apparent, and so that before receiving First Eucharist the child will be familiar with the Rite of Reconciliation and will be at ease with the reception of the sacrament. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is to be celebrated prior to the reception of First Eucharist.

An understanding of oneself as a sinner, of the different kinds of sin, and of the conditions requisite for a serious sin are necessary preliminaries in catechesis for the sacrament.

Parents of children who have reached the age of reason are invited to enroll their children for catechesis in a religious education program approved by their pastor. Catechesis for Reconciliation will commence at the beginning of the child's second year of catechesis. Thus a child is to have attended an approved catechetical program for at least one year. In the case of older children desiring first reception of this sacrament, the pastor and parish director of religious education should decide upon and implement an appropriate program₃

of study which will adequately prepare them for the sacrament.

Parents will be invited to participate in the preparation and celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation with their children. Part of the preparation will entail at least one session of sacramental catechesis for parents.

Vatican Council II's emphasis on the communal dimension of all the sacraments has changed the outward celebration of Reconciliation more significantly than any of the other sacraments. Therefore, care should be taken to involve other parishioners in the preparation and celebration of First Reconciliation so that children can experience forgiveness in a communal setting which includes family, parish priests, catechists, and parishioners which evidences a spirit of joyful celebration.

The pastor has the final responsibility to determine the readiness of a child for the celebration of the First Reconciliation. Because pastors are usually not directly involved in the catechesis, catechists, in conjunction with the parents, ordinarily decide if a child is ready for the celebration of the sacrament. Every effort should be made to encourage parents to accept this privilege and responsibility. Interviews with parents of children are appropriate if the interview encourages a process of mutual discernment.

Catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be in accord with the Revised Rite of Reconciliation.

Children should be taught the beginnings of conscious formation, the Ten Commandments, and the understanding of what it means to be forgiven and to forgive.

Children should age appropriately be taught to have sorrow for sin, and about Christ's suffering and death as the way we are redeemed from sin.

Children should learn to make a good confession from the beginning. Catechists should train them to confess the kind and number of sins.

An Act of Contrition should ordinarily be memorized.

Catechesis for children should always respect the natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of individuals. It should seek first, to make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life; second, to help the child recognize moral good and evil, repent of wrong-doing, and turn for forgiveness to Christ and the Church; third, to encourage the child to see that, in this sacrament, faith is expressed by being forgiven and forgiving; and fourth, to encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly.

The program for catechesis for First Reconciliation is to be one approved by the Religious Education Office of the diocese.