

*Faith
first*

Legacy Edition
SCHOOL

PREPARING
FOR **FIRST**
RECONCILIATION



Using
**Faith First Legacy Edition / School
Grade 2**

PREPARING FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION

Using
Faith First Legacy Edition / School
Grade 2

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- 20621:** Preparing for First Reconciliation: Using Faith First Legacy Edition / School Grade 2
- 20622:** Preparing for Confirmation: Using Faith First Legacy Edition / School Grade 6
- 20623:** Preparing for Confirmation: Using Faith First Legacy Edition / School Church and Sacraments
- 20624:** Preparing for First Eucharist: Using Faith First Legacy Edition / School Grade 2
- 20625:** Preparing for First Eucharist: Using Faith First Legacy Edition / School Grade 3

Contents

How to Use This Supplement 3

PREPARING FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION: LESSONS

Using Chapter 13

Forgiving Father: A Scripture Story 4

Using Chapter 14

God's Forgiving Love 6

Using Chapter 19

The Great Commandment: A Scripture Story 8

Using Chapter 20

The Ten Commandments 10

Using Chapter 22

We Make Choices 12

PREPARING FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION: LETTERS TO PARENTS

Parent Letter, explaining
Preparing for First Reconciliation 14

Parent Letter, Chapter 13 15

Parent Letter, Chapter 14 16

Parent Letter, Chapter 19 17

Parent Letter, Chapter 20 18

Parent Letter, Chapter 22 19

How to Use This Supplement

The immediate preparation for First Reconciliation is a grace-filled time. *Preparing for First Reconciliation* will guide you through the steps to use **Faith First® Legacy Edition / School Grade 2** to prepare children for receiving First Reconciliation.

This *Preparing for First Reconciliation* supplement has been written to be used in conjunction with the **Faith First Legacy Edition / School Grade 2** teacher guide. It will direct you to use the Grade 2 Teacher Guide (TG) used in a school program.

There are five chapters in the child's text that can be used for the children's immediate preparation for First Reconciliation. These chapters review the essential concepts that are a part of a sound catechesis for sacramental preparation. It is suggested that you coordinate teaching these lessons with the date of First Reconciliation in mind. The five chapters that are taught immediately prior to First Reconciliation are Chapters 13, 14, 19, 20, and 22.

Preparing for First Reconciliation is simple, clear, and easy to use. It consists of a two-page spread for presenting each of the five chapters that are used for the immediate preparation of the children for First Reconciliation. There are also six parent letters that are designed to be photocopied and sent home with each child. The first letter introduces the program to the parents. The remaining letters correspond to each of the five chapters.

On the first page of each lesson plan, you will find a brief explanation that places the chapter in the context of immediate preparation for First Reconciliation. Specific objectives are named. These objectives will help you focus on teaching the chapter to the children. There is also a list of additional resources, along with practical suggestions, that you might want to use to help the children prepare for First Reconciliation. This opening page of each lesson plan also contains a blessing for the children, which we encourage you to pray as you close each of the lessons.

The second page of the lesson plan is a step-by-step process for teaching the lesson. This page clearly identifies the parts of the regular **Faith First Legacy Edition / School Grade 2** Teacher Guide you should use and also contains additional information not found in the guides that will help you prepare the children for First Reconciliation.

Using Chapter 13—The Forgiving Father: A Scripture Story



In Chapter 13 we take a careful look at the parable of the Forgiving Father, which is also called the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is important that the children understand that Jesus told this story to explain the depth of God’s forgiveness. In addition to getting a glimpse of the parables as stories that teach, listening to this parable will help the children see how much God loves us and how good it feels when we experience God’s loving forgiveness.

Objectives for First Reconciliation Preparation

- Identify the feeling of being sorry for having done wrong as described in the parable of the Forgiving Father.
- Explain that it is necessary for each of us to ask for God’s forgiveness.
- Describe that God rejoices when we ask for forgiveness.

