

MY FIRST CONFESSION

ACTIVITY & CONVERSATION COMPANION

THIS IS NOT ANOTHER CATECHISM The existing catechism contains the teaching. This companion gives you simple activities, demonstrations, role-play, questions and prayer so the teaching feels personal and memorable.

The basic rhythm

- Begin with the child, not the page.
- Do one simple activity.
- Open the catechism and read only what helps.
- Talk. Let the child answer before you explain.
- Check that the essential Catholic truth has landed.
- Pray and stop.

USE ONE ACTIVITY, NOT EVERYTHING If the child is engaged and the main point is understood, stop. A good ten or fifteen minutes is better than a long formal lesson.

How to use this with the catechism

Keep the catechism open beside this companion. The catechism remains the doctrinal foundation; this book simply gives you ways to enter the teaching through ordinary life.

A SIMPLE SIX-STEP RHYTHM 1 Welcome - begin with something real. 2 Activity - use an object, movement or imagined situation. 3 Catechism - read the relevant teaching. 4 Conversation - ask and wait. 5 Check - make sure the main truth is understood. 6 Prayer - end simply and positively.

A few boundaries

- Use invented examples when talking about sin. Never ask the child to disclose personal sins.
- Do not turn the catechism answers into an oral examination.
- Do not compare children or push the pace because someone else is further ahead.
- If a safeguarding disclosure is made outside Confession, follow diocesan safeguarding procedure.

LESSON 1

God Made Me and Loves Me

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Begin from belonging: God made me, knows me and calls me to live with him.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: “Tell me one thing you enjoy, one person you love and one thing you are good at.” Then ask: “Do you think God already knows all of that?”

DO SOMETHING

Look at your hands together. Notice that no two people are exactly the same. Say: “God did not make a copy. He made you.” Then ask what it would mean if God stopped loving us every time we did something wrong.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 1, especially the REMEMBER line and the paragraph about God knowing us completely yet calling us back when we do wrong.

TALK TOGETHER

- If God already knows everything, why can we be honest with him?
- What is the difference between feeling bad and knowing a choice was wrong?
- How do we learn what is good?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- Who made you?
- Why did God make you?
- What is conscience?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Ask the child to “teach back” the lesson in one sentence: “God made me, loves me and calls me back when I do wrong.”

PRAY Father in heaven, thank you for making me and loving me. Help me to know what is good and choose it freely. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Keep this lesson warm. Confession starts from the truth that the child belongs to God and is loved. Do not make wrongdoing the first thing the child associates with the sacrament.

LESSON 2

Jesus Saves Me from Sin

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Place Confession inside the larger story of Jesus saving us through his Cross and Resurrection.

QUICK PREP: A crucifix, if one is nearby.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Point to the crucifix and ask: “What do you notice first? What does the Cross tell us about how much Jesus wants us close to God?”

DO SOMETHING

Stand a few steps away from the crucifix. Turn away and say: “Sin turns us away from God.” Then turn back and walk towards it: “Jesus opens the way home.” Let the child do the movement and explain it back to you.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 2. Pause at the sentences about Jesus conquering sin and death and about coming to the Saviour who already knows us.

TALK TOGETHER

- Why did Jesus die for us?
- What does the Resurrection tell us about sin and death?
- Who are we meeting in Confession: a stranger, or the Saviour who gave himself for us?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- Who is Jesus Christ?
- Why did Jesus die on the Cross?
- Why can we hope for forgiveness?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Look at a crucifix in silence for twenty seconds. Ask the child to choose one word that describes Jesus’ love.

PRAY Jesus, my Saviour, you loved me and gave yourself for me. Help me to trust your mercy and turn away from sin. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Do not make Confession sound like a system for dealing with bad behaviour. The centre is Christ: Cross, Resurrection, mercy and return.

LESSON 3

Baptism and the Life of Grace

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Show that Baptism truly gives new life and that Confession restores and strengthens the life of grace.

QUICK PREP: A little water in a glass or bowl.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: “Do you know where you were baptised? Have you seen a photo or heard the story?”

DO SOMETHING

Show the water. Ask: “Can ordinary water make someone God’s child by itself?” Explain that Christ uses water and the words of Baptism as a sacramental sign through which he really gives new life and grace.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 3, especially the sections on Baptism, sanctifying grace and the way Penance restores grace when it has been lost.

