

Sacrament of Penance

St. Thomas More

2024-2025

Family Guide

*Reverend Michael J. Yadron, Pastor
Miss Emily Hackett, Director of Religious Education*



**ST. THOMAS MORE
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Religious Formation Office

8501 Calumet Ave.

Munster, Indiana 46321-2594

(219) 836-8610

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Dear Parents:

The Sacrament of Penance is the confession of our sins to achieve reconciliation with God and neighbor. It is through this sacrament we learn to examine our conscience, confess our sins, and receive forgiveness in the peace of Christ. Through performing the penance received from the priest we show our sorrow for the sins committed. This in turn reconciles and strengthens our resolve to live as Disciples of Christ.

The forgiveness of sins is a gift from Jesus to fill God's people with grace. In receiving the gift of God's grace we learn to freely choose words and actions, which build up the reign of God's church.

As parents, we have the responsibility of teaching children how to freely choose right from wrong. It is through Christian family values and morals that our children learn to freely choose the right words and actions in their lives, which are consistent with our faith. Thus, it is through our faith in Jesus we learn to forgive and reconcile as friends, families and neighbors when unfortunate events happen in life. As children witness their parents' faith in Christ they begin to establish their own faith life and build on their ability to forgive others, as they would like to be forgiven. This builds faith, family and friendships.

We will be preparing your student for the Sacrament of Penance in the upcoming classes. We hope that this booklet and your student's book will aid you in becoming a primary source for your child regarding the understanding of God's grace and forgiveness.

Please take time to read this booklet for appropriate information regarding the day of the Sacrament. Also, please pray with your child and encourage their spirituality through attendance at Mass, spending five minutes of quiet time alone with Jesus and family prayer in your home. Sacraments are a special time in your child's life. If you have any questions please feel free to call the Religious Education Office. 836-8610.

May God Bless You and Yours,

Miss Emily Hackett
Director of Religious Education

IMPORTANT DATE

March 14 , 2025 First Reconciliation for STM School students will be right after their weekly class Mass

Parents of religious education students will bring their student to the Sacrament during regular Confession time at STM, Saturdays from 3:30-4:30, any Saturday after March 14 .

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS

Parents:

- + are the primary educators of their children
- + are responsible for initiating their children into the sacramental life
- + serve as models for their children by being moral Christians
- + receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly with their families
- + help children in forming a good conscience and a Christian code of morality
- + model forgiveness and apology situations
- + are asked to attend meetings, participate in activities and prayer services that are planned to help their child prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- + are asked to take time with their child to talk about reconciliation, to read Bible stories, and to pray together
- + are asked to determine their child's readiness for reconciliation.

PREPARING CHILDREN FOR RECONCILIATION

In preparing children for reconciliation, families teach many things through their everyday lives. Some family experiences where children in primary and middle grades learn forgiveness and peace are:

being forgiven
forgiving
sharing
cooperating
making friends

helping others
being loved
loving
making decisions

READINESS

Primary grade children still think concretely. In teaching about sin and forgiveness, parents must respect their child's developmental stage and intellectual capacity.

Most children at this level make quantitative judgments more easily than qualitative ones. To many children of this age, accidentally dropping a stack of the family's best dishes is much worse than breaking one in anger. Parents must also help children begin to make a distinction between deliberate and accidental acts.

Through experiences of everyday living, parents can determine whether their child can distinguish between something that is morally good and morally evil. Parents are also in the best position to know if their child has a basic understanding of forgiveness, being sorry, and trying to do better.

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Sacrament of Penance is the sacrament of forgiveness and peace. It is one of the ways in which God chooses to forgive us our sins. When people sin, they separate themselves from God's love. In the Sacrament of Penance, we return to God, our loving parent.

Sometimes you will hear people use the expression "confession" or "reconciliation" for the Sacrament of Penance. Both the confession of sin and receiving reconciliation with God through the priest are a part of this Sacrament.

UNDERSTANDING SIN

Children are introduced to the concept of sin within the context of understanding the nature of their relationship with God. They learn about this loving relationship through their experiences of family and of friendship. Through these experiences and stories about Jesus' special love for them, young children begin to understand the complexity of sin. Sin is presented in terms of how these relationships are changed as a result of willful wrongdoing.

In human friendships, there are serious disruptions in these relationships. There are also less serious offenses, which pave the way to a carelessness about the relationship. In coming to understand this, children learn that there are offenses that can affect their relationship with God in a similar way.

COMMUNAL ASPECTS OF SIN

The church is the family of God. We became part of this family at Baptism. At Baptism, we became children of God.

Anytime a member of God's family sins, the whole family is touched by this separation. That is why the Sacrament of Penance is sometimes a communal celebration where the parish family comes together asking for forgiveness.

SORROW FOR SIN

Parents teach children to be sorry for their sins by helping them understand the meaning of the words, “I’m sorry.” This is begun in ordinary family situations. Parents help children experience apology situations by letting children witness a loving sincerity of words and actions when spouses apologize to one another. Parents should not hesitate to apologize to their children when the occasion arises. This is done not only with words but also by their actions and behavior in apology situations.

In learning what it means to be truly sorry, children must be helped in gradually coming to understand that if a person is sorry, that person:

1. attempts to change his/her behavior;
2. does something about the wrong committed;
3. makes promises with resolutions to not to repeat the wrong.