Additional Resources

- Grade 2, **Faith First** video, segment 6
- Parent letter found on page 15 of this supplement
- Grade 2, **Faith First** Legacy Edition *Additional Activities* booklet, pages 13 and 13a
- Books to read:
 - Something Beautiful* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth. New York, NY: Doubleday. What is the something beautiful that you have to share with others?
 - Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. New York, NY: Harper Collins Juvenile Books. A wonderful story of forgiveness.
 - The Parables of Jesus* by Tomie de Paola. New York, NY: Holiday House Inc. A retelling of some of the parables of Jesus.

Getting Ready for First Reconciliation

- This lesson provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate forgiveness. Perhaps there might be a time in your class when a child says “I’m sorry” and asks for forgiveness. Assure the child that he or she is forgiven and that you are proud of him or her for realizing their mistake and wanting to make things right again.
- Begin practicing the songs that will be sung at the celebration of First Reconciliation.
- Have the children talk with their parents about the parable of the Forgiving Father. Encourage a discussion about the importance of forgiving and accepting forgiveness.

Blessing for the Children



*Forgiving Father,
you are with these children
as they begin their journey
to your forgiveness.*

*Open their ears, minds, and hearts
to the teaching of your Son.*

*Fill them with the Spirit of love,
peace, joy, and kindness.*

Amen.

Chapter 13

Lesson Plan

Before teaching this chapter, carefully read the “Chapter Background” and “Lesson Planner” on pages 252–254 of the teacher guide (TG).

Day 1

Guide Pages 255–257
Student Pages 163–165

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Tell the children that parables and other types of Scripture stories also help us to prepare for celebrating the sacraments. Explain that the story they will read on Day 2 helps us to understand God’s forgiveness, which they will soon celebrate in the Sacrament of Penance. Remind them that the Sacrament of Penance is also called the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Day 2

Guide Pages 258 and 259
Student Pages 166 and 167

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- As you discuss the parable “The Forgiving Father,” have the children underline the words in their texts that the son says to the father when he comes home (“*I am sorry.*”).
- Use the “Teaching Tip” box on the bottom of TG page 256 to reinforce the importance of saying we are sorry.
- If time permits have the children make the Forgiveness Spinners described on TG page 267 and play the game with a partner.

Day 3

Guide Pages 260 and 261
Student Pages 168 and 169

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Clarify that when we make wrong choices on purpose that are against God’s law, we sin.
- Have the children think about a time when a friend did something that hurt them or made them feel sad. Discuss:
 - Did you and your friend stop talking to each other for a while? Why or why not?
 - How did you feel when you finally made up with your friend and became friends again?
- Compare the children’s responses to the way the father and the son felt in the parable that the children read on Day 2. Emphasize that Jesus is truly happy when we turn back to him after we have sinned.
- After introducing the “Our Catholic Faith” box on student book page 169, have the children turn to page 399 in their texts. Read through the Act of Contrition. Explain any terms that may be unfamiliar to them.
- Work with the children to help them begin to memorize the Act of Contrition. Explain that being able to pray this prayer by heart is an important part of preparing for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Day 4

Guide Pages 262 and 263
Student Pages 170 and 171

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Ask the children how Saint John Vianney helped God’s people come to know God. Help them to appreciate that Saint John showed them God’s loving forgiveness.
- As you discuss the role of the Holy Spirit on page 171 in the student book, remind the children that the Holy Spirit gives us many gifts, or graces, at Baptism to help us live as Jesus taught.
- Ask the children if it is sometimes difficult to forgive people who hurt us. Have them explain why. Remind the class that God is always ready and waiting to forgive us when we are truly sorry for our sins.
- Continue helping the children to memorize the Act of Contrition.

Day 5

Guide Pages 264–266
Student Pages 172–174

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- If time permits, have the children do the “Using Puppets to Learn Forgiveness” activity on TG page 267. Suggest the scenarios described in the “Teaching Tip” box on TG page 265 to get the children started on ideas for their plays.
- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 174 in the student book and ask the children to share the page with their family.
- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” found on page 4 of this supplement.
- Encourage the children to be willing to ask for forgiveness and to forgive.

