

Celebrating Your Child's First Confession

Here are some pointers and guidelines that you may find useful and that support what the children are learning in school.



What are the children learning about the Sacrament of Confession or Sacrament of Reconciliation?

The school programme, Grow-in-Love, focuses on the fundamental goodness of us all as God's children. The children learn how, despite their own uniqueness, they need relationships. If they do not make an effort, if they are selfish, bully or generally misbehave they break these relationships. They become disconnected from their own goodness, from the group and from God. To re-establish these relationships they are challenged to see where they have gone wrong or where they could have done better (examination of conscience), they acknowledge it and say sorry. So in a very concrete way they learn what the Sacrament of Reconciliation is about.

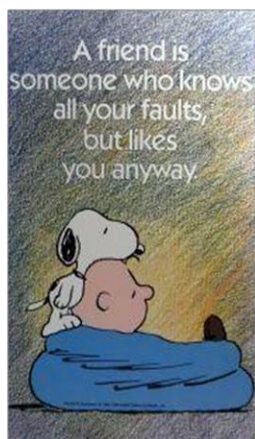
What will happen on the day?

On the day of First Confession, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place in the Church. The children will participate in readings and prayers. The child's confession will be heard by a priest in the open but in private. Confession boxes are not used for First Confession. It will vary with different churches but typically the priest will be sitting on a chair and your child will sit opposite them. The parent or guardian brings the child forward and introduces the child to the priest. They stand back and wait for the child to finish. The child returns to the parent and gives them a hug. The parent if they so wish may receive the Sacrament when the child has finished.

How can you help prepare your child for and support your child during the Sacrament so they are not nervous?

Go over the prayers they are learning in school with them. Bring them into the Church during the week and say the prayers with them there. Assure them that you will be close by during the Confession.

How do I talk about sins to my child?



Use the idea of showing God's love and not showing God's love. There are two pictures in their workbook of playground scenes where they can see how people play together or how they can be mean to others. Get them to talk about what's going on in the pictures? Help them relate to these images and ask them to think about times when they did not show love or to think of something they were not proud of doing or indeed think of something they could have done better. This will help them think (i.e. do an examination of conscience), acknowledge it, plan to do better and ask forgiveness. There are some suggestions below to help your child think of some ways they have not shown God's love. You may have ones that are specific to your child and family life and values that you could include. If you feel that your child will be nervous on the day you could write the main points and prayers on a card which they can bring with them to the Priest.

Suggestions for ways of considering how we have not shown God's love:

I didn't show love when: I didn't do what I was told, I took something that didn't belong to me, I used bad language, I lied to my parents, I fought with my brother/sister, I didn't listen very well, I didn't play fairly, I had a fight with my friend, I didn't say my prayers, I was mean, I didn't share, I hit someone, I called someone names, I could have been better doing this or that....

Children truly understand that they are forgiven when they say sorry. They have no problem accepting the unconditional love of God.

First Confession – Step by Step (This is an example – it will vary with the different schools)

- Parent: Father, this is my daughter/son N.
Priest: N. you're very welcome. *(parents/guardian steps back)*
Priest: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Child: Bless me Father for I have sinned, this is my First Confession.
Priest: What ways have you not shown God's love?
Child: I didn't show love when.... *(see suggestions above)*
Priest: Thank you *(and he will say a few words of encouragement to your child)* and now will you pray your Act of Sorrow?
Child: O, My God. Thank you for loving me. I am sorry for all my sins. For not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen.
Priest: N. God the Father forgives you and I absolve you of all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Priest: Congratulations, you have made your First Confession. *(The Priest will shake your child's hand and invite you to give your child a hug and then return to your seat. You may have your child stand back now while you go to confession if you wish. It is OK for you to use the same formula as your child has used for attending your confession).*

Future Confession

As a parish community, trusting in a loving and forgiving God, we invite all families to take part in the sacrament of Reconciliation on _____ in _____ church as a further step in preparing for the sacrament of First Communion. Taking part helps to reaffirm the pattern of participation for the child, enables them to see the Sacrament as a community activity and allows the family to avail of this Sacrament as part of their preparation.