



MY FIRST CONFESSION

Catechism

Jesus calls me back to his friendship

Twelve gentle conversations for children aged 7–9

With a parent, carer or parish mentor · No lesson preparation needed

My name _____

St Mary's · St John Bosco · St Edward's

To the adult sharing this book

You do not need teaching experience or a prepared lesson. Read the teaching aloud and use the questions and suggested answers provided.

You need only this book. Each opening uses a conversation, imagination or a simple movement. No printing, craft materials or internet searches are required. The twelve numbered titles match the parish First Confession Activity & Conversation Companion, should you wish to use it as an optional extra.

Begin with one conversation. Around ten to fifteen minutes may be enough. Stop sooner if the child becomes tired or worried. You can continue another day.

For each conversation:

1. Ask the opening question and listen.
2. Read the teaching slowly.
3. Use the questions to check understanding.
4. Read the short answer to remember.
5. Pray together.
6. Choose one simple practical step.

The suggested answers show the meaning to look for. The child may say the same truth in different words. If an answer is mistaken, explain the point kindly. This is not a public examination and there is no fixed timetable for finishing.

The child may answer by speaking, pointing, signing or another suitable way. Reading and writing ability are not tests of readiness. The parish priest discerns readiness with the family and arranges reasonable adaptations when needed.

Use invented situations whenever talking about wrongdoing. Never ask a child to tell a parent, mentor, catechist or group the actual sins they will confess. Those are for the priest in the sacrament. Parents remain present and involved when a parish mentor works with their child.

If a child speaks about being harmed outside Confession, follow the parish and diocesan safeguarding procedures. The seal of sacramental Confession is absolute. First Confession takes place before First Holy Communion for children who have reached the use of reason.

A useful opening prayer for every conversation

Jesus, help me to know you,
trust your mercy and choose what is good.
Be with us as we learn together.
Amen.

If a question arises which you cannot answer

Say:

“That is a good question. Let us ask Father.”

You do not need to invent an answer.

A welcome for the child

Jesus knows you. He loves you. He wants you to be close to him.

Sometimes we make wrong choices. We might hurt someone, tell a lie or refuse to do what is good. We all need God's forgiveness.

You are preparing for something wonderful: to meet Jesus in the Sacrament of Confession and to receive his mercy.

You might feel happy, curious, nervous or unsure. You can ask questions. You do not have to remember every word or get everything right the first time.

The priest will help you. You can always say: "Father, this is my first Confession. Please help me."

We will learn together, pray together and discover how Jesus calls us back to his friendship.

The twelve conversations

01 God Made Me and Loves Me

02 Jesus Saves Me from Sin

03 Baptism and the Life of Grace

04 God's Commandments Teach Me to Love

05 What Is Sin?

06 God Calls Me to Conversion

07 Jesus Gave Us the Sacrament of Penance

08 Contrition and a Firm Purpose

09 Examining My Conscience

10 Making a Good Confession

11 Absolution, Penance and a New Beginning

12 Living as a Forgiven Child of God

Then: an examination of conscience, the steps of Confession, prayers, a day-of guide, a summary catechism and a gentle review.

God Made Me and Loves Me

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

God made me, loves me and calls me to live with him for ever.

Begin together

“What is one thing you enjoy, and who is someone you love?”

Listen, then ask: “Do you think God knows these things about you?”

Read together

God made the whole world. He made you, and he loves you.

You are not an accident or a mistake. You are precious to God, who knows you better than anyone else.

God made every person in his image and likeness. This means that we can know what is true, choose what is good and love God and other people.

God made us to know him, love him and serve him in this life, and to be happy with him for ever in heaven.

Sometimes we make wrong choices. God already knows about them. We do not need to hide the truth from him.

He does not stop loving us when we sin. He calls us to be sorry, to turn away from what is wrong and to come back to him.

God helps us recognise what is good through our conscience. Conscience is the judgement we make about whether something we are choosing, or have chosen, is right or wrong.

We must teach our conscience what is true. We do this by listening to God’s word, learning his commandments, listening to the Church and asking the Holy Spirit for help.

Our feelings can tell us when something is wrong, but feelings alone are not always enough. We need to learn to judge our choices truthfully.

Confession begins with this good news: God has made us for his friendship and wants to bring us back when we have done wrong.

Talk and understand

Who made you?

God made me, and he loves me.

Why did God make us?

To know him, love him and serve him, and to be happy with him for ever in heaven.

What is conscience?

It helps us judge whether our choices are good or wrong. We must form it in the truth.

If we do wrong, should we hide from God?

No. God already knows and lovingly calls us to return to him.

Remember

Who made me and loves me?

God made me and loves me, and calls me to live with him for ever.

Pray together

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

One small step

Before bed, thank God for one person or one good thing in your day.

Jesus Saves Me from Sin

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

Jesus died and rose again to save us from sin and bring us to the Father.

