

*faith  
first*

Legacy Edition  
PARISH

PREPARING  
FOR **FIRST**  
**RECONCILIATION**



Using  
Faith First Legacy Edition / Parish  
Grade 2

**PREPARING  
FOR FIRST  
RECONCILIATION**

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Faith First Legacy Edition / Parish  
Grade 2**

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NIHIL OBSTAT

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**20537 Preparing for First Reconciliation**

**20515 Preparing for First Eucharist**

**20538 Preparing for Confirmation**

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# How to Use This Booklet

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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 / Parish 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 Legacy Edition / Parish Grade 2** teacher and catechist guides. It will direct you to use the Grade 2 Catechist Guide (CG) used in a parish 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 / Parish Grade 2** 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** 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.*

## Begin the lesson . . .

### Guide Page 197

#### Student Page 113

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

### Guide Page 198

#### Student Page 114

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Ask the children why Jesus told parables (to help people come to know and love God better).
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Before having the children do the activity on page 114, brainstorm a list of favorite Bible stories with the class. Write the list on the board. The children can choose from this list to complete the activity.

### Guide Page 199

#### Student Page 115

- In CG use **FOCUS**.
- Encourage the children to close their eyes and imagine that they are sitting with a large crowd on a hill. Ask them to picture Jesus telling the crowd a parable.
- In CG use **DISCOVER** and **REINFORCE**.
- Have the children study the picture on page 115 and describe what is happening. Ask them to name ways their parents show love for them when they are sorry for something they have done.
- Continue with **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 200

#### Student Page 116

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Clarify that when we make 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 and became friends again?
- Compare the children's responses to the way the father and the son in the parable felt. Emphasize that Jesus is truly happy when we turn back to him after we have sinned.
- In CG use **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- If time permits, have the children work in small groups to role-play situations where they say they are sorry and situations where they forgive someone who has hurt them.

### Guide Page 201

#### Student Page 117

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCOVER**.
- Invite the children to compare how Saint John Vianney was a sign of God's love. Help them to appreciate that Saint John was an example of God's loving forgiveness.
- Have the children turn to page 283 and read aloud the Act of Contrition. Encourage and help them to memorize this prayer by praying it often as they prepare for First Reconciliation.
- Continue with **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 202

#### Student Page 118

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT**.
- Emphasize that the Holy Spirit gives us many gifts, or graces, at Baptism.
- Continue with **RESPOND** and **CHOOSE**.
- Ask the children if it is sometimes difficult to forgive others. Have them explain why. Remind them that God is always ready and waiting to forgive us when we are sorry for our sins.

### Guide Page 203

#### Student Page 119

In CG use **WE PRAY** and **WE REMEMBER**.

## Conclude the lesson . . .

- Point out the "With My Family Activities" on page 120.
- Pray the "Blessing for the Children" found on page 2 of this supplement.
- Encourage the children 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 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.*

## Begin the lesson . . .

### Guide Page 209

#### Student Page 121

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

### Guide Page 210

#### Student Page 122

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Brainstorm with the class examples of bad choices that are actions that go against how God wants us to live. List their ideas on the board. Possible responses might be: disobeying, lying, cheating, using bad language, and so on. Explain that such choices are sins when we know that God does not want us to do things and we choose to do them anyhow.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 211

#### Student Page 123

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- List on the board the words *Reconciliation*, *Penance*, and *Confession*. Have the children pronounce each of the words.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- If time permits, take the children to church to visit the Reconciliation room, as suggested in “Enriching the Lesson” on page 217 in the catechist guide.

### Guide Page 212

#### Student Page 124

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Have the children recite aloud the four parts of the celebration of Reconciliation.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Explain that only a priest or bishop can forgive sins in Jesus’ name in the sacrament of Reconciliation.

### Guide Page 213

#### Student Page 125

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCOVER**.
- Pray aloud the Act of Contrition together.
- Invite the children to share a sign of peace with one another.
- Continue with **INTEGRATE**.
- Encourage the children to try to find ways to always solve problems peacefully.

### Guide Page 214

#### Student Page 126

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT**.
- Allow time for the children to ask any questions they may have about First Reconciliation. 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 is a sign of God’s loving forgiveness. Emphasize that the priest will not tell anyone what they have confessed in Reconciliation.
- Continue with **CHOOSE**.

### Guide Page 215

#### Student Page 127

In CG use **WE PRAY** and **WE REMEMBER**.

## Conclude the lesson . . .

- Point out the “With My Family Activities” on page 128.
- With hands extended over the children, pray the “Blessing for the Children” on page 4 of this supplement.
- Tell the children to take a few minutes before bedtime to think about the choices 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 to live as children of God.

## 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 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 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.*



## Begin the lesson . . .

### Guide Page 273

Student Page 165

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

### Guide Page 274

Student Page 166

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Establish that in addition to at church and at home, the children learn about God and his laws in their religion classes.

### Guide Page 275

Student Page 167

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- 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, people who are difficult to love, people we know, and people we might not ever know.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 276

Student Page 168

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Invite the children to give examples of how they like to be treated by others. Ask them to discuss what it really would be like at school, for example, if everyone always treated others the way they would like to be treated.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Ask the children how knowing about 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 know when we have sinned. When we know that we have sinned, we celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. We tell God we are sorry for our sins and ask him to forgive us.

