
CONFESSION

Part 3

Once you have completed watching the online video - www.stcatharine.com/first-confession - here are a few things you can put into practice to begin preparing your child for their first confession.



Domenico Fetti - Parable of the Lost Drachma

New Materials:

Watch Brother Francis and Discuss

Have you and your child watch this great video from the Brother Francis series entitled “**Forgiven: The Blessings of Confession**”. It is available on our website via Formed.org. Talk to your child about what they learned from the video.

Read the blog post for parents from Simcha Fisher

Read the article from Catholic blogger Simcha Fisher about some practical advice on how to make your child’s experience of First Confession, and Confession in general, a positive one.

Things to Continue...

Examination of Conscience

Continue to take time each day to go through the Examination of Conscience. This is a great practice to encourage in your child, and in your entire family, by giving time for them to reflect on their relationship with God that day.

Review the 10 Commandments

The 10 commandments are guidance from God that, if followed, lead to our ultimate happiness. God does not want to see us get hurt. He instead gives us guidance on how to live our life to the fullest.

Praying the Act of Contrition and other prayers

The best way to learn prayers is to pray them! Make it a practice to regularly pray these prayers with your child. It is common to pray the Act of Contrition after doing an Examination of Conscience.

Going to Mass

First Confession is a step closer to receiving First Communion. Your child is preparing a place for Jesus to be inside us both physically and spiritually! There is no better way to prepare for First Communion than by regularly attending Mass.

Examination of Conscience

An Examination of Conscience (A checklist for children)

1. Using God's name without respect.
2. Being inattentive or disruptive during Mass.
3. Being disrespectful or disobedient to parents or teachers.
4. Saying mean things to others or about others.
5. Teasing or making fun of others.
6. Using bad language or looking at bad pictures.
7. Doing something bad or shameful by oneself or with others.
8. Being selfish.
9. Being prideful.
10. Being jealous or envious of others.
11. Sulking, pouting, or whining.
12. Stealing.
13. Breaking things on purpose.
14. Cheating.
15. Telling lies.
16. Being ungrateful.
17. Being inattentive or disturbing others in class.
18. Not doing, or not finishing, one's homework.
19. Being careless in one's work.
20. Not saying one's prayers.

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You. I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life.

Amen.

Prayers To Know

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You. I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life.
Amen.

Our Father

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death.
Amen.

Glory Be

Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

First Confession - Here's How To Make It Easier

By **Simcha Fisher** - <https://www.simchafisher.com/2020/03/11/kids-first-confession-heres-how-to-make-it-easier/>

Adult converts sometimes sheepishly admit that confession scares them. What they may not know is cradle Catholics often feel the same way. Very often, anxiety around confession begins in childhood, when well-meaning parents send kids all the wrong messages about when, how, and why we go to confession.

But children aren't doomed to hate confession. Here are some things you can do to mitigate their anxiety and even help them learn to look forward to confession:

Make sure your kids fully understand that confession is a place you go for help, not a place you have to go when you're in disgrace. Mercy mercy mercy. Tell them until they're sick of hearing about it.

Practice ahead of time. Nothing eases anxiety like familiarity; and humor helps, too. Let the kid take turns acting out confession playing the part of different penitents with appropriate sins: Their two-year-old sister, for instance, or Indiana Jones. Let them know the routine inside and out before they make it personal.

Let them have as many crutches as they like, including a cheat sheet with the act of contrition or even the entire form of confession written out. They can bring in a paper with their sins on it, and throw it away or burn it afterward.

Let them check out the confessional during "off hours," so it's not a mysterious or terrifying place. Or arrange for confession in a setting that is familiar. Confessions don't have to be in a confessional to be valid.

Remind them repeatedly that father has heard it all before, and remind them that he's used to people being nervous, too. It's okay to say, "I forget what I'm supposed to say next," and it's okay to tell the priest you're scared or embarrassed, too.

Sometimes the waiting is the hardest part. If a child finds it truly excruciating to wait in line, consider making an appointment where he can just pop in and get it done.