TALK TOGETHER

- What changed at Baptism even though the baby looked the same afterwards?
- What is a gift you did not earn? How is grace a gift?
- Why might a baptised person still need Confession?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- What is Baptism?
- What is grace?
- What does Penance restore when grave sin has destroyed charity?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Find the child’s Baptism date or church and make a plan to thank God for Baptism on that anniversary.

PRAY Holy Spirit, live in me and help me remember that I belong to Christ. Strengthen me to choose what is good. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Keep “grace” simple and Catholic: God’s free gift of his life and help. The point is not to explain every theological distinction at once.

LESSON 4

God's Commandments Teach Me to Love

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Help the child see God's commandments as a way of protecting love, truth, worship, family and human dignity.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: "What rules keep people safe?" Think of roads, school, sport or home. Ask what would happen if everyone ignored them.

DO SOMETHING

Play "help or harm". Say an invented choice and let the child show thumbs-up if it protects love or a flat hand if it harms: telling the truth, joining in teasing, helping at home, cheating, forgiving, stealing, praying. Always ask "Why?"

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 4 and the two great commandments. Let the child find the line that says love is more than a feeling.

TALK TOGETHER

- Why are God's commandments not traps?
- Can loving someone sometimes mean saying "no"?
- What is the difference between being nice and choosing what is truly good?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- Why did God give the commandments?
- What are the two great commandments?
- Is love only a feeling?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Ask the child to invent one "help or harm" example for you to answer.

PRAY Lord Jesus, teach me to love as you love. Help me to obey God, speak the truth, forgive and choose what is good. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Praise the reasoning, not only the right answer. The goal is a conscience shaped by truth and love, not a child who merely guesses what the adult wants.

LESSON 5

What Is Sin?

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Help the child distinguish accident, temptation, mistake and freely chosen sin, then introduce mortal and venial sin clearly.

QUICK PREP: A plastic cup or another harmless object.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Put the cup nearby. Say: “Three children are near this cup. One knocks it over by accident. One wants to smash it but chooses not to. One deliberately throws it down in anger. Are those the same?”

DO SOMETHING

Act out the three situations very simply. After each ask: “Was there a free choice? Did the person know what they were doing?” Then invite the child to invent another harmless example.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Now read Lesson 5. The activity gives the child a picture for the formal definitions. Read the three conditions for mortal sin slowly and plainly.

TALK TOGETHER

- Is temptation already a sin?
- Why does freedom matter?
- Why are accident and deliberate choice different?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- What is sin?
- Is temptation itself a sin?
- What three things must all be present for mortal sin?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Give four quick examples and let the child label them: accident, temptation, mistake or deliberate choice.

PRAY Jesus, give me light to know what is wrong, courage to refuse temptation and trust in you when I have sinned. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Use invented examples only. Do not ask for the child’s real sins. Keep the distinction peaceful and precise: God sees the truth of the heart, including knowledge and freedom.

LESSON 6

God Calls Me to Conversion

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Make conversion visible as turning away from sin and returning to the Father with hope.

QUICK PREP: Two chairs, if convenient.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: “Have you ever taken a wrong turning and had to turn around?” Let the child tell a simple story.

DO SOMETHING

Put two chairs a few steps apart. Call one “away” and one “home”. Retell the lost son briefly while moving from one to the other: he recognised the truth, turned, returned, and the father came to meet him. Let the child repeat the movement in their own words.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 6 and the “Talk About It” question about the father running to meet the son.

TALK TOGETHER

- Why did the father run to meet his son?
- Does mercy mean the wrong thing did not matter?
- What does conversion actually mean?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- What is conversion?
- Who gives us grace to repent?
- Should shame make us hide from God?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Read or listen to Luke 15:11-32 and ask the child which moment in the story they remember most.

PRAY Father of mercy, when I have wandered from you, help me to return quickly. Give me a humble and trusting heart. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Keep the story about real conversion as well as welcome. Mercy does not call evil good; mercy heals and restores the sinner who returns.

LESSON 7

Jesus Gave Us the Sacrament of Penance

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Help the child understand that Christ forgives through the ministry he entrusted to bishops and priests.

QUICK PREP

Four scraps of paper are helpful but not necessary.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: "In Confession you can see and hear the priest. So who is really forgiving you?" Listen first.

DO SOMETHING

Make a simple chain: JESUS -> APOSTLES -> BISHOPS & PRIESTS -> CHURCH TODAY. Let the child arrange the words or repeat the four steps using fingers. Explain that Christ remains the one who forgives.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 7, especially John 20:19-23 and the sentence "Christ himself acts through the priest."