Begin together

“When you see a crucifix, what does it remind you about Jesus?”

Listen without rushing. Say: “The Cross shows how much Jesus loves us.”

Read together

God created our first parents for friendship with him. They were made good, but they disobeyed God.

Through that first sin, human nature was wounded. We call the condition into which we are born original sin. We need God’s grace to restore the life he wants us to have.

God did not abandon us. The Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Saviour.

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became man. He is truly God and truly human.

He taught people, healed the sick, welcomed sinners and showed the Father’s love.

Jesus never sinned. He loved and obeyed the Father perfectly.

On the Cross, he freely gave his life for our sins. On the third day, he rose from the dead. Jesus is alive for ever.

By his death and Resurrection, Jesus conquered sin and death and opened the way to eternal life.

The mercy we receive in Confession comes from this saving love. We are not asking a stranger to forgive us.

We are coming to the Lord who loved us enough to give his life for us.

Jesus knows our sins. He wants us to turn away from them, trust him and begin again. He does not excuse sin, but he is always ready to welcome the truly repentant sinner.

This is why Confession is about Jesus and his mercy, not simply about telling someone we have behaved badly.

Talk and understand

Who is Jesus Christ?

The eternal Son of God made man, true God and true man.

Why did Jesus die on the Cross?

He freely gave himself to save us from sin.

What happened on the third day?

Jesus rose from the dead.

Why can we trust Jesus' mercy?

Because he loves us and gave his life to bring us back to God.

Remember

Why did Jesus die and rise again?

To save us from sin and death and open the way to eternal life.

Pray together

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

One small step

When you see a crucifix, say quietly: "Jesus, thank you for loving me."

Bible background for the adult: Luke 23–24; John 3:16–17; Romans 5:8.

Baptism and the Life of Grace

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

At Baptism, God made me his child and gave me the new life of grace.

Begin together

“Do you know where you were baptised, or who was there?”

If you do not know, that is all right. Say: “Baptism is the beginning of our new life with Jesus.”

Read together

At Baptism, Jesus gave you a wonderful gift.

Through the water and the words of Baptism, he washed away original sin and made you a child of God.

You became a member of the Church, the family of God. God gave you his grace.

Grace is God’s free gift of his own life and help. We cannot earn it or make it ourselves.

Sanctifying grace gives us a share in God’s life and makes us holy. This is the life of grace we receive in Baptism.

God also gives us actual grace: his help to know what is good and choose it.

You may have looked exactly the same after your Baptism, but God had truly acted in your soul.

Baptism is not merely a welcome party or a family custom. It is a sacrament in which Jesus gives us new life.

But Baptism does not remove our freedom. We still have to choose whether to follow Jesus.

A lesser sin, which we call venial sin, wounds our friendship with God. A truly mortal sin destroys charity in the soul and causes the loss of sanctifying grace.

Jesus gave his Church Confession to forgive sins committed after Baptism. When grace has been lost through mortal sin, Confession restores it. Confession also helps us grow stronger against sin.

God does not expect us to save ourselves. He gives us grace and calls us to cooperate with it.

Talk and understand

What did God give us in Baptism?

New life in Christ, sanctifying grace and a place in his Church.

What is grace?

God’s free gift of his life and help.

Can a baptised person still sin?

Yes. We are still free and must choose what is good.

How does Jesus forgive sins committed after Baptism?

Through the Sacrament of Penance or Confession.

Remember

What did God give me in Baptism?

God made me his child and gave me the new life of grace.

Pray together

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

One small step

Ask someone at home where and when you were baptised. Thank God for that day.

God's Commandments Teach Me to Love

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

God's commandments show me how to love him and my neighbour.

Begin together

"Why do we have rules at home, at school or on the road?"

Listen. Say: "Good rules protect people and help us choose what is right."

Read together

God loves us and wants us to be truly free.

He gave his people the Ten Commandments to show us the way of goodness and love.

God's commandments are not traps. They protect what is precious: worship, family, life, truth, purity, justice and respect for others.

The commandments teach us to put God first, honour his name and keep his day holy.

They teach us to honour our parents and those who rightly care for us.

They teach us not to hurt others, steal, lie, misuse our bodies or desire what belongs to someone else.

Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. The second is to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Jesus also told his disciples to love one another as he loved them.

Love is more than a warm feeling. Love means choosing what is truly good.

For example, if a friend invites us to bully someone, love does not mean joining in. It means refusing to hurt that person.

If we tell the truth even when it is difficult, we are choosing what is good.

If we forgive someone who is sorry, we are learning to love as Christ loves.

We cannot keep God's commandments perfectly by our own strength. We need his grace, and when we sin we need to repent and seek forgiveness.

Confession helps us return to the way of love.

Talk and understand

Why did God give us the commandments?

To teach us how to love and choose what is good.

What is the greatest commandment?

