

Ten Ways to: *Celebrate your Child's First Reconciliation*

Your child's sacramental experience begins at home. Here are some ideas for enveloping your child in an atmosphere of faith and love as First Reconciliation day approaches.



Helpful hint

On advantage of receiving Reconciliation at a young age is that it develops a habit of asking for and receiving forgiveness. How important this may be at age 13, 16, 19—as you child starts to explore the adult world and perhaps makes some serious mistakes—to know that he/she can be forgiven. With youth suicide rates so high, it is essential that our children grow up knowing that no failure is so bad that there can be no way out.

Likewise, how important it is that children see their parents receiving this sacrament. Otherwise they will see it as 'kids' stuff' and may not turn to this source of grace when they most need it in their adult lives.

1. Pray 'sorry' prayers

Support your child in prayer. Pray together as a family. As well as 'thank-ing' and 'asking' prayers, include 'sorry' prayers in your time together with God. Maybe your child would like to write or draw his/her special prayer.

2. Adorn your 'sacred site'

Place a suitable symbol or picture at your 'sacred site' (your family prayer area). Place a bible at your sacred site and open its pages to the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).

3. Talk about it

Talk about what this day means: a celebration of God's forgiveness and love. Table topics: Who is the most forgiving and compassionate person you know? Or: Share a time when it was really hard to say 'sorry' but you found the courage to do so.

4. Practice forgiveness

This is a graced time to work at the atmosphere of forgiveness in your home. Practice being more gentle, compassionate, patient with one another. Let the fruits of the Spirit reign in your home.

5. Remember when...

Share Reconciliation moments. What was First Confession like for Grandpa? Mum? Older sisters and brothers? Impart to your child a sense of your family's Catholic story, including the positive changes in the way we celebrate Reconciliation today.

6. Seize teachable moments

Look for moments that naturally lend themselves to some discussion about forgiveness and reconciliation. E.g., if a child has a falling out with a friend at school, talk about what it feels like to be hurt, and the choices we have to respond to an upsetting situation in a Christ-like way.

7. Celebrate with the saints

Learn about the story of Saint John Vianney, a great confessor. People flocked to him for the sacrament. Encourage your child to call upon his/her favorite saint as a companion on this special sacramental journey.

8. Read stories that inspire

At family prayer-time, read a bible story such as the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears (Lk. 7:36-48), or the parable of the lost sheep (Lk. 15:1-7), the lost coin (Lk. 15:8-10), the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32).

9. Set an example

Witness to your child by participating yourself in the sacrament of Reconciliation. Most parishes encourage this at the children's First Reconciliation ceremony. (If you are not a Catholic, go to the priest and ask for a healing prayer and blessing.)

10. Party well

Conclude the big day with a special treat for your child: an ice cream, their favorite meal. Some parishes hold a party after the ceremony. Whatever your style, enter into the festivities and envelop your child in a spirit of celebration and joy!

Remember what happens to the prodigal son when he returns home? Party well!