

SECOND GRADE PARENT GUIDE

2022-2023
SACRAMENTS OF
RECONCILIATION &
EUCHARIST



CO - CATHEDRAL OF
ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE

Roman Catholic Diocese of Trenton

OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A PARENT'S PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help us to trust You to look after our children. A piece of our hearts is with them always, as we know You are too. You have watched over them from their first moments.

You created them so perfectly. They are such a gift.

Help us to love and care for them in Your Name. Cover our mistakes with forgiveness and grace. Lead us as a family to build our relationships upon the foundation of Your hope and truth, in the Church of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Second Grade Religious Education

The Co-Cathedral of St. Robert Bellarmine, through its Religious Education Office, partners with parents in forming their children as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ and preparing them to live in the Christian Community of faith, demonstrating and professing the Lord's presence and salvation to the world by their personal witness.

We thank you for trusting us to accompany you and your children at this special moment of grace and allowing us to assist and support you in preparing your children in faith for the reception of the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Eucharist.

**The Most Rev. David M. O'Connell, CM
Bishop of Trenton**

Rev. Msgr. Sam Sirianni

Pastor

Rev. Brian T. Butch

Parochial Vicar

Mr. Mark Russoniello

Director of Religious Ed.

Ms. Elisa Schmidt

Coordinator for Religious Ed.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

What is it? What does it mean?

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a *Sacrament of Healing* in the Catholic Church. Recently, Pope Francis has also referred to it as a Sacrament of joy.
- Through our Baptism, we are called to live in a relationship of love with God and with others. When we choose to reject this call and live without love we reject God, rupture relationships and cause pain. *This rejection and rupture are what we call sin.* God, through His Church, is always seeking us out and inviting us to reconciliation. God waits patiently and mercifully for us to respond to His invitation.
- Responding to God's invitation to repentance and reconciliation, we acknowledge our sin and seek with confidence to be reunited with God and others.
- Sin is a rejection of our truest identity as children of God made in God's the image and likeness. Sin is choosing our own imperfect will over the Divine Will that leads to the perfect freedom and happiness.
- The sacrament of Reconciliation respects our freedom as human beings to change our hearts. Our own desire to return to God and to walk faithfully in the way of Jesus, is the beginning of repentance. This desire *in us* begins with God's loving desire for *us*.
- In the sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest is called to proclaim the Gospel of forgiveness and joy. He is to pray with and on behalf of sinners. Especially, he is to welcome, accept, listen to, and understand the sinner. He imparts God's absolution in the name of Jesus Christ. The priest is never a judge, there to condemn sinners.

This sacrament gives us the opportunity to reconcile, or to make peace, with God, our neighbor, ourselves, and our whole community. It goes beyond just "telling" our sins to a priest. It includes an opportunity to seek advice as to how to grow as one of Jesus' disciples by making better choices. It helps us to grow in our spiritual life.

In preparing your child for First Reconciliation, it is important that he or she understands what it means to take responsibility for our choices, words and action, to be sorry when these cause harm to our relationship with God, others and to ourselves, or fail to offer support, healing, comfort and charity to those in need.

We need to give them our example of what saying "I'm sorry" really means. Try to establish the weekly family practice of expressing sorrow to one another by saying:

- I'm sorry that I _____
- I'll try to make it up to you by _____
- I promise that in the future I will first _____ so I don't hurt you again.
- Will you forgive me?

A child who has learned to ask for and give forgiveness is a child who will truly understand why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a celebration of mercy and joy

The Rite of Reconciliation

WHILE MAKING THE SIGN OF THE CROSS, THE CHILD BEGINS BY SAYING

Bless me Father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession.

Father, I ... (Here you may tell Father your sins.)

(Please help your child understand that s/he should not bring a "laundry list" of misdeeds to confession. Instead, work with your child to present behaviors or tendencies - illustrated by specific words, choices or actions - that may have caused harm to others or failed to relieve another's pain.)

