

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation is the sacrament of forgiveness and peace. It is one of the ways in which God chooses to forgive us our sins. Whenever people sin, they separate themselves from God's love. In the sacrament of reconciliation, we return to God, our loving parent.

Sometimes you will hear people use the expression "confession" or "penance" for the sacrament of Reconciliation. Both the confession of sin and receiving penance from the priest are a part of this sacrament.

UNDERSTANDING SIN

Children are introduced to 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 for them, young children begin to understand the complexity of sin. Sin is presented in terms of how these relationships are changed as a result of willful wrongdoing.

SORROW FOR SIN

Parents teach children to be sorry for their sins by helping them understand the meaning of the words "I'm sorry". This is begun in ordinary family situations. Parents help children experience apology situations by letting children witness a loving sincerity of words and actions when spouses apologize to one another. Parents should not hesitate to apologize to their children when the occasion arises. This is done not only with words but also by their actions and behavior in apology situations.

Unfortunately, the words "I'm sorry" have taken on a superficial meaning in our society. Parents have to ask themselves the following:

--Is it a magical formula that can get people out of trouble by simply saying it?

--Is it a way of showing others what polite children you have?

--Is it simply an automatic response to a stimulus similar to the quick "Thank you" and "Excuse Me"?

Children must be helped in gradually coming to understand that if a person is sorry he/she tries to change his/her behavior, does something about the wrong committed and makes promises or resolutions to try not to repeat the wrong.

Some Bible stories you may enjoy reading and talking about with your children are:

- The Lost Sheep (Luke 15)
- The Prodigal Son (Luke 15)
- The Paralyzed Man (Matthew 9)
- The Woman at the House of the Pharisee (Luke 7)
- The Woman at the Well (John 4)

PREPARING FOR CONFESSION

Jesus taught us that the two greatest commandments are Love of God and Love of Neighbor. "Love the Lord your God." Do we do the following to show our love for God?

- DO I PRAY EVERY DAY?
- DO I USE GOD'S NAME WITH RESPECT?
- DO I PRAY WITH OTHERS AND JOIN THEM AT MASS?
- DO I LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD?
- DO I TRY TO LEARN ABOUT MY RELIGION?

Jesus teaches us "Love others as yourself". Do we do the following to show our love for others?

- DO I TRY TO LISTEN TO MY PARENTS?
- DO I OBEY THEM WITHOUT ARGUMENT?
- DO I HELP AT HOME?
- AM I FRIENDLY, DO MY BEST AT PLAY AND SHARE WITH OTHERS?
- DO I DO MY BEST AT SCHOOL, BEHAVE IN CLASS?
- DO I RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE'S PROPERTY?
- DO I TAKE CARE OF MY HEALTH?
- DO I FORGIVE THOSE WHO HURT ME?

GUIDELINES FOR MAKING A GOOD CONFESSION

1. WE THINK ABOUT WHAT WE DID WRONG
2. WE ARE SORRY FOR OUR SINS
3. WE DECIDE NOT TO SIN AGAIN
4. WE CONFESS OUR SINS TO THE PRIEST
5. WE MAKE UP FOR OUR SINS

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

Sit down and face the priest. Bless yourself and say: “Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been _____(months, years) since my last confession”.

List your sins. When you are done say “For these and all my sins, I am truly sorry”.

The priest will talk to you and give you a penance to complete. Afterwards, he will pray over you and give you absolution for your sins.

If asked to do an Act of Contrition say the following:

“Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee and I detest all my sins because of your just punishment but mostly because they offend you, Oh Lord, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your Son to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.”