



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.

1. Pray 'sorry' prayers

Support your child in prayer. Pray together as a family. As well as 'thanking' and 'asking' prayers, include 'sorry' prayers in your time together with God.

2. Adorn your sacred site

Place a symbol or picture at your 'sacred site' (i.e. your family prayer table). This might be a scene from the prodigal son parable. Open the pages of your bible to this parable (Luke 15:11-32).

3. Talk about it

Talk about what this day means: a celebration of God's mercy and love.

Table topics: Who is the most forgiving and compassionate person you know? Or: Share a time when you asked for (or offered) forgiveness.

4. Show forgiveness

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

5. Remember when...

Share Reconciliation memories. What was First Reconciliation like for Grandpa? Mum? Older siblings? Give your child a sense of their Catholic story.

6. Seize teachable moments

Look for teachable moments to impart to your child a lesson about forgiveness and reconciliation. E.g., Discuss ways to resolve a playground conflict.

7. Celebrate with the saints

Read the story of St John Vianney who was a great confessor. People flocked to him to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. Encourage your child to call upon his/her favourite saint as a companion on this part of the faith journey.

8. Read stories to inspire

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

9. Set an example

Witness to your child about the value of Reconciliation by participating in the sacrament yourself. (Many parishes encourage non-Catholic parents to come forward to receive a blessing at the time of Reconciliation.)

10. Party well

Conclude the big day by gifting your child with a special treat; e.g., an ice cream, a special meal. Some parishes hold a party after the Reconciliation ceremony. Whatever your style, enter into the festivities and hug your child in a spirit of celebration.

Remember how the parable of the prodigal son ends? Party well!

Helpful Hints

An advantage of receiving Reconciliation at a young age is that children develop the habit of asking for and receiving forgiveness. How important it will be at age 13, 16, 19—as they start to explore the adult world and possibly make serious mistakes—to know that they can be forgiven. With youth suicide rates so high, it is essential that our children grow up knowing that there is no failure so bad that there can be no way out.

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