Using Chapter 14—God’s Forgiving Love



In Chapter 14 the children discover the need we have for God’s forgiving love. Sin is described as those times when we freely choose to say or do something that we know is against God’s law. Recalling the story of the Forgiving Father, the children recognize that they must ask God for his forgiveness when they sin. They learn that the Church helps us do this in the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation. In Reconciliation we say we are sorry for our sins and experience God’s forgiveness.

Objectives for First Reconciliation Preparation

- Explain that we must take responsibility for all our actions, loving and unloving.
- Describe reconciliation as involving more than just saying we are sorry.
- Explain the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Additional Resources

- Grade 2, **Faith First** video, segment 6
- Parent letter found on page 16 of this supplement
- Grade 2, **Faith First Legacy Edition Additional Activities** booklet, pages 14 and 14a
- Books to read:
 - Even If I Did Something Awful* by Barbara Shook Hazen. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks. A story of unconditional love.
 - Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse* by Kevin Henkes. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books. A story of confessions, penance, reconciliation, and peace.
 - Mama, Do You Love Me?* by Barbara M. Josse. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books. A story of unconditional love.

Getting Ready for First Reconciliation

- Review an act of contrition with the children. Be sure to discuss the meaning of each phrase of this prayer. Remind the children to practice this prayer at home.
- Invite your parish priest to visit the class. The children will be more comfortable with the sacrament when they hear the priest talk about how much he is looking forward to the special day of First Reconciliation just as they are looking forward to it.
- Plan for the children to see the inside of the reconciliation room or confessional. Being familiar with the place for celebrating Reconciliation will help prepare the children for their first celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Blessing for the Children



*Loving and forgiving God,
help these children understand
that sometimes their choices
bring sorrow and pain
to themselves and others.*

*Remind the children
of your constant love for them,
and help them always desire
your forgiveness.*

Amen.

Chapter 14

Lesson Plan

Before teaching this chapter, carefully read the “Chapter Background” and “Lesson Planner” on pages 268–270 of the teacher guide (TG).

Day 1

Guide Pages 271–273

Student Pages 175–177

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- As you discuss “We Make Choices” on page 176 in the student book, brainstorm with the class several examples of bad choices that are actions that go against how God wants us to live. List the children’s ideas on the board. Possible responses might be: disobeying, lying, cheating, making fun of people, and so on. Explain that such choices are sins when we know that God does not want us to do these things and we choose to do them anyway.
- As the children write their forgiveness prayers, tell them that we can always express sorrow for our sins in our own words, but that we also must learn to pray the Act of Contrition.

Day 2

Guide Pages 274 and 275

Student Pages 178 and 179

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- List on the board the words *Reconciliation*, *Penance*, and *Confession*. Have the children pronounce each word.
- If time permits, take the children to church to visit the Reconciliation room, as suggested in “Enriching the Lesson” on TG page 283.

Day 3

Guide Pages 276 and 277

Student Pages 180 and 181

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Have the children recite aloud the four parts of the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Explain that only a priest or bishop can forgive sins in Jesus’ name in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- As you discuss “Our Catholic Faith” on page 181 in the student book, challenge the children to be peacemakers as described in the “Teaching Tip” box on TG page 276. Provide art supplies and invite the children to draw a picture of a child who is the same age as they are acting as a peacemaker. Allow time for the children to share their work with the class.
- Encourage the children to try to find ways to solve problems peacefully.

Day 4

Guide Pages 278 and 279

Student Pages 182 and 183

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Allow time for the children to ask any questions they may have about receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. Children often ask such questions as: What will the priest think of me? Will he tell my parents? Will he be angry with me?
- Answer the questions by reassuring the children that the priest will not tell anyone what they have confessed in Reconciliation.
- Pray the Act of Contrition aloud together and conclude by inviting the children to share a sign of peace with one another.

Day 5

Guide Page 280–282

Student Pages 184–186

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 186 in the student book and ask the children to share the page with their family.
- With hands extended over the children, pray the “Blessing for the Children” on page 6 of this supplement.
- Tell the children to take a few minutes before bedtime to think about the good choices and the bad choices they made that day. Encourage them to tell God they are sorry for any bad choices they have made and to ask the Holy Spirit to help them to continue to make good choices.