BIBLE STORIES

Some Bible stories you may enjoy reading and talking about with your children are:

1. Luke 15:1-10 The Lost Sheep.
2. Luke 15:11-32 The Lost Son.
3. Luke 7:36-50 The Pardon of the sinful Women.

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

Before Receiving the Sacrament

- + Spend some time quietly thinking about what you will confess. You can use the Examination of Conscience to see how you are living the Commandments.
- + Say a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you make a good Confession.
- + Wait quietly until it is your turn to enter the confessional. Be courteous to others who are waiting.

Steps in the Sacrament of Penance (*Individual*)

1. Go into the confessional. Begin with “Bless me Father for I have sinned.”
2. Say, “This is my first confession.” (After your first time then the next time you receive the Sacrament this say, “My last confession was _____.”)
3. Tell your sins to the priest and end by saying “For these and for all my sins I am sorry.”
4. The priest gives you a penance – something you agree to do in order to make up for your sins and to show that you want to change your life.

5. The priest invites you to tell God how sorry you are. You pray an Act of Contrition.
6. The priest prays the prayer of absolution. If you are making your Confession face-to-face, the priest will extend his hands over your head while he prays. As the priest blesses you, make the sign of the cross and answer, "Amen."
7. The priest says, "Go in peace."

After Receiving the Sacrament

For our First Penance service, return to your pew and wait for others to conclude and for the final prayers. The priest will dismiss everyone.

The next time you go to the Sacrament:

1. Remain in the church for a few moments. Say a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus for the grace and healing you have received.
2. If the priest has asked you to say prayers as your penance, you may pray these prayers quietly now.
3. If the priest has asked you to do something as your penance, plan how you can carry out this action now.
4. Do not talk with others about your confession. Do not ask others about their confessions.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

1. I am the Lord, your God. You shall have no other gods besides Me.
(*Make God the most important thing in your life.*)

Have I put God first, or have I made other things in my life more important than God?

Do I remember to talk to God?

Do I choose what God wants for me over what I want for myself?

2. You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.
(*Use God's name the right way.*)

Have I used God's name with care?

Have I used God's name in the wrong way? (For example, saying "God" when I wasn't really talking to Him or talking about Him.)

3. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.
(*Make Sunday a day to worship God.*)

Did I miss Mass on Sunday through my own fault?

Have I tried my best to worship God at Mass by singing, praying and listening?

Have I misbehaved during Mass?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

(Love your parents and follow their rules.)

Have I obeyed my parents – even when they are not looking?

Have I talked back to them?

Have I obeyed my teacher?

5. You shall not kill.

(Be kind to the people and animals God made.)

Have I been kind to others?

Have I solved disagreements in a peaceful way?

Have I fought with anyone?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

(Be respectful in the things you do.)

Have I been respectful in my actions?

Have I followed God's rules in how I treat my body and respect the bodies of others?

7. You shall not steal.

(Take care of other people's things; don't take what belongs to someone else.)

Have I respected other people's things?

Have I taken something that does not belong to me?

Have I cheated in my dealings with others?

8. You shall not lie.

(Tell the truth.)

Have I told the truth?

Have I told a lie or things that were only partly true?

9. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.

(Keep your thoughts and words virtuous.)

Have I been virtuous in the things I think and say?

Have I watched any movies or shows that I should not have seen?

Have I tried to keep my mind on good things?

10. You shall not desire anything that belongs to your neighbor.

(Be happy with the things you have.)

Have I been happy with the things I have?

Have I been jealous of others?

ACT OF CONTRITION

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest my sins because of your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve with the help of your grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen

VOCABULARY FOR UNDERSTANDING THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Absolution

Comes from a Latin word which means “to wash”; it is the prayer the priest says while making the sign of the cross over the person receiving God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Act of Contrition

A prayer expressing sorrow for sin and an intention to do better.

Contrition

Sorrow for sin.

Confession

After examining your conscience, explain sins to the priest in the Sacrament of Penance.

Penance

The prayer, good work, or action that a priest asks the person receiving the Sacrament of Penance to do in order to express an intention to become a better person and reconcile with God and the community.

Free Will

Power to choose or make a decision to do or not to do something based on a person’s own wish or desire.

Conscience

An inner sense that people have to recognize right from wrong to help make moral decisions in their lives.

Examination of Conscience

A sincere effort a person makes to remember the sins committed and how they could change their behavior to bring about goodness.

Mortal Sin

A serious sin; a complete turning away from God’s love; a serious disruption in a person’s relationship with God.

Venial Sin

A less serious sin; shows a carelessness in a person's relationship with God.

Temptation

A pull toward something a person really wants and is sometimes willing to do wrong to have. Temptation is not a sin, but it can lure a person to sin.

Confessional

A small enclosed area in the church that is reserved for confessions; it has a place for the priest to sit and a kneeler for the person who is confessing.

Confessional Room

A place set aside in the church for individual, private confessions where the priest and the penitent sit together, face-to-face.

Firm Purpose of Amendment

The intention a person to not sin or to try to become a better person.

Covenant

An agreement between God and His people. A sign of relationship.

FACTS STUDENTS MUST KNOW

Students must know the following material:

1. Ten Commandments

They must have knowledge of what each Commandment asks of us.

2. Our Father, Hail Mary and Act of Contrition

3. Five Steps to Making a Good Confession

1. Examine your conscience for sins
2. Be genuinely sorry for my sins
3. Determine in mind and action not to sin again
4. Tell my sins to the priest
5. Do the penance given from the priest.