To love the Lord our God with all our heart.

What is the second great commandment?

To love our neighbour as ourselves.

Is love only a feeling?

No. Love also chooses and does what is truly good.

Remember

What do God's commandments teach me?

To love God and my neighbour by choosing what is good.

Pray together

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

One small step

Choose one quiet act of kindness this week. Do it without asking to be praised.

Bible background for the adult: Exodus 20:1–17; Matthew 22:37–40; John 13:34.

What Is Sin?

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

Sin is a wrong choice made freely against God's love and commandments.

Begin together

"If a child spills water by accident, and another child deliberately throws it at someone, are those the same?"

Listen. Explain: "A free choice is important when we talk about sin."

Read together

Sin is something we freely choose against God's law and love.

We can sin in our thoughts, words and actions. We can also sin by deliberately refusing to do some good thing that we truly ought to do. This is called an omission.

Sometimes something goes wrong without our choosing it. An accident is not the same as a sin.

Sometimes we make a mistake because we did not know something. Not every mistake is a deliberate sin.

We may also feel tempted to do something wrong. Temptation itself is not a sin. What matters is whether we freely agree to what is wrong.

An unwanted thought or feeling is not a sin simply because it comes into our mind. We are responsible for what we knowingly and freely choose.

The Church teaches that there are mortal and venial sins.

For a sin to be mortal, three things must be present together: the matter must be grave, the person must know it is seriously wrong, and the person must freely choose it.

These are called grave matter, full knowledge and deliberate consent. If one of those things is missing, the sin is not mortal in the full sense.

A venial sin is less serious, or is committed without full knowledge or complete consent. Venial sin still matters because it weakens charity and can lead us towards greater wrongdoing.

We should avoid every sin, but we must not become frightened of accidents, unwanted thoughts or ordinary feelings.

God knows the truth about our choices, including what we understood and how free we were. He calls us to be honest, not afraid.

Something another person does to hurt you is not your sin. If anyone has frightened, threatened or harmed you, tell a trusted safe adult outside Confession so that you can be protected and helped.

Talk and understand

What is sin?

A thought, word, action or omission freely chosen against God's law.

Is an accident or unwanted thought automatically a sin?

No. Sin involves a free choice.

Is being tempted already a sin?

No. Temptation is not sin unless we freely consent to what is wrong.

What three things are needed for mortal sin?

Grave matter, full knowledge and deliberate consent.

Remember

What is sin?

Sin is a wrong thought, word, action or omission freely chosen against God's law.

Pray together

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

One small step

Think of three invented examples: an accident, a temptation resisted and a deliberate wrong choice. Explain why they are different.

For the adult: Invent examples; never ask the child to disclose personal sins. A child is not guilty of harm done to them by someone else. Respond to disclosures outside Confession under safeguarding procedures.

God Calls Me to Conversion

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

Conversion means turning away from sin and coming back to God with hope.

Begin together

“If you take a wrong turning on a journey, what should you do?”

Say: “We turn around. Jesus helps us turn away from sin and come back to the Father.”

Read together

Jesus said, “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

Repent means turning away from sin and turning back to God. Another word for this is conversion.

Conversion is more than feeling embarrassed or wishing that nobody had noticed what we did.

It means recognising the wrong, being sorry and wanting to live differently with God’s help.

Jesus told a story about a son who left home and made bad choices. He wasted what his father had given him and ended up very unhappy.

At last the son realised what he had done. He decided to go home, admit his sin and ask for mercy.

But while the son was still far away, his father saw him. The father ran to meet him, embraced him and welcomed him home.

This story is often called the parable of the prodigal son or the lost son. It helps us understand the mercy of God.

The father did not say that everything the son had done was good. The son really had done wrong.

But his father loved him and wanted him to return.

God is like that loving father. He does not want us to remain in sin.

The Holy Spirit gives us grace to recognise our sins, be sorry and come back.

Sometimes shame tells us to hide. Jesus invites us to speak the truth and trust his mercy.

When we prepare for Confession, we are not going to a place where God stops loving us. We are returning to the One who has been calling us all along.

Talk and understand

What is conversion?

Turning away from sin and returning to God.

Who helps us to repent?

The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to repent.

Why did the father welcome his lost son?

Because he loved him and wanted him home.

Does God's mercy mean sin does not matter?

No. Mercy forgives and heals because sin is real.

Remember

What is conversion?

Turning away from sin and returning to God with trust in his mercy.

Pray together

Father of mercy,
when I have wandered from you,
help me to return quickly.
Give me a humble heart
that trusts your love.
Amen.

One small step

Ask someone to read Luke 15:11–32 with you, or listen to the story of the lost son.

Jesus Gave Us the Sacrament of Penance

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

Jesus forgives our sins through the priest in the Sacrament of Penance.

Begin together

“In Confession, you can see and hear the priest. Who is really forgiving you?”

