

Blessed John XXIII Community
Sacramental Preparation
Minimum knowledge required for reception of the Sacrament of
First Confession

Congratulations! You are seeking to have your child make their First Confession. That means you understand that your child is not a little angel, they are flawed like the rest of us and that they are in need of the grace of Confession to help them advance in the Faith and their growth toward holiness.

In order to make one's First Confession, one needs to have been Baptized. They also need to be 7 years of age. The reason for this is that the Church has determined that the Age of Reason is age 7. What is the Age of Reason? It is that point in one's life where they can reason and know the real difference between right and wrong and good and evil. In other words, they can know what is sin. One of the conditions for sin is that one needs to know what sin is. Before this awareness in one's life, there is no need for confession as there can be no sin.

Knowing what is sin is bigger than knowing the 10 Commandments or that it is what will get you in trouble if you do it. We are looking for a real understanding that it is wrong, that it is evil, that it is contrary to the will and the mind of God. Knowing this, one will want to avoid what is evil. As they develop and deepen this understanding through out their life, they will learn to avoid evil for the love of God rather than simply as a way to avoid the pains of hell.

If your child is advanced in their development of the understanding of sin before the age of 7, please see your pastor and let him determine this before you begin the preparation.

Training for First Confession should begin at the start of second grade that they may be ready to receive in December. This way they can begin their lessons for First Holy Communion in January and be ready to receive in April, May or June, depending on when it is scheduled.

As the parent, you are the first teacher of your children. You have the right to teach and prepare your child for this Sacrament. You may also send your child to Religious Ed classes or have a relative or friend do it for you. In any case, please take the process serious as this is an important step in your child's spiritual development.

The procedure too receive the Sacrament of First Confession is as follows:

Step ONE:

If you are in 2nd grade, at the beginning of the school year, let the pastor know that you desire to go to Confession.

Step TWO:

You need to go to the parish of your Baptism and get a new copy of your baptismal record. Give this new record to your pastor that he may determine if you are eligible for your First Confession.

Step THREE:

Learn, know and be ready to discuss the following information:

What is Sin?

Sin is where we offend God by knowingly and willingly breaking one of His commandments. Sin is where we do something that we know is wrong.

Where did sin come from?

Sin originated with our first parents, Adam and Eve.

What are mortal and venial sin?

Mortal sin is a serious offence against the law of God. Mortal sin places our souls in jeopardy of Hell. Mortal sin is committed when we commit a sin that is serious, we give it serious reflection and then give full consent of our will.

Venial sin is a slight offence against the law of God. No number of venial sins can add up to a mortal sin, but they do weaken us and lead us to commit mortal sin.

What is lost when one commits mortal sin?

When one commits mortal sin, they lose sanctifying Grace and no longer have the friendship of God?

What happens to someone if they were to die while in the state of mortal sin?

If they die in the state of mortal sin, they shall not go to heaven but shall suffer hell for all eternity.

How does the Sacrament of Penance remit sin, and restore to the soul friendship of God.

The Sacrament of Penance remits sin and restores the friendship of God by means of the absolution of the priest.

What is the Sacrament of Penance?

Penance is the Sacrament in which the sins committed after Baptism are forgiven.

What is the examination of conscience?

The Examination of Conscience is an earnest effort to recall to mind all the sins we have committed since our last worthy confession?

What is contrition, or sorrow for sin?

Contrition, or sorrow for sin, is a hatred of sin and a true grief of the soul for having offended God, with a firm purpose of sinning no more.

What is attrition?

Attrition is sorrow for our sin because we fear the pains of hell that we know we must suffer for our sins. We have not, however, come to a hatred or true grief for having offended God, nor do we have firm purpose of amending our life. We are sorry because we know we got caught. It is also known as imperfect contrition.

Does God accept both contrition and attrition?

Yes. God accepts both, but we are to mature in our faith and come to true contrition in our lives if we are to ever become holy and to truly amend our life.

Why should we be sorry for our sins?

We should be sorry for our sins because sin is the greatest of evils and an offence against God our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, and because mortal sin shuts us out of Heaven and condemns us to the eternal pains of Hell.

What is meant by having a firm purpose of sinning no more?

By firm purpose of sinning no more we mean a fixed resolve not only to avoid mortal sin, but also its near occasion.

What is meant by near occasion of sin?