Priest says: For your penance ...

(example: say one Our Father - or - help your parents today)

You say: **Act of Contrition**

My God,

I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.

In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,

I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.

I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance,

to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.

In his name, my God, have mercy.

Raising his hand over your head, Priest says:

I absolve you of your sins, in the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God bless you.

You say: Amen. Thank you, Father.



FIRST RECONCILIATION

The Sacrament of First Reconciliation is scheduled for the following dates. Please note the group assignments for each date to determine when your child will celebrate the Sacrament.

Monday, January 30, 2023 @ 5:00PM: Groups 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D

Wednesday, February 1, 2023 @ 5:00PM: Groups 2E, 2F, 2G and 2H

Thursday, February 2, 2023 @ 5:00PM: Groups 2H, 2I and 2J

1. Review for First Penance:

The children will gather with their parents on Thursday, December 15, 2022, to review the Rite of Reconciliation. Parents are encouraged to spend time before this review to help their children understand the Rite and what they will be asked to say and do during it. That will not only eliminate surprises but will reinforce all that the children need to know. Please make use of the resources in your children's workbook and those provided to you by the Religious Education Office.

2. Format for First Penance:

1. The celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation will begin in Church with a brief prayer service. At present wearing of masks is optional. There continue to be hand sanitizer stations as you enter the Church for you sanitize your hands before you proceed to your assigned pew. St. Roberts' also continues to employ all the sanitizing procedures used since the start of the pandemic, including use of special air filtration. *St. Robert's reserves the right to reimpose mask mandates as public health conditions and Diocese of Trenton directives demand.*

At the time of individual confessions, the children will be directed to a confessional station where they will meet with a Priest. Once they have made their confession, they will pray their penance. Please respect that the act of confession is a private matter between your child and Jesus, present in the person of the Priest. If your child has any concerns or hesitancy about celebrating the Sacrament in this way, please alert the Religious Education staff or volunteers before the prayer service begins.

3. Dress Code for First Penance:

There are no absolute dress requirements for the celebration of First Reconciliation. Children should simply wear clothing that is respectful and appropriate for Church.

We ask that the children refrain from wearing sports uniforms, sweats, shorts, tee-shirts or anything with inappropriate images or product logos, etc.

4. Prayers for your child to know...

You may refer to several resources to help your child learn the prayers that are central to the Rite of Reconciliation and other basic prayers. These include your child's ***Finding God*** workbook (which includes audio files accessible by *QR code* to help your child practice the prayers even when you are not there) and the booklet ***Catholic Prayers for Catholic Families***. These prayers include:

**Our Father, The Hail Mary, Sign of the Cross, Act of Contrition,
Great Commandment, Prayer to the Holy Spirit, Grace before Meals**



Jesus said: "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15: 7, 10

THE SACRAMENT OF EUCHARIST

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) calls the Eucharist "the Source and Summit of the Christian life" (*On the Church, Light of the Nations*). This means that all Christian disciples are called to *begin* and *end* their lives (and everything in between) giving praise and thanksgiving to God in union with Jesus and all God's people through the Holy Spirit. Gratitude and union with God are the gifts we are given and the goals to which we aspire as Christians. It is who we are and who we are meant to be.

The celebration of Eucharist -- which comes from a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving" -- always takes place in liturgy (another Greek word meaning "the gathering or work of the people") because this is where we encounter Jesus most perfectly in His Word and Sacrifice. Eucharist (thanksgiving) is the faithful work of God's people in the community of the Church. Eucharist, liturgy and Church cannot be separated. They are one, as Christians become one with God and each other in celebration. This is why one of the many names we give to Eucharist is ***Holy Communion***.