Listen, then say: “Jesus is the one who forgives us.”

Read together

Jesus Christ is the Saviour who forgives sins.

On Easter Day, after he rose from the dead, Jesus appeared to his Apostles and spoke peace to them.

He breathed the Holy Spirit upon them and gave them authority to forgive sins. You can read about this in John 20:19–23.

Jesus did not give this gift only for the first Apostles. Their ministry continues in the Church through bishops and priests.

Only God can forgive sins. In the Sacrament of Penance, Jesus himself acts through the priest.

That means Confession is not merely a private conversation or an ordinary apology. It is a sacrament, a special action of Christ through which he gives grace.

You tell the priest your sins, because Jesus has entrusted his ministers with this work of forgiveness.

The priest listens, may offer some advice, gives you a penance and then grants sacramental absolution.

Absolution is the action through which Christ, acting through the priest, forgives the sins of a repentant person and reconciles that person with the Church.

The sacrament has several names. We call it Confession because we confess our sins; Penance because it calls us to repentance and amendment; Forgiveness because God pardons us; and Reconciliation because friendship with God is restored.

There is also an important promise of secrecy. The seal of Confession is absolute. The priest may never reveal what he learns from someone's Confession.

You do not have to tell your family, catechist, mentor or friends what you confessed.

If you are worried about something or need protection from harm, you can tell a trusted safe adult outside Confession. The adults helping you prepare must always take your safety seriously.

Talk and understand

Who gave the Apostles authority to forgive sins?

The risen Jesus Christ.

Who forgives sins in Confession?

God forgives through the ministry of the priest.

What is absolution?

The sacramental forgiveness Christ gives through the priest.

What is the seal of Confession?

The priest must never reveal what he learns in Confession.

Remember

Who forgives my sins in Confession?

Jesus Christ forgives me through the ministry of the priest.

Pray together

Risen Lord Jesus,
thank you for giving your Church
the sacrament of forgiveness.
Help me to receive your mercy
with trust and honesty.
Amen.

One small step

Look up John 20:19–23 with an adult and listen for what Jesus says to the Apostles.

For the adult: The seal applies absolutely to the priest. Do not practise or imitate the words of sacramental absolution as a game.

Contrition and a Firm Purpose

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

Contrition means truly being sorry for sin and intending to change with God's help.

Begin together

"Is saying 'I am sorry I did it' the same as saying 'I am sorry I got caught'?"

Listen. Explain that real repentance is about the wrong choice itself.

Read together

When we go to Confession, Jesus asks us to be truly sorry for our sins.

The Church calls this sorrow contrition.

Contrition means recognising that we have sinned, being sorry for the sin and deciding to turn away from it.

We are not simply saying, "I wish nobody had noticed." We are telling God the truth about what we freely chose.

Sometimes we are sorry above all because we love God and hate the thought of offending him. This is called perfect contrition.

Sometimes our sorrow begins because we understand how ugly sin is or because we fear its just consequences. If that sorrow comes from faith and God's grace, it is called imperfect contrition. It too is God's gift and leads us towards sacramental forgiveness.

We do not need to measure our feelings or make ourselves cry. What matters is a genuine turning of the heart.

Being sorry also includes what the Church calls a firm purpose of amendment.

Amendment means changing something for the better.

A firm purpose means that we sincerely intend to avoid sin, and to avoid things that easily lead us into it, with the help of God's grace.

For example, a child who has been telling lies might decide to pause and speak the truth, even when it is uncomfortable.

A child who is unkind when angry might decide to step away, calm down and ask for help.

You cannot promise that you will never make another wrong choice. But you can sincerely promise to try, relying on Jesus.

The Act of Contrition is a prayer which expresses that sorrow and desire to change. You will pray it in Confession when the priest invites you.

Talk and understand

What is contrition?

Being truly sorry for sin and deciding to turn away from it.

Can we be sorry because we love God?

Yes. Sorrow arising from love of God above all things is called perfect contrition.

What is a firm purpose of amendment?

A sincere intention, with God's help, to avoid sin and the things that lead to it.

Must we be sure we will never sin again?

No. We must truly intend to change and rely upon grace.

Remember

What is contrition?

Sorrow for sin with a sincere intention to turn away from it.

Pray together

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.

One small step

With an invented example of wrongdoing, think of one practical change that could help someone choose better next time.

This is the Act of Contrition used in the parish. A child can say it slowly and ask the priest for help if the words are forgotten.

Examining My Conscience

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

I ask the Holy Spirit to help me examine my conscience honestly and peacefully.

Begin together

“If a room is dark, what helps us see what is there?”

Say: “Light helps us see. We ask the Holy Spirit to help us see our choices truthfully.”

Read together

Before Confession, we prepare by examining our conscience.

An examination of conscience is a prayerful look at the choices we have made.

We ask the Holy Spirit to help us remember our sins, be honest and trust God's mercy.