By near occasion of sin, we mean all persons, places, things and activities, including speech and thoughts, that may lead us into sin.

What is confession?

Confession is the telling of our sins to a duly authorized priest, for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness.

What sins are we bound to confess?

We are bound to confess all our mortal sins in kind (what is the sin) and number (how often they occurred), but it is good to confess our venial sins also.

What should we do if we cannot remember the number of our sins?

If we cannot remember the number of our sins, we should tell the number as nearly as possible.

Is it a grievous offence (serious sin) to willfully conceal a mortal sin in Confession?

Yes. It is a grievous offence to willfully conceal a mortal sin in Confession, because we thereby tell a lie to the Holy Ghost (Spirit) and make our Confession worthless.

What must one do who has willfully concealed a mortal sin in Confession?

One must confess that they committed this sin and all sins that have been committed since their last worthy confession, including the sin they omitted.

Why does the priest give us a penance after Confession?

The priest gives us a penance after confession that we may satisfy God for the temporal punishment due to our sins.

Do you have to do the penance?

Yes.

How do we know that the priest has the power of absolving sins committed after baptism?

We know that the priest has the power of absolving us from sins committed after baptism because Jesus Christ granted that power to the priest of His Church when He said, "Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (Jn. 20:22-23)

How does the priest forgive our sins?

The priest forgives our sins by the power of God, when he pronounces the words of absolution.

What are the words of absolution?

The words of absolution are, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

How often should you go to confession?

One is bound to go to confession at least once a year, especially in preparation for Easter (referred to as our Easter Duty).

In general, one should go to confession as often as one finds themselves in the state of mortal sin.

How do you go to Confession?

- Enter the confessional and close the door
- Either kneel behind the screen or sit in the chair for face to face confession
- Make the Sign of the Cross
- “Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been ___ since my last confession”
 - Or “Bless me Father for I have sinned. This is my first confession.”
- State your sins in kind and number (what are the sins and how often did they happen)
- The priest may offer some advice or counseling.
- The priest will give a penance.
- Make your Act of Contrition.
- The priest gives absolution (forgiveness).
- Make the sign of the cross when the priest says “In the name of the Father...”
- The priest says, “Go in peace”.
- You respond, “Thanks be to God.”

Know the following prayers:

- Our Father
- Hail Mary
- Glory Be
- Act of Contrition

Know the following:

- 10 Commandments
- Seven Capital Sins
- Precepts of the Church

Steep FOUR:

When you believe your child to be ready, call your pastor and make an appointment for an interview.

While you are the first teacher of your child, the Church is the guardian of the sacraments. This interview becomes the overlap of these two responsibilities, your saying your child is ready and the Church confirming that readiness.

What can your child expect in the interview:

- It should not be seen as a test (pass/fail). After the interview, many are determined to be ready, but are given feedback on things they need to continue to work on. This feedback is not to be seen as criticism. We all have need to work on our knowledge and understanding of the Faith.
- If there are any serious gaps in their knowledge or understanding, the pastor may talk to the parents so that they may do more work in teaching in these areas.
- The discussion will be constrained to the information given in this document. There will be no surprises.

- They will not be expected to know it all perfectly.
- They will be expected to have the ability to talk about it to some extent.
- I will often times give them hints if they are struggling. Remember that I am not concerned with them regurgitating the information like a robot. I am concerned with what do they know. If I give them a hint and they do well from there, then I know they know it. That is all that matters.
- Some children are shy. I take this into consideration if they are not doing well. If I get the feeling that they know, but are just too shy or scared to tell me, then that is fine too. I am not there to torture or interrogate them.
- This is no insult, but some children are more intellectually astute than others. Some learn better, some may never learn. This is a harsh reality of life. We do not all have the same gifts. I take this into consideration also during the process. If your child has learning disabilities, it is nice if you let me know before hand so I treat the situation appropriately. If a child is one who simply cannot learn, that is taken into consideration also. The goal is not to deprive a child of the sacrament. Sometimes we just get a sense that the child understands right and wrong and so we give them a pass. This is not to say that knowledge is not important. It is. It is the ideal. But if a child is trying and simply can't do it, we are not going to punish them either.
- It has happened and can happen that a child is not ready to receive the sacrament. This is not a failure. This is not a "you will never receive." It is simply a postponement as some more work needs to be done. When the work is done, they need to be interviewed again.