

*Faith
First*

**PREPARING
FOR FIRST
RECONCILIATION**

Using Faith First Grade 2

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RECONCILIATION**

**Using Faith First
Grade 2**

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How to Use This Booklet

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**® Grade 2 to prepare children for receiving First Reconciliation.

This *Preparing for First Reconciliation* booklet has been written to be used in conjunction with the **Faith First** Grade 2 teacher and catechist guides. It will direct you to use the Grade 2 Catechist Guide (CG) used in a parish program and 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 plan your teaching of 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** Grade 2 Teacher Guide or Catechist 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: 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 13 of this guide
- Grade 2, **Faith First Additional Activities Book**, 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 learn an act of contrition. Explain the meaning of each phrase in this prayer.
- 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.

Begin the lesson . . .

Guide Page 219

Student Page 131

- In CG and TG use **PRAY** and **DISCOVER**.

Guide Page 220

Student Page 132

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **SHARE**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **DESCRIBE**.
- Have the children close their eyes and imagine that they are with Jesus. Ask the children to imagine that Jesus is telling them a parable.
- Ask the children what special lessons they think Jesus might tell them in a parable about forgiveness, such as the importance of saying we are sorry, how to make up, how to forgive and to accept forgiveness.

Guide Page 221

Student Page 133

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Remind the children that in every family there are many opportunities for saying we are sorry and for forgiving others.
- Call on volunteers to give examples of times they have asked for forgiveness from a family member or of times that a family member has asked them for forgiveness.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 222

Student Page 134

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **INVOLVE**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **INVOLVE**.
- After reading the parable, point out that, like the forgiving father, God always forgives us totally and completely when we are truly sorry for our sins.
- Ask the children to give examples of how they would show that they really forgave someone for something that person had done or said that hurt them.

Guide Page 223

Student Page 135

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Discuss with the children those things that sometimes make it difficult or keep us from telling others we are sorry.
- Remind the children that it must have taken great courage for the son to have gone back to his father and ask for forgiveness.
- Explain that we never need to be afraid to ask God for forgiveness. God doesn't refuse his love and forgiveness to anyone who is truly sorry.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 224

Student Page 136

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **SHARE**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **EXPLORE**.
- Have the children think about a time when a friend did something that hurt them or made them feel sad.
- Ask and discuss:
 - Did you and your friend stop talking to each other for awhile? Why or why not?
 - How did you feel when you finally made up and enjoyed each other's friendship again?
- Compare the children's responses to the way the father and son in the parable felt. Emphasize that God is truly happy and filled with joy when we turn back to him after we have sinned.
- If time permits, have some of the children role-play a situation where they say they are sorry and forgive someone.
- A typical response that children often use when someone who has hurt them apologizes is "It's okay." Point out that it really isn't okay to hurt others. Teach the children to say "I forgive you" and emphasize that what is okay is that they have shared forgiveness

and are reconciled.

Guide Page 225

Student Page 137

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 226

Student Page 138

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCUSS**. In TG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **EXPLORE**.
- Focus on the question in the text "Who helps you to ask for forgiveness?"
- Remind the children that the parish priest was once a young child like themselves and can understand how the children feel when they have deliberately done something wrong. The priest wants to help the children trust in God's love and forgiveness.
- Ask the children to name ways that they can teach others about forgiveness.
- Talk about what it means to set a good example.

Guide Page 227

Student Page 139

- In CG and TG use **RESPOND** and **CHOOSE**.
- Remind the children that people sometimes have a hard time forgiving others, but that God is always ready and waiting to forgive.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 228

Student Page 140

- In CG and TG use **REINFORCE** and **CELEBRATE**.

Conclude the lesson . . .

- Pray the "Blessing for the Children" found on page 2.
- Encourage the children always to be willing to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others.

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 14 of this guide
- Grade 2, **Faith First Additional Activities Book**, 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. Jooose. 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.

Begin the lesson . . .

Guide Page 233

Student Page 141

- In CG and TG use **PRAY** and **DISCOVER**.

Guide Page 234

Student Page 142

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **SHARE**. In TG use **SHARE** and **DISCUSS**.
- Have the children look at the pictures on page 142. Call on volunteers to describe how these pictures depict what it means to really forgive.
- Ask the children to name some examples of disobeying, lying, cheating, using bad language. Explain the difference between making a mistake, poor choice, and a sin. Give several examples and have volunteers describe the difference between a mistake and a sin.