For First Confession, we think about the wrong things we remember choosing since we became able to understand right and wrong.

For later Confessions, we normally think about the time since our last good Confession.

God's commandments, the teaching of Jesus and the duties of our life help guide us.

We might think about how we have loved God, behaved at home, treated people at school, spoken the truth, respected other people's belongings and used our time.

We think about wrong things we have done and good things we deliberately refused to do.

We do not need to search for sins we have not committed or invent wrong things to tell the priest.

A good examination is honest, but it is not frightening. God does not ask us to remember the impossible.

The Church teaches that mortal sins we remember after careful examination must be confessed by kind and number, as far as we can remember. This means saying what the serious sin was and, if we can, how often it happened.

Venial sins can also be confessed and it is good to do so. We do not need a huge list of tiny faults.

If we genuinely forget a sin, God forgives the forgotten sin along with the others in a good Confession. If we later remember an unconfessed mortal sin, we mention it at our next Confession.

The examination of conscience in this book is a help, not a list of things you are supposed to have done.

You should never be asked to tell an adult preparing you what sins you have remembered. Those belong in Confession with the priest.

Talk and understand

What is an examination of conscience?

A prayerful look at our choices to recognise our sins.

Who helps us examine our conscience?

The Holy Spirit.

Do we need to remember every tiny thing perfectly?

No. We examine honestly but do not need an impossible memory.

What if we honestly forget a sin?

It is forgiven in a good Confession; a later-remembered mortal sin is mentioned next time.

Remember

What is an examination of conscience?

A prayerful review of my choices to recognise my sins.

Pray together

Come, Holy Spirit.

Give me light to know my sins,
sorrow to repent, honesty to confess
and strength to amend my life.

Amen.

One small step

Look through “A Child’s Examination of Conscience” at the back of this book. You do not need to tell anyone what you remember.

For the adult: Never turn an examination of conscience into an interview about the child’s real sins. Do not ask the child to recite a private list.

Making a Good Confession

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

I confess my sins simply, honestly and clearly, trusting Jesus to help me.

Begin together

“If you forgot what to say when you went into Confession, what could you do?”

Answer: “Tell the priest. He will help you.”

Read together

Your first Confession is a meeting with Jesus through the priest. You do not have to perform everything perfectly.

You might enter the confessional and kneel at the grille, or sit in the place provided. Follow the parish's arrangements. The priest will welcome you.

Begin with the Sign of the Cross. You may say:

“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first Confession.”

If you forget the words, simply say:

“Father, this is my first Confession and I need some help.”

The priest will guide you.

Tell the sins you remember simply, clearly and honestly. Do not deliberately hide a mortal sin. Do not blame someone else or add long stories that are not needed.

You may finish by saying, “For these and all my sins, I am truly sorry.”

The priest may ask a gentle question or give you advice. He will then give you a penance, perhaps a short prayer or a good action.

If you do not understand your penance, it is fine to ask the priest to explain it.

When he invites you, make your Act of Contrition. You may use the prayer in this book.

Then the priest gives absolution. Through the words of absolution Jesus truly forgives the sins of a repentant person.

Listen carefully and make the Sign of the Cross as the priest completes the absolution. Answer “Amen.”

The priest will dismiss you in peace.

Afterwards, do your penance as soon as you reasonably can. Thank Jesus for his mercy.

The important things are honesty, sorrow for sin and trust in Christ — not perfect memorisation or remembering every gesture.

Talk and understand

What may you say at the beginning?

“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first Confession.”

What if you forget the words?

Tell the priest. He will help you.

What happens after you confess your sins?

The priest gives advice and a penance; you pray an Act of Contrition.

What do you answer after absolution?

“Amen.”

Remember

How should I make my Confession?

I should confess my sins simply and honestly, trusting in Jesus.

Pray together

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

One small step

Look at the “My First Confession Step by Step” guide. Practise only the order of events, using invented examples — never your actual sins.

For the adult: Do not imitate the priest’s absolution during a rehearsal. Practise the steps, never the child’s actual confession.

Absolution, Penance and a New Beginning

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

Jesus truly forgives me in absolution, and I respond with penance and love.

Begin together

“If you accidentally damage somebody’s book, what might you do besides saying sorry?”

Accept ideas such as helping to clean or repair it. Now consider an intentionally damaged toy.

Read together

Confession is a sacrament in which Jesus gives us his mercy.

The most important moment of the sacrament is absolution.

The priest speaks the Church's words of absolution and God truly forgives the sins we have confessed with repentance.

The priest says the essential words, “I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The forgiveness does not come from the priest’s own power. Jesus Christ acts through the priest.

When our sins are forgiven, our friendship with God is healed. If mortal sin had destroyed sanctifying grace, it is restored in a good Confession.

The priest also gives us a penance. This might be a prayer, an act of kindness or another simple good action.