Using Chapter 19—The Great Commandment: A Scripture Story



In Chapter 19 we read a story in the Gospel about Jesus instructing the people about the Ten Commandments. In this story Jesus summarizes the Ten Commandments in what has become known as the Great Commandment. The Great Commandment is a guide for everything we say and everything we do. As the children discuss the two parts of the Great Commandment they learn about the good choices they can make each and every day of their lives.

Objectives for First Reconciliation Preparation

- Identify ways to show our love for God.
- Demonstrate ways to show our love for other people in the same way that we love ourselves.
- Explain ways that we as Catholics are called to share God's love and forgiveness with others.

Additional Resources

- Grade 2, **Faith First** video, segment 3
- Parent letter found on page 17 of this supplement
- Grade 2, **Faith First Legacy Edition** *Additional Activities* booklet, pages 19 and 19a
- Books to read:
 - The Black and White Rainbow* by John Trent. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press. A story of forgiveness.
 - The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Cole. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. The true story of hatred, prejudice, and a child's forgiveness.
 - Sweet Strawberries* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. New York, NY: Atheneum Books. A story about loving one another and treating others nice.

Getting Ready for First Reconciliation

- Visit the reconciliation room or confessional in your church. Point out the Bible, crucifix, and any other religious furnishings. Allow the children to sit, kneel, and be comfortable in the place in which they will celebrate First Reconciliation.
- Remind the children about each other's privacy when they make their First Reconciliation.
- Tell the children that the priest will be very helpful when they come to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Continue practicing an act of contrition so that the children are totally familiar with it on First Reconciliation Day.

Blessing for the Children



*Creator of all that is good and kind,
help these children to be open
to the guidance of your Spirit
as they learn to live by the
light of the Great Commandment.
Inspire them to make good choices
as they share their love
with you and others.
Amen.*

Chapter 19

Lesson Plan

Before teaching this chapter, carefully read the “Chapter Background” and “Lesson Planner” on pages 356–358 of the teacher guide (TG).

Day 1

Guide Page 359–361
Student Pages 241–243

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- As you teach page 243 in the student book, establish that, in addition to church and home, the children learn about God and his laws in their religion classes.

Day 2

Guide Pages 362 and 363
Student Pages 244 and 245

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Discuss what Jesus meant by the word *neighbor*. Explain that when Jesus spoke about one’s neighbor he meant everyone, all people, those who are easy to love and people who are difficult to love, people we know and people we might not ever know.
- Reinforce the children’s understanding of the meaning of the Great Commandment by having them do the “Creating Great Commandment Art” activity described on TG page 371. Note that the handouts you provide will need to be prepared prior to today’s session.

Day 3

Guide Pages 364 and 365
Student Pages 246 and 247

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Invite the children to give examples of ways that they like to be treated by others. Ask them to discuss what it really would be like at school, for example, if everyone really treated others the way they themselves would like to be treated.
- Ask the children how the Great Commandment helps them to prepare to celebrate First Reconciliation. Lead them to understand that knowing how Jesus wants us to live helps us to know when we have sinned. When we know we have sinned, we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We tell God we are sorry for our sins. We ask him to forgive us and to help us make better choices to live as his children.

Day 4

Guide Pages 366 and 367
Student Pages 248 and 249

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Discuss with the children appropriate ways they can help in the Church’s missionary efforts in our own country and in other parts of the world. Emphasize that we can always pray for the missionaries and the people they serve. Point out that

praying for others is one way to show love for God and our neighbor.

- As you teach page 249 in the student book, emphasize that when we tell others about the Great Commandment we are acting as missionaries. We are telling people that it is important to love God and one’s neighbors—all people.
- As you conclude the presentation of today’s lesson, encourage the children to pray to the Holy Spirit often, asking the Holy Spirit for help in living the Great Commandment.

Day 5

Guide Pages 368–370
Student Pages 250–252

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 252 in the student book and ask the children to share the page with their family.
- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” on page 8 of this supplement.
- Encourage the children to make good choices by showing their love for God and for their family, their friends, their classmates, and others.

