

FAMILY PREPARATION FOR RECONCILIATION

GUIDE FOR CATECHISTS AND PARISH CATECHETICAL LEADERS

This document has been developed to help families prepare at home for the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation. The role of the parish catechetical leader and/or catechists will be to accompany the parents in this process. Please read the document thoroughly prior to offering it to the parents.

The family is the first place the child learns about love and forgiveness. From infancy the parent's care and unconditional love for their child reveals God's care and unconditional love for them. Love and forgiveness are the two major components in the preparation for the sacrament of Reconciliation, and the family is a very well-chosen place to prepare for God's healing love and forgiveness. It is important also to note that there are seven sacraments, three of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation) two of service (Marriage, Holy Orders) and two of healing, (Reconciliation and Anointing).

The attached document therefore proposes that parents be given the responsibility of preparing their child for his or her celebration of Reconciliation. Families will need to be accompanied during this process. It is therefore important that they be given some explanations along with the document to help them better understand their role.

SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT

This preparation should take about 2 hours in total, and although it need not be done all at one time, it is recommended that it be done fairly close to the actual celebration of the sacrament.

The first part is addressed directly to the parents and allows them to immerse themselves in the dynamics of the sacrament of Reconciliation from which we receive the healing love of God. They will also be invited to write a love letter to their child.

The second part offers parents an opportunity to lead their child in an understanding of the concept of sin and the recognition of God's unconditional love for them, through the story "Mommy, do you love me?". This is a special time of reflection and prayer, that concludes with a meditation on Psalm 139. Encourage the parents to recognize this as a sacred time of sharing together. It is a time to listen to their child, asking "I wonder" questions to help their child to reflect on what sin is, and to recognize God's unconditional love for them.
(approximately 30 minutes)

In the next section of the preparation the parent will lead the child through the examination of conscience. He or she will then be able to explain to the child how the meeting with the priest will take place (approximately 30 minutes).

This third part should be done just prior to the celebration of the sacrament. Perhaps the evening before the actual celebration of the sacrament.

The parents will have written the love letter to their child and will have it ready to bring with them to the church, where they will read it to their child right after they have returned from speaking to the priest.

The heart shaped woven basket can be done anytime, either before or after the examination of conscience. The woven heart is a wonderful activity that keeps the child's attention focused on the creation of the heart and helps to alleviate any worry about telling the priest their "sins". (approximately 30 minutes)

Encourage the parent to go first, to sit with the priest before their child goes, to reassure their child that they need not be afraid to celebrate this healing sacrament.

ACCOMPANYING

Your role in supporting parents is very important. We invite you to remain present to the parents throughout the process.

Contact with the parents is important to ensure their participation and offer them an opportunity to ask questions or express any concerns. Please instruct them to read the document thoroughly and plan for the time needed to complete the process.

Take the time to introduce each of the parts while explaining the meaning of the process and the role they will play.

Follow up after the activity has been completed, soliciting their comments. Ask them to share how they experienced this special time together. Suggest that after the celebration of the sacrament they may want to celebrate as a family, with a special meal or activity. You may also encourage them to find their child's baptismal candle to light at home during the preparation or when they return from the church.