Guide Page 235

Student Page 143

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Talk with the children about some reasons that make it difficult for people to admit that they have done wrong, such as fear of punishment, fear of disappointing someone, and embarrassment. Tell the children that these are feelings that everyone has.
- Point out that people feel good when they take responsibility for their actions, admitting their sin, and asking for forgiveness.
- Tell the children that celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation helps us take responsibility for our actions, come to experience the loving forgiveness of God, and the gift of peace.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 236

Student Page 144

- In CG use **FOCUS**. In TG use **INTRODUCE**.
- Write the word *reconciliation* on the board. Have all the children say this word aloud so that they can pronounce it.
- Write the words *penance* and *confession* on the board. Tell the children that the sacrament of Reconciliation is also sometimes called by these names.
- In CG and TG use **INVOLVE**.
- On the board write the steps for the Communal Rite of Reconciliation as they appear on page 329 of the student text.
- Review the steps of the rite and invite volunteers to explain each of these steps in their own words.
- Explain exactly how the children will be celebrating First Reconciliation.

Guide Page 237

Student Page 145

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 238

Student Page 146

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **SHARE**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **DISCUSS**.
- List the following on the board:
1. Confess our sins; 2. Receive our penance; 3. Receive absolution; 4. Rejoice and thank God.
- Call on volunteers to explain these steps of the rite of Reconciliation in their own words.
- Explain that only a bishop or priest can forgive sins in the name of Jesus in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Guide Page 239

Student Page 147

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**. In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 240

Student Page 148

- In CG and TG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCUSS**.
- Allow time for the children to ask any questions they may have about First Reconciliation. Children often ask questions, such as, What will the priest think of me? Will he tell my parents? Will he be angry with me? Be sure to discuss the answer to the questions the children ask. Remind the children that the priest is the sign and instrument of God's merciful love. Assure the children that the priest will never tell anyone what they have confessed in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Guide Page 241

Student Page 149

- In CG and TG use **RESPOND** and **CHOOSE**.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 242

Student Page 150

- In CG and TG use **REINFORCE** and **CELEBRATE**.

Conclude the lesson . . .

- Pray the "Blessing for the Children" found on page 4.
- Tell the children to take a few minutes just before going to bed to think about the good choices and the bad choices that they made that day. Tell them to say they are sorry for any bad choices 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 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 Catholic Christians 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 15 of this booklet
- Grade 2, **Faith First Additional Activities Book**, 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.*

Begin the lesson . . .

Guide Page 305

Student Page 193

- In CG and TG use **PRAY** and **DISCOVER**.

Guide Page 306

Student Page 194

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **EXPLORE**.
- Tell the children that just as the Jewish people in the time of Jesus went to the Temple to learn about God, we learn about God in our parish.
- Ask the children to name places other than at church where they learn about God.

Guide Page 307

Student Page 195

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Explain to the children that we can always learn more about God and how God wants us to live. Tell the children that they can learn about God from their parents and with their parents, and from other members of their family. Point out that sometimes they will even teach their parents more about God.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 308

Student Page 196

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **SHARE**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **INVOLVE**.
- Discuss with the children what Jesus meant by the word *neighbor*. Explain that when Jesus spoke about neighbors he meant everybody—people who are easy to love, people who are difficult to love, people we know, and people we might not ever know.
- Emphasize that God calls us to love everyone. We must be kind to everyone and treat all people with respect. We are called to

help others in whatever way we can. We are not to hurt other people either by our words or actions.

Guide Page 309

Student Page 197

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- After the children have finished the activity, point out the similarities between the two lists. One example might be: We show God we love him by praying. We show others we love them by taking the time to talk to them and listen to them.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 310

Student Page 198

- In CG use **FOCUS**. In TG use **INTRODUCE**.
- In CG use the following instead of **SHARE**. In TG use the following instead of **EXPLORE**.
- Read aloud the first two paragraphs of the section “The Great Commandment” to learn about keeping God at the center of our life.
- Have the children explain in their own words what it means for them to keep God at the center of their lives.
- Ask the children to give examples of ways they can keep God at the center of their lives.
- Call on a volunteer to read the third paragraph. Discuss this question: If you treated everyone the way you like to be treated, how would you be following the Great Commandment?
- Invite the children to give some examples of ways they like to be treated by others. For example, discuss with the children what it would be like at school if everyone would really treat others the way they like to be treated.
- Conclude by reading aloud the final paragraph on page 198.