### Guide Page 277

Student Page 169

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCOVER**.
- Discuss with the children appropriate ways that they can help in 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 for our neighbor.
- Continue with **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 278

Student Page 170

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **FOCUS**.
- Emphasize that when we tell others about the Great Commandment we do what missionaries do. We are telling others how important it is to love God and our neighbor.
- Continue with **CHOOSE**. Encourage the children to pray to the Holy Spirit to ask for help in living the Great Commandment.

### Guide Page 279

Student Page 171

In CG use **WE PRAY** and **WE REMEMBER**.

## Conclude the lesson . . .

- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 172.
- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” on page 6 of this supplement.
- Encourage the children to make good choices by showing their love for God 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 16 of this booklet
- 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.*

## Begin the lesson . . .

### Guide Page 285

Student Page 173

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

### Guide Page 286

Student Page 174

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Help the students make the connection between the first three of the Ten Commandments and the first part of the Great Commandment.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 287

Student Page 175

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Point out that the Ten Commandments give us specific ways to show love for God, for our neighbors, and for 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.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- 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 others?
  - How can we show respect for our own bodies?

### Guide Page 288

Student Page 176

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- 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?
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 289

Student Page 177

- Use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCOVER**.
- Remind the children that Saint Vincent de Paul was once a child just like them. Emphasize the good 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.
- Continue with **INTEGRATE**.

### Guide Page 290

Student Page 178

- In CG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **RESPOND**.
- Ask the children to name ways they can live one of the Ten Commandments with the following people and in these places: parents, brothers and sisters, church, school, and playground.
- Continue with **CHOOSE**.
- Review the steps for celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation (see page 124) with the children before the First Reconciliation celebration. Help them to create a visual aid to recall the four steps. Distribute handprints you traced and cut out before class. On the thumb, have the children write Reconciliation. Then have them write the steps on each of the four fingers, namely, Confession, Contrition, Penance, and Absolution. Have the children bring their handprints home so their parents can help them prepare for the celebration.

### Guide Page 291

Student Page 179

In CG use **WE PRAY** and **WE REMEMBER**.

## Conclude the lesson . . .

- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 180.
- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” on page 8 of this supplement.
- Remind the children to show respect to everyone they meet this week. Ask them 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 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.*

## Begin the lesson . . .

### **Guide Page 309** **Student Page 189**

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

### **Guide Page 310** **Student Page 190**

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Ask the children to name who helps them to make wise choices (Responses might include God the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, parents, teachers, priests, friends, and siblings).
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- As the children study the illustrations on page 190, 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 or having a messy room is sinful and when it is not sinful.

### **Guide Page 311** **Student Page 191**

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Discuss how we can fix the harm caused by the choices we have made. Responses may include: asking forgiveness of the person we have hurt, celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation, replacing what we have broken or lost, or promising to make better choices in the future.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Give each child a paper circle that has a happy face on one side and a sad face on the reverse 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.

### **Guide Page 312** **Student Page 192**

- In CG use **FOCUS** and **DISCOVER**.
- Reinforce that we are never alone when faced with a choice. Emphasize that God is always with us, guiding us to make choices to live as children of God and followers of Jesus.
- Continue with **REINFORCE** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Utilize the “Liturgy Tip” on page 312 in the CG 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 help the children learn the prayer by heart and to express true sorrow for sin.

### **Guide Page 313** **Student Page 193**

- Before having the children look at page 193, have them raise their hands in response to these questions:
  - How many of you remember to say a morning prayer?
  - How many remember to say your night prayers?
- Then introduce **HIGHLIGHT** in CG.
- Continue with **DISCOVER** and **INTEGRATE**.
- Help the children appreciate that praying daily can help them grower closer to Jesus and can also help them to think about the choices they have made.

### **Guide Page 314** **Student Page 194**

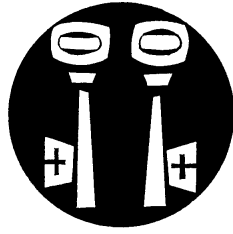
- In the CG use **HIGHLIGHT** and **DISCOVER**.
- Tell the children that as they work hard to make wise choices they are helping to form a good conscience. Explain that having a good conscience will guide them to continue to make good choices.
- Continue with **CHOOSE**.

### **Guide Page 315** **Student Page 195**

- In CG use **WE PRAY** and **WE REMEMBER**.
- Review again the steps on page 124 for celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation. Have the children use the handprints that they made in the last session to help recall the four steps.

## Conclude the lesson . . .

- Point out the “With My Family” activities on page 196.
- Pray the “Blessing for the Children” found on page 10 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.
- Encourage the children to talk to the Holy 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 113–120 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 283 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 121–128 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 chart found on page 124 of your child's text. You can also use the activity on page 125 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,





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Dear Parents,

The story of the Great Commandment is the focus of Chapter 19, which is found on pages 165–172 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,

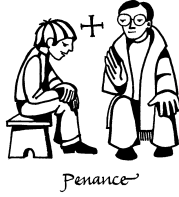
Chapter 20, found on pages 173–180 in your child’s text, discusses the Ten Commandments. As parents you have been teaching your child to live the commandments for many years. Now you have the opportunity to explain the commandments more fully in the context of your child’s daily actions.

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 189–196 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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