It's okay to avoid difficult or unpleasant priests and to seek out helpful, reassuring ones. Yes, it's always really Jesus in there; but it's also a particular man. If your kid likes and trusts some particular priest, he may be willing to schedule a confession if that's what makes the difference between going and not going.

But for some kids, knowing the priest makes it worse. Some kids would rather have an anonymous experience with less social awkwardness. If your kid would prefer to confess to a stranger, make an occasional pilgrimage to another parish for this purpose.

In any case, remind the kid about the seal of confession and what dire consequences face a priest who breaks the seal. Remind them that the priest can't tell the penitent's parents what was confessed! If you're going as a family, let an adult go first and alert the priest there's a nervous kid coming up next, so he can do everything in his power to make it a good experience.

Make it sweet, not bitter. Associations are powerful things, for good or ill. The Jews have a tradition of giving children honey as they learn the Torah, so they will know that the law of God is sweet. It's not bribery; it's helping children internalize something true. So celebrate at least the first confession with a small treat, and consider making subsequent confession trips as pleasant as possible. It may not be practical to include ice cream every time, but at last don't make it wretched.

If necessary, wait. Some kids simply aren't ready when most of their peers are ready. A young child isn't going to be committing mortal sins, so it's far better to wait an extra year or so than to force a traumatic first confession. If you have to literally drag your kid into the confessional, or if you have to threaten or coerce them into going, you may be harming your child's relationship with God, and making it less likely that they'll go at all, once they're old enough to choose.

Make it a normal normal normal. Let them see you and their siblings going regularly, and then going about their day. Talk about it like it's the normal thing it is. Let your kids hear you say things like, "On Saturday, we'll pick up some cat food, then get to confession, then do a car wash," or "I remember going to confession at St Blorphistan, and boy, those kneelers were squeaky." No good can come of making it rare and unfamiliar, or speaking as if it's some kind of mysterious, arcane experience that doesn't fit into everyday life. Many people (not all) find that frequent confession is easy confession.

Be open about your own struggles and joys surrounding confession. If confession makes you nervous, acknowledge this to your kids. If you feel intense relief when it's over, talk about that. If you ever feel grateful to God for the gift of forgiveness, talk about that. The last several times I went to confession and the priest said the words, "I absolve you from your sins," I had to fight down the urge to shout, "JUST LIKE THAT?" It seemed like such an incredibly good deal, I couldn't believe my good fortune. Every time I feel this way, I talk about it to whichever kid is with me.

Let it be a standing offer. Remind them they can always ask to go to confession, and resolve to bring them any time they ask, no questions asked, no fuss, no complaints, no exceptions. Acknowledging and overcoming sin is hard enough; the last thing a kid needs is for her parents to add obstacles by embarrassing her, or making her feel like she's causing trouble.

Mind your own business. Yes, you have to educate them in a general way about what kind of things they ought to be bringing to confession, but it's not a great idea to shout, "Ryan, you apologize to your sister's hamster right now, and you better be confessing that next week!" It's the penitent, the priest, and God in there. Parents aren't invited.

But do check in. Without asking for any personal details, occasionally make sure the experience they're having at confession is okay. If they seem distraught when they come out of the confessional, ask if anything happened that makes them feel weird. Kids should know that confession can be difficult and intense, but it's not supposed to be excruciating or humiliating. And they should know that safe adults never ask children to keep secrets.

Take anxiety seriously. If a child is showing severe reluctance or anxiety around confession, don't assume it's because he's a reprobate who's resisting spiritual improvement, and don't be sarcastic or dismissive of his anxiety. Maybe something bad happened to him in confession, in which case you need to find out what happened and address it swiftly.

Or maybe he's suffering from anxiety in general. If confession is just one of many things your child can't bring himself to do because of anxiety, then you should be talking to a pediatrician to figure out what the next steps are. Put confession on the back burner until you have a better idea of what's really happening, rather than cementing the association of confession with fear and misery.

When a penitent meets Christ in the confessional, it's about a relationship. Like any relationship, it takes time to develop naturally over the years, and there will be highs and lows. Sometimes helping our kids through the lows helps us become more comfortable with this great sacrament, too.