Guide Page 311

Student Page 199

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 312

Student Page 200

- In CG and TG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCUSS**.
- Remind the children that God calls us to love everybody—even the people whom we do not know. Tell the children that when we pray for people in countries other than our own, or for people who are sick or hurt or lonely, we are showing our love for our neighbors.

Guide Page 313

Student Page 201

- In CG and TG use **RESPOND**.
- If time permits, ask some of the students to demonstrate how they would explain the Great Commandment to kindergartners. Tell the children that just as it is sometimes difficult to explain the Great Commandment, it is also sometimes difficult to really live the Great Commandment.
- Remind the children that the Holy Spirit always helps us to do our best.
- In CG and TG use **CHOOSE**.
- In TG use **CLOSE**.

Guide Page 314

Student Page 202

- In CG and TG use **REINFORCE** and **CELEBRATE**.

Conclude the lesson . . .

- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” found on page 6.
- Invite the children to tell the story of the Great Commandment to their parents. Have the children ask their parents to give examples of ways that they can live the Great Commandment.

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 16 of this booklet
- Grade 2, **Faith First Additional Activities Book**, 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

- Review an act of contrition with the children. Encourage the children to practice this prayer at home.
- 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.

Begin the lesson . . .

Guide Page 319

Student Page 203

- In CG and TG use **PRAY** and **DISCOVER**.

Guide Page 320

Student Page 204

- In CG use **FOCUS**. In TG use **INTRODUCE**.
- Discuss with the children the need for rules.
- Use the following instead of **PRESENT** in CG and **DISCUSS** in TG.
- Read aloud the first paragraph of the section “We Show Our Love for God.” Ask: When have you heard or read these words before? (In the previous lesson on the Great Commandment.)
- On the board summarize the First Commandment by writing “Love God above all.”
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud the final paragraph on page 204 to discover the Second Commandment. Write “Honor God’s name” on the board.
- Discuss with the children ways that they can show that they honor God’s name.
- Invite volunteers to read aloud the two paragraphs on page 205 while the rest of the children follow along.
- Ask: What is the Third Commandment? Write “Keep the Lord’s Day holy” on the board. Be sure the children understand that for Christians the Lord’s Day is Sunday.

Guide Page 321

Student Page 205

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- In TG use **PRAY**.

Guide Page 322

Student Page 206

- Use the following instead of **FOCUS** in CG and **INTRODUCE** in TG.
- Ask the children to describe what is happening in the pictures.
- Summarize by telling the children that the people in the pictures are treating others the way they would like to be treated. These pictures show people living God’s commandments.
- Explain that the last seven commandments of the Ten Commandments tell us how we are to treat others.
- In CG use **SHARE**. In TG use **INVOLVE**.
- Ask the children to name some ways children show love to others and ways they do not show love to others.

Guide Page 323

Student Page 207

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Remind the children that when they truly respect people they are making choices that show they are living the commandments.
- Ask the children to name ways that they know they are respected by other people.
- In TG use **PRAY**.

Guide Page 324

Student Page 208

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **SHARE**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **INVOLVE**.
- Ask the children to give examples of stealing, for example, taking things without permission that do not belong to them, and cheating at games or on schoolwork.
- Ask the children to explain the term *lying* in their own words.
- Help the children realize that every blessing that they have and all their talents are gifts from

God that they are to use wisely and to share with others.

Guide Page 325

Student Page 209

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Ask the children: Who helps you make right choices? What helps you make right choices?
- In TG use **PRAY**.

Guide Page 326

Student Page 210

- In CG and TG use **HIGHLIGHT**.
- Remind the children that Saint Vincent de Paul was once a child just like they are now. Emphasize the great good Vincent de Paul did by living the commandments.
- In CG use **SHARE**. In TG use **EXPLORE**.
- Have the children think of ways they can help others either with their friends or with their families.

Guide Page 327

Student Page 211

- Use the following instead of **RESPOND** in CG and TG.
- Ask the children to think of ways that they can follow the commandments in these places and with these people: God and Church, family, the neighborhood, school, sports.
- In CG and TG use **CHOOSE**.
- In TG use **PRAY**.

Guide Page 328

Student Page 212

- In CG and TG use **REINFORCE** and **CELEBRATE**.

Conclude the lesson . . .

- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” found on page 8.
- Remind the children to show respect to everyone they meet this week. Ask the children to think about the Ten Commandments when they are making choices.