Using Chapter 20—The Ten Commandments



Chapter 20 presents the Ten Commandments as the basic principles that God has revealed to guide us in living a life of holiness. The Ten Commandments are divided into two sections that illustrate the ways we are to show our love and respect for God and for others. The chapter also provides concrete examples of situations familiar to children. The children will come to see the Ten Commandments not only as a list of things not to do but as guideposts for making decisions about how people are called to choose to live as children of God.

Objectives for First Reconciliation Preparation

- Describe the Ten Commandments as a guide for how to live.
- Explain that we follow the Ten Commandments both by what we do and also by what we do not do.
- Explain that living the Ten Commandments brings us closer to God and closer to one another.

Additional Resources

- Grade 2, **Faith First** video, segment 3
- Parent letter found on page 18 of this supplement
- Grade 2, **Faith First Legacy Edition** *Additional Activities* booklet, pages 20 and 20a
- Books to read:
 - The Doorbell Rang* by Pat Hutchins. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books. Gifts that are shared multiply.
 - The King at the Door* by Brock Cole. New York, NY: Sunburst Press. When we serve one another, we are serving Jesus.
 - Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by John Steptoe. New York, NY: Lothrop, Lee, and Shepard Books. An African tale that retells the message of Jesus to treat others as they would treat him.

Getting Ready for First Reconciliation

- Provide reminders for the children and their families that specify the date and time for the celebration of First Reconciliation.
- You may wish to role-play with the children the rite of Reconciliation. It is easier for the children to understand and feel comfortable celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation if they can practice the rite before they actually take part in its celebration.

Blessing for the Children



*God of all people,
help these children listen to you
as Moses once listened to you.*

*Be with them on their daily journey
as you once traveled through
the desert with your chosen people.*

*Help the children make choices
that allow them to live in peace
and harmony with all people.*

Amen.

Chapter 20

Lesson Plan

Before teaching this chapter, carefully read the “Chapter Background” and “Lesson Planner” on pages 372–374 of the teacher guide (TG).

Day 1

Guide Pages 375–377

Student Pages 253–255

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- As you teach pages 254 and 255, help the students make the connection between the First, Second, and Third Commandments and the first part of the Great Commandment.

Day 2

Guide Pages 378 and 379

Student Pages 256 and 257

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Point out that the Ten Commandments give us specific ways to love God, our neighbor, and ourselves.
- Help the children recognize that when we knowingly choose not to keep the Ten Commandments, we sin. Ask and discuss, What should we do when we realize that we have sinned?
- Guide the children to recall that when we sin, we should ask for God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Have the children respond to these questions:
 - How can we honor and obey our parents?
 - How can we take care of our lives and the lives of other people?
 - How can we show respect for our own bodies?

Day 3

Guide Page 380 and 381

Student Pages 258 and 259

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Have the children give specific responses to these questions:
 - How can we keep the Seventh Commandment?
 - How can we keep the Eighth Commandment?
 - How can we keep the Tenth Commandment?

Day 4

Guide Pages 382 and 383

Student Pages 260 and 261

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Remind the children that Saint Vincent de Paul was once a child just like them. Emphasize the good that Saint Vincent de Paul did by choosing to live the Ten Commandments. Tell the children that they, too, can make a difference by choosing to live the Ten Commandments.
- Clarify that when we live the Ten Commandments we are living as God asks us to live.
- Ask the children to name ways they can live one of the Ten Commandments. Then have them name ways that they can live the Ten Commandments in church, at home, in school, and on the playground.
- Review the process for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation (see page 180 in the student book) with the children before the First Reconciliation celebration. Have them work with a partner to trace one another’s handprint on art paper and then, using scissors, cut out the handprint.

This will serve as a visual aid to recall the four steps. On the thumb, have the children write *Reconciliation*. Then have them write the steps in the celebration of Reconciliation on each of the four fingers: *Confession*, *Contrition*, *Penance*, and *Absolution*. Have the children bring their handprints home so their parents can work with them to prepare their children for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Day 5

Guide Pages 384–386

Student Pages 262–264

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 264 in the student book and ask the children to share the page with their family.
- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” on page 10 of this supplement.
- Remind the children to think about the Ten Commandments when they are making choices and encourage them to show respect to everyone they meet this week.