TALK TOGETHER

- Why can a priest forgive sins if only God forgives?
- What authority did Jesus give the Apostles?
- Why is the seal of Confession important?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- Who instituted Penance?
- To whom did Jesus first give authority to forgive sins?
- Who forgives in the sacrament?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Ask the child to draw four arrows: Jesus -> Apostles -> bishops/priests -> us today.

PRAY Risen Lord Jesus, thank you for giving your Church the ministry of forgiveness. Help me to receive this sacrament with faith and honesty. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Do not role-play sacramental absolution as a game. Explain the authority Christ gave, but keep the sacramental formula itself reverent and for the actual celebration.

LESSON 8

Contrition and a Firm Purpose

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Help the child recognise real sorrow for sin and a sincere intention to change with God's grace.

QUICK PREP

Nothing needed.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Say: "I'm sorry I did it" and then "I'm sorry I got caught." Ask: "Are those the same kind of sorry?"

DO SOMETHING

Use an invented situation: someone lies about homework. Build a three-step change plan together: admit the wrong; ask forgiveness; choose one practical way to avoid repeating it.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 8. Let the child explain the difference between contrition and embarrassment about consequences.

TALK TOGETHER

- Can someone be sorry only because they are embarrassed?
- Does a firm purpose mean promising never to fail again?
- How can a practical change make a good intention stronger?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- What is contrition?
- What is a firm purpose of amendment?
- Must we be certain we will never sin again?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Ask the child to invent a harmless situation and create a three-step change plan for it.

PRAY O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and by the help of your grace I will not sin again. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Aim for sincerity, not impossible promises. "I truly intend to change with God's grace" is the point.

LESSON 9

Examining My Conscience

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Teach examination of conscience as a short prayerful search for truth with the Holy Spirit.

QUICK PREP: A phone torch or lamp, if available.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Shine the torch on a dark corner or under a table. Ask: “What does light help us do?” Then say: “We ask the Holy Spirit for light so we can see our choices truthfully.”

DO SOMETHING

Have sixty seconds of quiet. Name only broad areas: God; home; duties; kindness; truth; self-control. Do not ask what sins the child remembers. Afterwards ask: “Did the headings make it easier to think?”

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 9 and then look at Appendix A. Explain that the questions are helps, not a list of things every child has done.

TALK TOGETHER

- Why do we pray before examining our conscience?
- Do we need a perfect memory?
- What should we do if we honestly forget a sin?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- What is an examination of conscience?
- What guides our examination?
- What if a sin is honestly forgotten?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Let the child choose five headings for a very simple examination of conscience and remember them on five fingers.

PRAY Come, Holy Spirit. Give me light to know my sins, sorrow to repent, honesty to confess and strength to amend my life. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE The adult must not turn the examination into an interview. Do not ask, “Which of these have you done?” Actual sins belong in sacramental Confession.

LESSON 10

Making a Good Confession

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Give practical familiarity with the shape of Confession without rehearsing real sins.

QUICK PREP: Two chairs. Use invented examples only.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: “If you forgot every word when you sat down with the priest, what could you say?” Aim for: “Father, this is my first Confession and I need some help.”

DO SOMETHING

Practise the sequence with invented sins: Sign of the Cross -> “This is my first Confession” -> invented sins -> listen -> penance -> Act of Contrition -> receive absolution in the real sacrament -> “Amen”. The adult should not imitate the words of sacramental absolution.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 10 and Appendix B. Let the child point to the steps instead of trying to memorise everything.

TALK TOGETHER

- What can you do if you forget what comes next?
- Why should we confess simply rather than tell long stories?
- What do we answer after absolution?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- How should we confess?
- What do we do after telling our sins?
- What is absolution?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Swap roles and let the child be the “guide” who tells you the next step, without pretending to absolve.

PRAY Jesus, give me courage to speak the truth and humility to receive your forgiveness with gratitude. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Practise procedure, never content. The goal is calm familiarity. The priest will guide the child.

LESSON 11

Absolution, Penance and a New Beginning

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Show that forgiveness is real and that penance and reasonable repair belong to our response to mercy.

QUICK PREP: Nothing needed. Optional: a book or toy for the example.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: “If I spill a drink over your book and say sorry, is there anything else I should do?” Let the child suggest cleaning, drying or repairing it.