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 17 of this booklet
- Grade 2, **Faith First Additional Activities Book**, 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.
- Some of the children may still have difficulty knowing if an action is simply an accident, or a mistake, or sinful. Often children think that when something seriously wrong happens, it is sinful. Remind the children of the difference between an accident that has harmful consequences and a sin.
- 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.

Begin the lesson . . .

Guide Page 347

Student Page 223

- In CG and TG use **PRAY** and **DISCOVER**.

Guide Page 348

Student Page 224

- In CG use **FOCUS**. In TG use **INTRODUCE**.
- When you discuss the choices of the children in the pictures, have the children identify which choices might actually be sinful.
- Use the following instead of **SHARE** in CG and **DISCUSS** in TG.
- Read aloud the first paragraph of the section “Choosing to Follow Jesus.”
- Have the children name some of the stories about Jesus that they remember. Remind the children that these stories help us make good choices because Jesus always made good choices.
- Read aloud the second paragraph.
- Ask the children if they know the name of the place where they will be happy with God forever. Read aloud and discuss the section “Happiness with God” to help the children understand that God made us to be happy and to live with him forever.

Guide Page 349

Student Page 225

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Ask some of the children to describe the feelings that they have had when they made a good choice that was difficult for them to make.
- In TG use **PRAY**.

Guide Page 350

Student Page 226

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCUSS**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **DISCUSS**.

- Provide for each child a paper circle that has a happy face on one side and a sad face on the reverse side. Attach the circle to a craft stick. As you 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 choices and bad choices.
- Emphasize that it is their responsibility to think before they act to help them make good choices.

Guide Page 351

Student Page 227

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- In TG use **PRAY**.

Guide Page 352

Student Page 228

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCUSS**. In TG use **INTRODUCE** and **DISCUSS**.
- Guide the children in the “Examination of Conscience” found in the Bright Idea on page 352 of the guide. Tell the children that this will be a special time between themselves and God.
- After you have read the last statement, allow a few moments for the children to silently tell God they are sorry for the times they deliberately did not do their best or deliberately made bad choices.
- Ask: Why is it important to make up when we hurt others?
- Conclude by having all the children together pray an act of contrition.
- Encourage the children to make an examination of conscience every day.

Guide Page 353

Student Page 229

- In CG and TG use **SUMMARIZE**.

- In CG and TG instead of **INTEGRATE** use the following.
- Tell the children that the activity is another way they can examine their conscience. Emphasize the need to examine their conscience to prepare for receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- In TG use **PRAY**.

Guide Page 354

Student Page 230

- In CG and TG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCUSS**.
- Ask the children how they would stay in touch with a relative or a close friend if that person moved away.
- Tell the children that if they and the person who moved away talk or write to each other often they will be able to stay close to each other.
- Explain that praying each day helps us to stay close to Jesus.

Guide Page 355

Student Page 231

- In CG use **INVOLVE** and **CHOOSE**. In TG use **RESPOND** and **CHOOSE** and **PRAY**.
- Tell the children that as they work hard to make good choices they are helping to form a good conscience, which will help them continue making good choices.

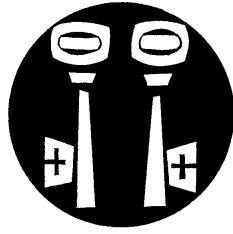
Guide Page 356

Student Page 232

- In CG and TG use **REINFORCE** and **CELEBRATE**.

Conclude the lesson . . .

- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” found on page 10.
- Tell the children that the Holy Spirit is with them helping them prepare for First Reconciliation. Remind the children to talk to the Spirit in prayer 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 131–140 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 322 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 141–150 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 the activity "Celebrating Reconciliation" found on page 147 of your child's text. You can also use the activity on page 149 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 193–202 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,

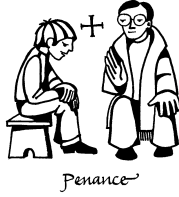
Chapter 20, found on pages 203–212 in your child’s text, discusses the Ten Commandments. As parents you have been teaching your child to live the commandments for many years. Now you have the opportunity to explain the commandments more fully in the context of your child’s daily actions.

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,

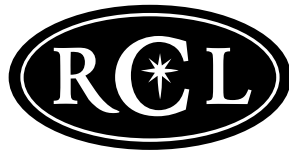
Here it is, the final week before the children celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time. Our chapter this week is Chapter 22, "We Make Choices," found on pages 223–232 of your child's text. Your child learns that we all are faced with opportunities to make good or bad choices every 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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