

## **Preparing your child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.**

### **God is Love!**

God is love. When we share love or receive love, we experience God.

When we share love, we share God.

When others show love to us, we receive God.

When we refuse to be loving or to forgive we break our connection with God.

When we forgive others or receive forgiveness we fix that broken connection bringing ourselves not just close to God, but also becoming a real part of God.

### **Reconciliation is a Sacrament of Healing**

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing.

Healing mends, fixes and makes all well again.

Healing makes the parts of the body work well together.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation makes us work together well as parts of Christ's Body.

When any part of a body is not well or is cut off from the rest of it, then the whole body suffers.

When a member of our family, community, school or workplace is not well or is cut off, then everyone else has to work harder or to feel the tension that is tiring.

Jesus' example of forgiveness and healing shows us how to live happy lives together so that we are more free to discover and share all our gifts and talents.

### **We are all sinners**

As all parts of the human body can become ill and be in need of healing, every person in the family of God fails to love well at different time and needs help and healing to be the best person as made by God. We are all sinners: which means that we all fail to do our best and to love at different times.

### **We are all called to be saints**

However, we are all called to be saints: to be loving people who do the best possible with the gifts given to us by God. We are all called to greatness! God gives us some of the tools to reach for greatness through love, the ability to talk with Him in prayer, the support of one another and the sacraments. We all want to lead our children to greatness and to live the great plan that God has for each one. We will show them how to be saints!

### **How to prepare your child for the Sacrament of Reconciliation:**

1. Listen to your child tell you about the stories in Alive-O each week.  
Connect with what they are doing in Religion in school.
2. Bring them to weekly Mass where they will meet people who pray for them and support them.  
At Mass they will hear about Jesus and talk with Jesus learning that God loves them as they are, always reaching out to bring each one closer to Him.
3. Encourage them to show love – let them know when you see them being loving to others.
4. Encourage them to admit wrongs, to say sorry to others and to forgive.
5. Take a moment at the end of the day to pray and
  - to name times when they showed love to others
  - to name times when they could have been more loving or tried harder to do their best
  - to decide how to be better tomorrow.
  - say the *Act of Sorrow* together

## **Teach the three Reconciliation prayers to your children**

Perhaps you might spend a week learning each of the three prayers below. Each of the prayers tell us something important about God. The prayers show us how much God loves us and how we are connected to God.

Perhaps you might say the prayer together each night after thinking about times when your child was loving or failed to love, or you might like to take time to do it with the help of pictures. The following might be a process that you could follow as you prepare your child. You may wish to follow through the nights five nights preparation over a two or three week period with some of the material named for a night taking two nights if preferred.

### **NIGHT ONE**

**Ask your child to write the first line of the prayer on top of a blank page.**

*O my God, I thank you for loving me.*

Then talk about times when they felt loved by someone.

Discuss the people who love them, care for them and are always willing to give them a second chance.

(God loves them through others – God has given us the gift of sharing Him with one another through love.)

Then give them time to draw a picture of a time when he/she felt loved.

Put the picture someplace where they will be reminded of how much God loves them.

### **NIGHT TWO**

**Ask your child to write the second and third line of the prayer on top of a blank page.**

*I am sorry for all my sins,*

*for not loving others and not loving you.*

1. Encourage your child to think about a time when they felt bad about how they had treat someone, or when they knew that they hadn't done their best. Encourage them to think about how they felt at that time. Was it a time when they felt close to others?- or did they feel lonely or sad? – or angry? – or disappointed?
2. What could they have done/or did they do to make it well again?
3. Did they need to say sorry or to forgive someone?
4. Give your child time to draw a picture of one of those times – showing any part of the story that they choose.

### **NIGHT THREE**

Ask your child to write the fourth line on top of a page.

*Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again.*

- Discuss with your child:
- Jesus healed people, fed the hungry, forgave those who hurt Him, did His best even when people made it hard for Him to do so, always spoke the truth even when he was tested or jeered or bullied. Jesus was always loving towards others. What helps you to be more loving? What help do you need to ask from Jesus?
- Draw a picture of something that you would like to do for someone tomorrow to show them how much you love them – or draw a card to show someone how much you love them.

### **NIGHT FOUR, FIVE, SIX**

Say the Act of Sorrow together each night looking at the pictures that were drawn on the first three nights.

**Act of Sorrow**

O my God, I thank you for loving me.