Eucharist is also called "The Sacrament of Sacraments". A sacrament is a ***visible sign*** of God's loving, always-everywhere Presence in the world that has been given to Christian disciples by Jesus Himself and handed down to us through the ages by our ancestors in faith. Eucharist is the ***preeminent sign of God's love for us***. Eucharist is not a "symbol" of God with us (Emmanuel). ***It is, and always will be, the Real Presence of Jesus among us.*** For this reason, we must maintain a respectful disposition toward the Eucharistic species when they are present. ***It is the duty and responsibility of parents to communicate to their children the respect and honor due to Jesus in the Eucharist.*** The best way for parents to fulfill this holy responsibility is by regularly participating in the celebration of Eucharist - the Mass - with their children.

When someone in the family is preparing to receive Eucharist for the first time, it should be a family affair. Eucharist is the heart of Christian life, and it should become the heart of the Christian family.

According to their age and maturity, children should learn that the Eucharist is both a meal and a **sacrifice**.

When the community gathers at Mass, it remembers and celebrates the saving death and resurrection of Jesus. Children quickly learn that Jesus offers Himself to them as the Bread of Life in Holy Communion.

Preparing for First Communion with children enables parents to deepen their own understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist. Enjoy this time of anticipation and preparation with your children. It is a joy and a blessing.



FIRST COMMUNION

The celebration of First Eucharist will take place in the communal setting of regular weekend Masses. Children have been assigned to Communion groups and Mass times. Please refer to the schedule below to determine when your child will celebrate the Sacrament.

- Saturday, April 29, 2023 @ 4:30 PM -- Groups 2A & 2B (*Summer-July*)
- Sunday, April 30, 2023 @ 10:00 AM -- Groups 2C & 2D (*Summer-August*)
- Saturday, May 6, 2023 @ 4:30 PM -- Groups 2E, 2F (*Fall-Monday*)
- Sunday, May 7, 2023 @ 10:00 AM -- Groups 2G, 2H & 2I (*Fall-Tuesday*)
- Saturday, May 20, 2023 @ 4:30 PM -- Groups 2J & 2K (*Fall-Wednesday*)

(Note: Assignment of dates is subject to change based on number of children registered for each session)

**FIRST COMMUNICANTS SHOULD REPORT TO DENTICI HALL AT
LEAST 45 MINUTES BEFORE THEIR SCHEDULED MASS**

**FIRST COMMUNICANTS WILL BE LINED WITH THEIR COMMUNION GROUPS AND
PROCESS INTO MASS BEFORE THE PRIEST-CELEBRANT. PLEASE BE ON TIME.**

**FIRST COMMUNICANTS WILL SIT TOGETHER AS A GROUP. THERE WILL BE NO
RESERVED OR SAVED SEATING FOR FAMILY. ARRIVING ON TIME SHOULD PROVIDE
AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE SEATING NEAR THE FIRST COMMUNICANTS.**

**WE ASK THAT YOU BE RESPECTFUL THAT OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SAINT ROBERT
FAITH COMMUNITY WILL ALSO BE PRESENT FOR MASS.**

2. **Dress Code:** This is a very **SPECIAL** day. Girls usually wear white dresses, although pastels are acceptable. Boys usually wear a suit, although a sport jacket, shirt, tie and dress pants are acceptable.
3. **First Communicants CANNOT bring anything into church.** This includes **ANY** type of flowers (boys as well as girls), corsages - wrist or pin, boutonnieres, bouquets. No gloves, purses, rosary beads, etc.
4. The children will receive their First Holy Communion individually from Father before all other persons in attendance at Mass. After all the First Communicants have received the congregation will receive as per the continuing protocols outlined for the COVID 19 Pandemic.
5. Saint Robert's follows all necessary public health directives from the State of NJ and the Diocese of Trenton to ensure a safe environment for our community. We continue to operate atomizers in the Church to assure the purification of the air. Hand sanitizing stations are available throughout the Church. Use of face coverings optional during celebration of Mass, based on your family's individual circumstances and needs. *St. Robert's reserves the right to reimpose mask mandates as public health conditions and Diocese of Trenton directives demand.*
6. Parents must be mindful that all directions for the celebration of the Sacrament presented in this guide are contingent on public health circumstances at the time. All plans are subject to change.
7. **PICTURES/PHOTOGRAPHER:**
Arrangements have been made for a professional photographer to be at each of the Masses. Individual photographs of the children will be taken as they receive Communion (when it becomes available, a form will be emailed to you with the photographers contact information).
8. The Catholic Church requires that those who are to receive Holy Communion be Catholics in a state of grace and who have fasted at least one hour before receiving.