Using Chapter 22—We Make Choices



We are constantly faced with choices to make. Using Chapter 22 the children learn to recognize when the choices they make are or are not in accordance with God's Law. The children will learn more clearly the process of developing a good and healthy conscience that will guide them throughout their entire life in making the choices that are in keeping with God's Law. The children also learn how to examine their conscience in preparation for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation and as a way to help them live as Jesus taught.

Objectives for First Reconciliation Preparation

- Describe ways to follow our conscience in making good choices.
- Explain the difference between bad choices that are not sinful and those that are sinful.
- Identify ways to evaluate our day according to God's Law and to express sorrow for the times we have failed to live by God's Law.

Additional Resources

- Grade 2, **Faith First** video, segment 2
- Parent letter found on page 19 of this supplement
- Grade 2, **Faith First Legacy Edition Additional Activities** booklet, pages 22 and 22a
- Books to read:
 - The Empty Pot* by Demi. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company Inc. Honesty is the best gift.
 - Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting. New York, NY: Clarion Books. A story about the people for whom we pray.

Getting Ready for First Reconciliation

- Pray an act of contrition and praise the efforts of the children for learning this prayer.
- The children may still have many questions. Listen carefully and respond as clearly as you can to the questions. Affirm the children in what they have learned.
- As a group, make a card thanking the priests who will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with the children. Have all the children sign the card. Be sure you sign it too.

Blessing for the Children



*Almighty and ever-loving God,
shower the children with your love
so that they will be able to look
honestly at the choices
they have made.*

*Help them see the unending depth
of your love and forgiveness.*

Amen.

Chapter 22

Lesson Plan

Before teaching this chapter, carefully read the “Chapter Background” and “Lesson Planner” on pages 404–406 of the teacher guide (TG).

Day 1

Guide Pages 407–409

Student Pages 277–279

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Ask the children to name who helps them to make wise choices (God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, parents, teachers, priests, friends, and siblings).
- As the children study the illustrations on page 279 in their text, ask them how the actions in the pictures might be sinful. For example, if the girl lied about breaking the window; if the girl disobeyed her parents after they told her to clean her room. Clarify when breaking a window is sinful (they deliberately throw a rock at the window because they do not like the person living in the house) and when it is not sinful (when they are playing catch and a ball hits and breaks a window accidentally), or when having a messy room is sinful (when they deliberately choose to disobey their parents when they are asked to clean their room) and when it is not sinful (when they simply forget to clean it).

Day 2

Guide Pages 410 and 411

Student Pages 280 and 281

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Discuss some ways that we can fix the harm caused by the choices we have made. Responses may include: asking forgiveness of the person we

have hurt, replacing what we have broken or lost, promising to make better choices in the future, and so on.

- Give each child a circle drawn on paper that has a happy face on one side and a sad face on the other side. Have the children glue a craft stick to the circle. One at a time, give examples of good and bad choices. Have the children hold up the happy face to identify a good choice or the sad face to identify a bad choice. Affirm the children for knowing the difference between good and bad choices.

Day 3

Guide Pages 412 and 413

Student Pages 282 and 283

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Reinforce that we are never alone when we are about to make a choice. Emphasize that God is always with us, guiding us to make choices to live as children of God and to be followers of Jesus Christ.
- Utilize the “Liturgy Tip” on the bottom of TG page 413 to help the children examine their conscience as part of their preparation for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Pray the Act of Contrition aloud together to express true sorrow for sin. This will also help the children to continue to learn the prayer by heart.

Day 4

Guide Pages 414 and 415

Student Pages 284 and 285

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Invite the children to raise their hands to respond to these questions:
—How many of you remember to say a morning prayer?

—How many of you remember to say a nightly prayer?

- Help the children to appreciate that daily prayer can help them grower closer to Jesus. Point out that it can also help them to think about the choices they have made.
- Tell the children that as they work hard to make wise choices, they are helping to form a good conscience. Explain that a good conscience will guide them to continue to make good choices and to avoid making bad choices.

