



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO **Office of Family and Faith Formation**

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Recommendations: First Penance and Reconciliation

Parish Faith Formation Programs should offer at least 6 sessions of immediate preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The family must be intimately involved with the formation of a child's moral conscience and ordinarily integrates the child into the wider ecclesial communities, parents should be involved in the preparation of their children for this sacrament so that they can affirm and reinforce frequent participation in the sacrament. They orient the child toward God and encourage continual growth in the understanding of God's mercy and love. (Cf. NDC 135-136)

Catechesis for children prior to their first reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation must always respect their natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances. Readiness for the reception of this sacrament includes. Components of catechesis in preparation for First Reconciliation include:

- Learn of God's unconditional love for us.
- Learn of Sacramental forgiveness and reconciliation.
- Recognize the presence of good and evil in the world and their personal capacity for both.
- Recognize the need for forgiveness, not only from parents and others but from God.
- Explore the meaning of the symbols, gestures, prayers, and scriptures of the Rite of Reconciliation.
- Learn that the faithful are "obliged to confess all serious sins committed after baptism".
- Learn that true forgiveness comes from repentance, confession, reparation, and absolution.
- Learn that a mortal sin is of a grave matter committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.
- Learn that the priest is given the faculties to forgive in the name of Christ.
- Learn that a priest is bound by the seal of confession to keep absolute secrecy. (NDC 133-136)

Since conversion is a lifelong process, catechesis for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is ongoing. Children have a right to a fuller catechesis each year following the first reception. (Cf. NCD 126)

Reconciliation with God is part of the plan of salvation. Through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation—also called the sacrament of conversion and confession—the penitent obtains pardon for sins committed after Baptism through God's mercy (LG, no.11; CCC, nos. 1422-1424; USCCA, 235-236; CIC, c. 959; CCEO, c. 718).

“Readiness for reception includes knowledge of the person of Jesus and the Gospel message of forgiveness, knowledge of sin and its effect, and an understanding and experience of sorrow, forgiveness, and conversion.”

NDC, no. 36 3b-2

Pastoral considerations:

- General principles for Catholics with disabilities visit: <http://www.usccb.org/about/divine-worship/policies/guidelines-sacraments-persons-with-disabilities.cfm>

-The Diocese recognizes that parents are the primary educators of their child(ren), and that some parents choose to live out their role of primary educators by providing formal catechesis at home. The parish pastor and his delegates also have the responsibility to provide catechetical instruction for the children. The rights and responsibilities of parents and the parish call for collaboration between the two. The same prerequisites for candidacy apply to children who are home schooled for faith formation as are required for children in parish programs and Catholic schools.