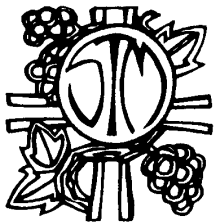


Sacrament of Reconciliation

Family Information Booklet

St. Thomas More Parish

2007-2008



**ST. THOMAS MORE
CATHOLIC CHURCH**

Religious Formation Office

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Munster, Indiana 46321-2594

(219) 836-8610

January, 2008

Dear Parents:

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important part of our lives as Catholics living together as a community. It is the Sacrament of forgiveness and peace. Through Reconciliation, we are filled with strength and grace to become the people we are called to be -- the People of God.

Preparing children for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important element in their spiritual formation. As parents, you have the awesome responsibility of helping your child form a good conscience, distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. It is through your efforts that your child establishes a system of values and a code of morality. It is through your lives that he/she comes to understand forgiveness. It is by witnessing your faith in Christ that your child comes to know Jesus.

We are happy to assist you in preparing your child for Reconciliation, but his/her appreciation for this Sacrament comes primarily from you. You, as parents, are the ones from whom your child learns most of his/her religious attitudes and values.

We present you with this Family Information Booklet, which contains pertinent facts and suggestions to make your family involvement in the Sacrament more adaptable to the preparation process. Above and beyond the necessities (i.e. appropriate dress, times, etc.), we encourage you to share prayer and try to renew and deepen the appreciation of this wonderful Sacrament.

We are happy to share this special time in your child's life with you and your family.

Yours in Christ,

Sr. Marilyn Hettinger O.S.B.

Sr. Marilyn Hettinger, O.S.B. and
The Sacramental Teachers

IMPORTANT DATES

January 10, 2008	Reconciliation/Eucharist Parent Meeting 7:00 p.m. in the Gym
February 16, 2008	First Confession for STM School students and Religious Formation students 9:30 a.m. in the Church
May 3, 2008	First Communion for STM School students 12:00 p.m. Liturgy
May 17, 2008	First Communion for Religious Formation students 12:00 p.m. Liturgy

This Special Communion Mass usually lasts about 90 minutes ... so please plan your day accordingly.

So as not to interfere with the solemnity of the occasion, arrangements have been made to have the First Communion ceremony videotaped by Professional Video Services. We ask that no other video cameras or flash photography be used during the ceremony. You may take pictures after the group picture is taken.

DRESS - FIRST CONFESSION

Receiving a Sacrament is a special time in a child's life. Proper attire for the sacred occasion is appreciated.

DRESS - FIRST COMMUNION

- Girls: All white dress; veil
Dresses should be appropriate for the occasion –
with sleeves, no spaghetti straps
White shoes, white socks, nylons or tights
No purses, gloves, prayer books, rosaries, etc.
- Boys: White shirt with long sleeves (purchase this early)
Dark dress pants with belt (blue, black, brown)
Matching long tie – solid color
Dark dress shoes
Suit or sports jacket will NOT be worn during the ceremony

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	helping others
forgiving	being loved
sharing	loving
cooperating	making decisions
making friends	

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 RECONCILIATION

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

Sometimes you will hear people use the expression "confession" or "penance" for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Both the *confession* of sin and receiving a *penance* from 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 Reconciliation 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.

Unfortunately, the words, “I’m sorry” have taken on superficial meaning in our society. Parents have to ask themselves how they are teaching their children the meaning of “I’m sorry.”

- + Is it a magical formula that can get people out of trouble by simply saying it?
- + Is it a way of showing others what polite children you have?
- + Is it simply an automatic response to a stimulus, similar to the quick “Thank you’s” and “Excuse me’s”?

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:

- + tries to change his/her behavior;
- + does something about the wrong he/she committed;
- + makes promises or resolutions to try not to repeat the wrong.

BIBLE STORIES

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

- + The Lost Sheep (Luke 15: 1-7 and Luke 15: 8-10)
- + The Lost Son (Luke 15: 11-32)
- + The Paralyzed Man (Matthew 9: 1-7)
- + The Woman at the House of the Pharisee (Luke 7: 36-50)
- + The Woman at the Well (John 4: 4-26)

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 Reconciliation room or confessional. Be courteous to others who are waiting.

Steps in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Individual)

1. Go into the confessional. Begin with “Bless me Father for I have sinned.”
2. Say, “This is my first confession.” (After 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

- + Remain in the church for a few moments. Say a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus for the grace and healing you have received.
- + If the priest has asked you to say prayers as your penance, you may pray these prayers quietly now. If the priest has asked you to do something as your penance, plan how you can carry out this action now.
- + 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 sometimes 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 class?

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 told or listened to any dirty jokes?

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

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you. I detest all 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 RECONCILIATION

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

The telling of sins to the priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Penance

The prayer, good work, or action that a priest asks the person receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation to do in order to express an intention to become a better person.

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 help them recognize right from wrong and to help them make moral decisions.

Examination of Conscience

A sincere effort a person makes to remember the sins committed and the good things that he or she did.

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 it. 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.

Reconciliation Room

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

Firm Purpose of Amendment

The intention a person receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation has to sin no more, or to try to become a better person.

Covenant

An agreement between God and the people of God; testament; sign of a 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

- Find out my sins
- Be sorry for my sins
- Make up my mind not to sin again
- Tell my sins to the priest
- Do the penance the priest gives me

4. Seven Sacraments

- Baptism
- Reconciliation
- Eucharist
- Confirmation
- Marriage
- Holy Orders
- Anointing of the Sick