Day 5

Guide Pages 416–418

Student Pages 286–288

- Teach the lesson plan outlined in the teacher guide.
- Review again the steps on page 180 in the student book for celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Confession, Contrition, Penance, and Absolution. Have the children use the handprints they made in chapter 20 to help recall the four steps.
- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 288 in the student book and ask the children to share the page with their family.
- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” found on page 12 of the supplement.
- Tell the children that the Holy Spirit is with them helping them to prepare for their first celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Remind the children to pray to the Holy Spirit often during this final week before they celebrate First Reconciliation.



Dear Parents,

Celebrating a sacrament for the first time is an important step in the life of your child as a Catholic Christian. As part of the formal preparation for First Reconciliation, we wish to keep you informed of what we are teaching in each week's lesson. We will have your child bring home a letter summarizing what was taught in the lesson. This will enable you to discuss the lesson at home, to anticipate some of the questions your child might ask, and to share some of your insights about reconciliation and forgiveness. We will also include suggestions for activities that you can do at home together as a family.

Since your child was an infant you have been teaching him or her how to make good choices and to recognize the difference between good and bad actions. Perhaps one way you did this was when your child was unkind to another child or family member. This important task of teaching your child to make good choices also took place when you explained how to share, how to speak respectfully to others, and how to play fairly. You yourself modeled these behaviors too, perhaps when you said you were sorry when you had been unkind. Such actions taught your child to do the same.

It is our sincere hope that these weekly letters will help you and your child communicate more easily about the decisions he or she makes to live as a child of God. These five weeks preparing for First Reconciliation can lead to many years of comfortable discussions as your child continues to grow and learn from God, from you, and from the Church community.

Sincerely,



Dear Parents,

This week's lesson focuses on Chapter 13, pages 163–174 of your child's book. Chapter 13 presents the parable of the Forgiving Father, which is also known as the parable of the Prodigal Son. Jesus used this parable to teach the people to trust in God's great love and unending forgiveness. During our class discussion of this Gospel parable, we talked about how difficult it must have been for the son to return to his father and say he was sorry. The father's joy was made real for your child as we talked about how the father arranged a big party to welcome his son home.

Your child has probably experienced many times when she or he has had to express sorrow for an unloving or selfish act at home. When you have forgiven your child during such times, you set an example of love and forgiveness. Through your actions your child has learned to trust and say "I'm sorry." It is through these normal forgiving moments that your child grows in his or her trust in God.

It is also important for your child to experience giving forgiveness to another person. An example would be when you ask your child's forgiveness at a time when you may have been unfair. Such actions on your part help your child come to realize that everyone, even grown-ups, must ask for forgiveness. These habits of expressing sorrow and offering forgiveness make for healthy families who are able to express feelings and to share love and acceptance.

This week retell or reread and discuss the parable of the Forgiving Father found in Luke 15:11–24. Talk with your child about how proud you are that she or he is preparing for First Reconciliation. Take time to practice with your child the Act of Contrition, found on page 399 of your child's text.

Our prayers are with you and your child as we begin this final time of preparation for the celebration of your child's First Reconciliation.

Sincerely,



Dear Parents,

You will find this week's chapter, *God's Forgiving Love*, on pages 175–186 of your child's text. Chapter 14 explains that sin is freely choosing to do something that we know is against God's Law. It is often difficult to admit that we have sinned. This chapter emphasizes the need for the children to take responsibility for their own actions. In the sacrament of Reconciliation we acknowledge that we have sinned, accept responsibility for our actions, and ask and receive forgiveness. Talk with your child about these important dimensions of celebrating Reconciliation.

As a parent, you have the primary responsibility of guiding your child to recognize what actions are and are not in keeping with God's Law. Just as it is an important responsibility for a parent to take good care of the physical needs of a child, it is also important to see that a child grows spiritually and morally. By providing your child with a set of guidelines for his or her behavior, you are fulfilling the promise you made on the day of your child's Baptism to teach your child to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us.

As your child is preparing for First Reconciliation, you can also help your child understand the importance of making up for the harm his or her bad choices have caused. At times, a child must learn this through the very tangible example of replacing something that was broken; at other times the more emotional examples of doing an act of kindness or love is a way of making up. Talking about this will help your child understand that accepting and doing a penance is an important part of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

You can review the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation with your child by using pages 180 and 181 of your child's text. You can also use the activity on page 183 of your child's text as a starting point for a family discussion on forgiveness. What wonderful examples of God's love and forgiveness are seen each and every day of our lives.