I am sorry for all my sins,

for not loving others and not loving you.

Help me to live like Jesus and not sin again. Amen.

### NIGHT SEVEN

- Ask your child to write out the Prayer for Forgiveness
- Encourage your child to name times when he/she did not show love on that particular day.
- Discuss how they might change tomorrow so that they can find and share more love.
- What would Jesus have done? If you do what Jesus would do you are living like Jesus!
- Ask your child to close your eyes and ask Jesus to help him/her.
- Give your child time to Decorate the prayer to remind them that Jesus is always in his/her heart ready to help.
- Then say the prayer together.

### NIGHT EIGHT & NINE

Say the Act of Sorrow and Prayer for Forgiveness together each night.

#### **Prayer for Forgiveness**

O my God, help me to remember the times  
when I didn't live: as Jesus asked me to.  
Help me to be sorry and to try again. Amen.

### NIGHT TEN

Ask your child to write the first line on top of a page.

***O my God, thank you for forgiving me.***

1. Discuss -
  - times when they felt that someone forgave them.
  - what it feels like to be forgiven
  - what it is like to forgive others
2. Draw a picture of one of those times/experiences.

### NIGHT ELEVEN

Ask your child to write the second line of the prayer on top of a blank page.

***Help me to love others.***

1. Discuss –
  - How can you be more loving?
  - How can you do your best tomorrow?
  - Who needs your help?
  - Is there someone that you need to include in your play time?
2. Draw a picture of what you would like to do tomorrow to be more loving, helpful or your best.

### NIGHT TWELVE

Ask your child to write the last line of the prayer on top of a page.

Help me to live as Jesus asked me to.

1. Discuss –
  - How would you like Jesus to help you?
2. Draw a picture asking Jesus to help you to be your very best.

#### **Prayer after Forgiveness**

O my God, thank you for forgiving me.  
Help me to love others.  
Help me to live as Jesus asked me to. Amen.

#### **Every night until the time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation arrives:**

Say the three prayers each night and reflect on showing love, failure to show love and making fresh starts through forgiveness.

**(The story of the Good Shepherd directly from the Bible) John 10:11- 18**

“I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

“The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”

**(The story of the Good Shepherd re-told for children)**

One day, Jesus said, “If a man sneaks over the fence to get into a sheep pen, he probably is a thief. If he calls the sheep, they won’t come because he’s a stranger. His voice frightens them and they run away. But the real shepherd enters through the gate. And when he calls his sheep, he uses their names, and they know his voice. “I am the good shepherd. I know each of My sheep by name, and My sheep know Me. And I am the gate. Those who come through Me will be saved. They will have everything they need. “Sometimes a man is hired to watch over the sheep,” continued Jesus. “But this man does not own these sheep and he does not really care about them. He just -works to get paid. If a wolf comes in the middle of the night, the man runs away! And the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters the flock. The man doesn’t even care—because they’re not his sheep.

“But I am the good shepherd,” said. Jesus. “And I lay down My life for My sheep.

“My Father loves Me, and I gladly lay down My life for My sheep. Even though He has told Me to do this, I do it because I want to. No man will take My life from Me. Instead, I give it freely.

“And after I lay down My life, My Father has given Me the power to take it back again.”

**The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

We will meet in the church at ten past seven on the night of your child’s first Reconciliation to practice what they will do during the Sacrament. Each child will sit with their family. There will be readings, hymns and prayers during the Service of Reconciliation with parishioners, parents and children taking part. It will be a very special night for all the parish, as together, we celebrate and connect with God’s great love for each one of us.

**Practice with your child:**

When your child goes to the priest, they will be made welcome and helped as needed.

When they have been introduced to the priest and are ready to start, begin by blessing self:

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit  
as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*

*Bless me Father, for I have sinned.*

*This is my first time at reconciliation.*

*I didn’t show love when I.....(they may name one or two times when they did not show love.)*

The priest will talk with them about what they have said helping them to see that God loves them and is with them helping them to be more loving.

The priest will then give absolution (sharing God’s forgiveness) so that they are ready to be connected with God again. He will sent your child back to you. As a sign of being re-connected in love again, give your child a hug, showing how much you love them.

If parent(s)/guardian(s) or any other family member would like to receive the sacrament, they may do so also after their own child, after which the family returns to their seat.

Some parishioners may wish to receive the sacrament also.

**The three prayers that the children have learnt will be said together during the ceremony.**