Penance does not buy forgiveness. Jesus gives forgiveness freely through his mercy.

Doing our penance shows that we want to respond to his grace and grow in holiness.

We should complete it carefully and as soon as reasonably possible.

Sometimes a wrong choice has also hurt another person.

If a child has stolen something, it should be returned if possible. If someone has told a harmful lie, that should be corrected when prudent. A sincere apology or an act of kindness may be needed.

The Church calls this willingness to put things right satisfaction. We do what we reasonably can, and the priest can help us decide what is appropriate.

We must never put ourselves in danger or approach an unsafe person to repair harm. Ask the priest or another safe adult for guidance.

After Confession, thank God. You may leave knowing that Christ’s forgiveness is real and that you can begin again.

Talk and understand

What happens in absolution?

Jesus forgives sins through the ministry of the priest.

What is penance?

A prayer or good action the priest asks us to do as a response to God's mercy.

Does penance buy forgiveness?

No. Forgiveness is Christ's gift.

What if our wrong choice harmed someone?

We should put it right as far as is reasonably possible and safe.

Remember

What happens in absolution?

Jesus truly forgives my sins through the priest.

Pray together

Merciful Father,
thank you for forgiving me.
Help me to do my penance,
put right what I reasonably can
and begin again in your love.
Amen.

One small step

Use an invented example of someone damaging a toy. Discuss how they could apologise and safely put matters right.

For the adult: Do not turn reparation into a dangerous or compulsory encounter with someone who has harmed the child. Seek the priest's guidance.

Living as a Forgiven Child of God

THE IMPORTANT TRUTH

First Confession is the beginning of a lifelong friendship with Jesus and his mercy.

Begin together

“Will we ever need Confession again after our First Confession?”

Say: “Jesus gives us this sacrament for our whole Christian life.”

Read together

Your First Confession is a very important beginning.

You have learnt that God made you, that Jesus saves us and that sin wounds our friendship with God.

You have also learnt that Christ calls us back and forgives us in the Sacrament of Penance.

After your First Confession, you can return to this sacrament throughout your life.

We keep growing. We still face temptation. We still sometimes make wrong choices.

But Jesus does not leave us alone. He gives us his grace and the help of the Church.

Regular Confession helps us know ourselves honestly, resist sin, grow in virtue and live closer to Christ.

We can also keep growing through Sunday Mass, daily prayer, the Bible and loving service to other people.

Soon you may prepare to receive Jesus in First Holy Communion. You are not finishing a course. You are growing in the Catholic life that began at Baptism.

When you are tempted, ask Jesus for help, turn away from what is wrong and speak to a trusted adult if you need guidance.

If you fall into sin, do not hide from God. Be sorry, repent and seek his forgiveness.

And because Christ forgives us, we should try to forgive others.

Forgiving does not mean pretending that harm was acceptable. If someone has hurt you, it can still be important to seek protection and help, and to keep sensible boundaries.

Jesus wants us to become holy. That happens through grace and a life of faithful choices, not by pretending we are already perfect.

The good news is that we can always return to him.

He calls us to remain close to him, today and throughout our lives.

Talk and understand

Why do Catholics go to Confession more than once?

To receive forgiveness, grow in grace and become stronger against sin.

What helps us grow in holiness?

Sunday Mass, prayer, Scripture, the sacraments and acts of love.

What should we do when we fall into sin?

Repent and return to Jesus, trusting his mercy.

Does forgiveness mean harm was acceptable?

No. We can forgive and still seek protection, justice and help.

Remember

How should I live after First Confession?

I should stay close to Jesus, repent when I sin and grow in love.

Pray together

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.

One small step

Choose one simple habit to keep: a morning prayer, Sunday Mass, a kind action or a short evening examination of conscience.

For the adult: First Confession is not a graduation or a reward for completing twelve conversations. Continue supporting the child's sacramental life.

A Child's Examination of Conscience

This is a quiet prayer to help you see your choices clearly before Confession. The questions are suggestions, not a list of things every child has done.

Begin with the Sign of the Cross. Ask the Holy Spirit for light. Think honestly, but do not become afraid. You do not have to tell a parent, mentor or group the sins you remember. You will tell your sins to the priest in Confession.

Come, Holy Spirit.
Help me to see the truth,
trust God's mercy
and make a good Confession.
Amen.

Loving God

- ☐ Have I deliberately refused to pray or treated God as unimportant?
- ☐ Have I missed Sunday Mass through my own fault?
- ☐ Have I used God's holy name carelessly or disrespectfully?
- ☐ Have I treated the church, prayers or holy things without reverence?

At home and in my duties

- ☐ Have I deliberately disobeyed my parents or those rightly caring for me?
- ☐ Have I spoken cruelly, rudely or without respect?
- ☐ Have I deliberately neglected schoolwork or responsibilities?
- ☐ Have I been ungrateful or refused reasonable help at home?