DO SOMETHING

Use the broken-toy example from the catechism. Say three words and let the child explain them: FORGIVEN - PENANCE - REPAIR. Try two invented situations: taking something; telling a lie. Ask what reasonable repair might look like.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 11. Emphasise that penance and satisfaction do not buy forgiveness; they are part of responding to mercy.

TALK TOGETHER

- Does repairing harm mean God has not really forgiven us?
- Why does the priest give a penance?
- When should we do our penance?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- What happens in absolution?
- What is satisfaction?
- What if we have harmed another person?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Give one invented situation and ask for three responses: ask forgiveness, do penance, repair what can reasonably be repaired.

PRAY Merciful Father, thank you for forgiving me. Help me to do my penance, repair the harm I have caused and walk in newness of life. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Not every harm can or should be repaired directly. Keep the catechism’s phrase “as far as reasonably possible”; the priest can advise in difficult cases.

LESSON 12

Living as a Forgiven Child of God

Activity page - use beside My First Confession Catechism

AIM Help the child see First Confession as the beginning of a lifelong Catholic habit, not a graduation.

QUICK PREP

Use your hand - no materials needed.

BEGIN WITH THE CHILD

Ask: "After First Confession, is Confession finished forever?" Then ask why Catholics return to the sacrament.

DO SOMETHING

Use five fingers to make a simple Catholic rhythm: Sunday Mass; daily prayer; Scripture; charity; turning back to God. Add Confession as Christ's sacrament of forgiveness and strengthening. Let the child choose one realistic habit for this week.

NOW OPEN THE CATECHISM Read Lesson 12. Connect Confession with ordinary Catholic life and with preparation for First Holy Communion.

TALK TOGETHER

- Why do Catholics go to Confession again?
- What can we do when temptation begins?
- How does being forgiven help us forgive others?

CHECK THE MAIN POINT

Ask naturally. The child can answer in their own words:

- Why receive Penance regularly?
- What ordinary practices help us grow?
- What should we do when temptation begins?

OPTIONAL EXTRA Let the child make a simple five-finger rule of life and choose one finger to practise especially this week.

PRAY Lord Jesus, keep me close to you. Help me to love what is good, return quickly when I fall and forgive others as you forgive me. Amen.

FOR THE ADULT ALONGSIDE Finish with hope. The destination is not "I completed the course" but "I know how to return to Christ throughout my life."

A tiny teaching bag

You do not need crafts, worksheets or a cupboard of resources. These few ordinary items can make almost every lesson more concrete:

ITEM	USE
Crucifix	Cross, salvation, conversion
Plastic cup	Accident, temptation and deliberate choice
Small bowl or glass of water	Baptism and grace
Phone torch	Examination of conscience
Two chairs	Conversion and Confession rehearsal
Paper and pencil	Authority chain, change plans, repair
Bible / catechism	Scripture and the doctrinal foundation

Three activities you can reuse anywhere

- CHOICE STORY - Give an invented situation and ask what happened, whether it was free, and what love requires now.
- SHOW ME - Let the child point, move, arrange, choose or explain rather than only listen.
- TEACH IT BACK - Say: “Explain that to me as if I had never heard it before.”

KEEP IT SIMPLE One good activity is enough. If the child is talking, thinking and understanding, stop there.

What you are looking for

You are not looking for perfect wording. Across the preparation, look for growing signs that the child understands and can participate according to their capacity.

GOD AND MERCY The child knows God loves us, sin is real and Jesus offers forgiveness.

MORAL UNDERSTANDING The child can usually distinguish deliberate wrong from accident, temptation and lack of freedom.

SACRAMENTAL UNDERSTANDING The child knows sins are confessed to a priest and Christ forgives through sacramental absolution.

PRACTICAL CONFIDENCE The child can follow the simple shape of Confession and ask for help if needed.

CATHOLIC LIFE The child sees Sunday Mass, prayer, charity and the sacraments as belonging together.

Non-negotiable boundaries

- Never ask the child to disclose personal sins to a parent, mentor or group.
- Use invented examples for rehearsal and activities.
- Do not compare children or turn readiness into a public test.
- If a child discloses harm outside Confession, follow diocesan safeguarding procedures.
- Final pastoral judgement about readiness belongs to the parish priest.

THE GOAL A child who can say, in simple words: “I know God loves me. I know what sin is. I know Jesus forgives me in Confession. I know what to do, and I want to receive his mercy.”

Use alongside My First Confession Catechism and the parish resources at cathparishmje.co.uk/first-confession/