Sincerely,



Dear Parents,

The story of the Great Commandment is the focus of Chapter 19, which is found on pages 241–252 in your child’s text. Your child learns the two-fold command which Jesus taught: to love God above all else and to love your neighbor as yourself. This summarizes how Jesus’ followers are to live.

In this chapter we explain to your child that loving God more than anything or anyone is not just something we say. It is something we actively do and show in our lives. Take some time to discuss how, as a family, you put God first in your lives. In what concrete ways do you already show your love for God? How might your family improve upon what you are already doing? Listen closely to the ideas your child may share.

The children are learning that loving one’s neighbor is more than simply staying out of fights and being nice to others. The children are also learning that one’s neighbor may refer to the child next door or the child at school who taunts and teases everyone; one’s neighbor may be one’s best friend or favorite grandparent; one’s neighbor may be someone we have never met and will never meet. Encourage your child to think of specific ways of being kind and giving to ALL people. Invite your child to pray each night for someone who is sick, lonely, or having a difficult time.

Talk with your child about the difference between loving someone and liking someone. Emphasize Jesus’ command to love. Help your child understand that we do not have to like everyone in order to love them.

Living Jesus’ command to love will take a lifetime. This time of your child’s preparation for First Reconciliation is an excellent opportunity for your family to review the Great Commandment and support one another in living it. Pray for the wisdom to say the right things at the right time that will truly help your child.

Sincerely,



Dear Parents,

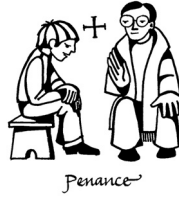
Chapter 20, found on pages 253–264 in your child's text, discusses the Ten Commandments. As parents you have been teaching your child to live the commandments for many years. Now you have the opportunity to explain the commandments more fully in the context of your child's daily actions.

Talk about each of the Ten Commandments with your child, especially those commandments that most frequently apply to your child's daily living. Spend more time on those commandments, such as respecting others and the things that belong to others, being honest, playing fairly, and telling the truth. It is very important that you affirm the times your child obeys any of the commandments. By affirming your child when he or she makes a good choice, you motivate your child to repeat that action.

The day of your child's celebration of First Reconciliation is coming soon. Continue practicing an act of contrition with your child. Discuss some specific ways your child can more closely base their daily choices on the Ten Commandments. Encourage your child to ask questions. Taking the time to really listen and respond to your child will deepen your child's trust and develop the habit of continuing communication between you and your child. Such moments are among the most rewarding and enriching times you can spend with your child.

Identify a few of the Ten Commandments for your family to live by in a very specific way. Ask family members to help create this list. Post these commandments where everyone in the family can see them. The good that results from living the Ten Commandments will really make it clear that the commandments are a wonderful gift from God.

Sincerely,



Dear Parents,

Here it is, the final week before the children celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. Our chapter this week is Chapter 22, "We Make Choices," found on pages 277–288 of your child's text. Your child learns that we all are faced with opportunities to make good or bad choices every day of our lives. God sent his son, Jesus, who showed us what those good choices are. The Holy Spirit is with us to help us make good choices every day of our life.

Along with children growing physically, they are also growing in their understanding and ability to make responsible choices. One of the responsibilities of parents is to help guide their children in learning to make choices that are based on God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and neighbor. Sometimes children think that an action is wrong only if they get caught. Parents have the challenge to guide their children to broaden this understanding of what is right and wrong. Parents need to help their children learn to consistently make moral choices based on the example and the teachings of Jesus.

One way to help teach your child to make good decisions is to suggest that they ask themselves "What would Jesus do?" This helps the child to imagine what Jesus might do if he were making the same decision that your child is now faced with making. Encouraging your child to ask this simple question will help your child integrate a moment of prayer into her or his decision-making process.

We pray that you will become more and more aware that the Holy Spirit is always at your side as you guide your child to live as a child of God.

Sincerely,



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