Kindness and respect

- ☐ Have I deliberately hit, bullied, mocked or frightened anyone?
- ☐ Have I joined in excluding or humiliating someone?
- ☐ Have I been cruel to people or animals?
- ☐ Have I refused to help someone when I reasonably could?

Truth, fairness and belongings

- ☐ Have I lied, cheated or blamed someone else for something I chose to do?
- ☐ Have I spread unkind stories or shared another person's secrets?
- ☐ Have I taken, damaged or kept something that did not belong to me?
- ☐ Have I been unfair in games, schoolwork or online?

Respect and self-control

- ☐ Have I treated my own body and other people's bodies with respect?
- ☐ Have I knowingly looked at or shared something I understood was indecent?
- ☐ Have I respected other people's privacy and personal boundaries?
- ☐ Have I been jealous, greedy, wasteful or unwilling to share?
- ☐ Have I knowingly let anger or entertainment lead me into bad choices?

Be at peace. An accident or an unwanted thought is not a sin merely because it happened. What someone does to harm you is never your sin. Tell a trusted safe adult outside Confession if you have been harmed or frightened.

When you finish, ask God to make you truly sorry. Do not keep repeating the examination once you have done it carefully. The priest will help you.

My First Confession Step by Step

You can look at this before going to Confession. You do not need to learn every word. Fr John or another priest hearing Confessions will help you.

What happens	What I do
1. Prepare	Pray to the Holy Spirit, examine your conscience, be sorry for your sins and decide to speak honestly.
2. Enter and begin	The priest welcomes you. Make the Sign of the Cross. You may say, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first Confession."
3. Confess your sins	Tell your sins simply and clearly. You may finish, "For these and all my sins, I am truly sorry."
4. Listen	Listen to the priest's advice and accept the penance he gives. Ask if you do not understand.
5. Pray	Pray your Act of Contrition when the priest invites you.
6. Receive absolution	Listen as the priest gives absolution. Make the Sign of the Cross and answer, "Amen."
7. Give thanks	The priest dismisses you in peace. Thank Jesus and do your penance as soon as reasonably possible.

If you forget: "Father, this is my first Confession and I need some help." That is enough to begin. The priest will guide you.

A short practice dialogue

Child: "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my first Confession."

Child: "These are my sins ..." (Actual sins are told only during real Confession.)

Child: "For these and all my sins, I am truly sorry."

The priest gives advice and a penance.

Child: Prays the Act of Contrition.

The priest grants absolution.

Child: "Amen."

For the adult: You may practise the sequence with invented examples. Never ask for the child's private sins and never imitate sacramental absolution.

Prayers to Know

The Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The 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.

The 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 our death.
Amen.

The 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.

The Act of Contrition

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.

This is the same Act of Contrition used in Conversation 08 and in the parish First Confession Companion. If you forget the words in Confession, the priest will help you.

Before examining my conscience

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

After Confession

Merciful Father,
thank you for forgiving me through your Son.
Help me to do my penance,
repair any harm as far as I reasonably can
and remain close to you.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer to my guardian angel

Angel of God, my guardian dear,
to whom God's love commits me here,
ever this day be at my side,
to light and guard, to rule and guide.
Amen.

My First Confession day

Before leaving home

Pray briefly and ask the Holy Spirit for help. Examine your conscience calmly. Remember: Jesus loves you and calls you to receive his mercy.

When you arrive

Go quietly to the place arranged by the parish. If you feel nervous, speak to Fr John or another adult helping with the celebration. You may use the step-by-step guide.

When you meet the priest

Make the Sign of the Cross. Tell him that this is your first Confession. Say your sins simply and honestly. The priest will help if you do not know what comes next.

Before absolution

Listen to the priest's advice and the penance he gives. Pray your Act of Contrition when asked. Do not worry if you forget a word.

When the priest absolves you

Listen reverently, make the Sign of the Cross and answer "Amen." Jesus truly forgives you in the sacrament.

Afterwards

Return quietly to your place, thank Jesus and do your penance as soon as reasonably possible. You do not have to tell anyone what you confessed.

Going forward

Your First Confession is the beginning of receiving this gift throughout your life. Continue Sunday Mass, prayer and preparation for Holy Communion.

Summary Catechism

These brief answers gather some of the essential truths from the twelve conversations. They are an optional reference, not a test. Understanding matters more than perfect wording.

Who made me?

God made me and loves me.

Why did God make us?

To know him, love him and serve him, and to be happy with him for ever in heaven.

Who is Jesus Christ?

The eternal Son of God made man, true God and true man.

Why did Jesus die and rise?

To save us from sin and death and open the way to eternal life.

What did Baptism give me?

New life in Christ and sanctifying grace.

What is grace?

God's free gift of his life and help.

Why did God give the commandments?

To teach us how to love him and other people.

What is sin?

A thought, word, action or omission freely chosen against God's law.