Some Details Regarding First Penance & First Holy Communion

- **Baptismal Certificates:** A copy of the child's Baptismal Certificate with a raised seal must be presented to and verified by the Office of Religious Education before these sacraments can be received. Baptismal Certificates are not necessary for children baptized at St. Robert Bellarmine. Our Office will verify the information back to the Baptismal Register.

- **First Holy Communion Scrapbook:** For the past few years we have invited the children complete a Communion Scrapbook. This is not a required project. It is something for you to do as a family to help your children prepare for the Sacrament and create a lasting memory of their special day. The pages for the Scrapbook will be provided at the Advent Family Catechesis on November 17th. The theme of that activity is "Jesus' Family Photo Album". We encourage you to help your child in creating this beautiful keepsake book of their Sacramental Faith Formation.

- **Attire:** First Penance: see page 6. First Communion: see page 8.

- **Certificates:** Sacrament certificates (Reconciliation and Eucharist) will be distributed to the children following the conclusion of all the scheduled Communion Masses. The children should remain seated in the Church at the conclusion of Mass to receive their certificates.

- **Communion Procedures:** The students will receive First Holy Communion prior to the rest of the congregation. A professional photographer will be taking photos of each child as they receive their First Holy Communion. Please contact the photographer directly with any questions.

WHAT DOES YOUR CHILD NEED TO KNOW?

Your child needs to have knowledge of the stories of the Gospels.

Talk or read about the life of Christ: the kind of person he was, the stories he told, the way he treated people. Explain that Jesus was the Son of God who came to show us how to live a life of love. Don't feel you have to offer a complete course of Bible study. Simply make your child familiar with the gospel stories and with Jesus Christ.

Your child needs to know how to pray.

The only way we can learn to pray is by doing it. Make prayer a part of your everyday family life. It doesn't have to be a long-drawn-out affair. Nor do you need special books, special words, special positions or special facial expressions! Simply choose a few moments, perhaps your child's bedtime, and sit together thanking God for the day. Say "I'm sorry" to one another and to God for things that have gone wrong; remember anyone who may be sick or having a difficult time; and ask God's blessing on one another. If you don't pray together at present, don't worry. The fact that your child is preparing to celebrate his or her First Holy Communion provides you with an ideal reason for introducing prayer into your family. Let your child know that you pray. There's no need to make a big fuss about it. Simply make it clear that you thank God for his blessings. Think about going to Mass regularly if you don't go often; perhaps try going during the week sometimes. Make sure, though, that you are not forcing your children to pray when they do not wish to. That is one way of making sure that they never pray! By helping your child become familiar and comfortable with prayer, you will help him or her to build a deep and very personal relationship with God.

Prayers Your Child Needs to Know

Sign of the Cross

Hail Mary

Lord's Prayer

Glory Prayer

Act of Contrition

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

The Great Commandment

Grace Before Meals

These prayers are located in the back of your child's Religious Education textbooks.

My Child's Sacrament Information

Reconciliation/Eucharist Group _____

Date of First Reconciliation _____

Date of First Eucharist Rehearsal _____

Date/Time of First Eucharist _____

*Please refer to the Second Grade calendar
available on the Parish website
(strobert.cc/religious-education) for specific
times of rehearsals, preparatory activities
and Sacramental celebrations.*

Please save this page for easy reference.