Is temptation itself sin?

No. Temptation is not sin unless we freely consent to what is wrong.

What is mortal sin?

A grave sin committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.

What is venial sin?

A less serious sin, or a sin committed without full knowledge or complete consent.

What is conversion?

Turning away from sin and returning to God.

Who gives us grace to repent?

The Holy Spirit.

Who gave us the Sacrament of Penance?

Jesus Christ.

Who forgives in Confession?

Jesus Christ, through the ministry of the priest.

What is the seal of Confession?

The priest may never reveal what he learns in Confession.

What is contrition?

True sorrow for sin with a sincere intention to turn away from it.

What is a firm purpose of amendment?

A sincere intention, with God's help, to avoid sin and its near occasions.

What is an examination of conscience?

A prayerful review of our choices to recognise our sins.

Which sins must be confessed?

Every remembered mortal sin, in kind and number as far as possible.

May I confess venial sins?

Yes. The Church strongly recommends it.

What if I forget what to say?

I may ask the priest for help.

What is absolution?

The sacramental act by which Christ, through the priest, forgives our sins.

What is satisfaction?

Doing the penance given and putting right any harm as far as reasonably possible.

Why return to Confession?

To receive mercy, grow in grace and live closer to Christ.

A gentle final conversation

For the adult

Use these questions over one or more conversations. Do not introduce them as an examination. Allow the child to answer in their own words, ask questions, point or sign. If something is unclear, return to that conversation calmly.

Who made you?

God made me and loves me.

Who saves us from sin?

Jesus Christ, through his death and Resurrection.

What is the difference between an accident and sin?

A sin involves a freely chosen wrong; an accident does not.

Is temptation itself a sin?

No. We sin by freely consenting to what is wrong.

What is conversion?

Turning away from sin and coming back to God.

Who forgives in Confession?

Jesus, through the ministry of the priest.

How do you begin Confession?

Make the Sign of the Cross, say that this is First Confession and ask for help if needed.

What is the Act of Contrition about?

Being sorry for sin and intending to change with God's help.

What happens in absolution?

Jesus truly forgives sins.

What do you do afterwards?

Thank Jesus and complete the penance.

Will you go to Confession again?

Yes. It is a gift for the whole Catholic life.

Also invite the child to ask:

“Is there anything you want to ask?”

“Is anything worrying you?”

“What are you looking forward to?”

Look for understanding, honesty and a desire for mercy, according to the child's capacity. Never ask the child to tell you their sins. The parish priest discerns readiness with the family.

A simple mentor check-in

Use this when the family has already shared some of the conversations. There is no need to repeat all the teaching.

Welcome

“How have you been? Is there anything you have noticed at Mass or about prayer?”

Look back

“Which conversation have you shared? What did you learn about Jesus and his mercy?”

Check one truth

Choose a question from the relevant conversation. “How would you explain it in your own words?” Listen and clarify kindly.

Connect with life

Use an invented example to talk about a good choice, a temptation or making amends. Never ask for the child’s real sins.

Pray

Use the prayer from the conversation and allow the child to join however they can.

Agree the next step

Choose the next conversation or revisit an earlier truth. Tell the family how to obtain support from the parish.

For the adult: A disability or learning difference does not by itself prevent Confession. Arrange suitable adaptations with the family and priest. Never shame, pressure, publicly test or ask a child to reveal sins. If harm is disclosed outside the sacrament, follow safeguarding procedures.

Continuing with Jesus

Keep coming to Sunday Mass.

Keep speaking to Jesus in prayer.

Keep asking questions.

When you do wrong, be sorry, seek forgiveness and begin again.

When you need Confession, return to Jesus with trust.

Remember that First Confession is part of your preparation for First Holy Communion.

Try each day to speak kindly, tell the truth, forgive and choose what is good.

You do not have to make this journey alone.

Your family and parish are here to help you.

And Jesus is always calling you to remain close to him.

Jesus, help me to know you,
love you and follow you,
receive your mercy
and begin again when I fall.
Stay with me throughout my life.
Amen.

Sources and doctrinal references

Sacred Scripture: especially Luke 15:11–32; John 20:19–23; Mark 1:15; Luke 18:13; Matthew 22:37–40; John 8:11.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§1420–1498 on Penance and Reconciliation; §§1730–1748 on human freedom; §§1776–1802 on conscience; §§1846–1876 on sin; §§1987–2029 on grace and justification.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: questions on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the moral life.

Code of Canon Law: canons 914 (First Confession before First Holy Communion), 959–997 (the Sacrament of Penance), especially 983–984 (the seal of Confession), and canon 827 on catechetical publications.

Pastoral note: The parish priest guides preparation and makes the final judgement about readiness, in accordance with the Church’s law and diocesan policy. No child should be pressured to disclose personal sins outside sacramental Confession. The sacramental seal is inviolable.