FIRST RECONCILIATION PREPARATION
“GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS” in Preparing Their Children for First Penance

Your child's First Penance is a special event in his/her life. The preparation for receiving the Sacrament and the interest of his/her parents will affect a lifelong attitude towards this Sacramental Encounter with God's forgiving love.

The role of the parent preparing the child for reconciliation begins before a child starts school. The parent consciously and unconsciously, instills in their child a hierarchy of values, a sense of right and wrong, an understanding of the words "sorry", "apology", and "forgiveness". These are important elements in a child's preparation for the sacrament of reconciliation.

Here are a few guidelines to help you in preparing your child:

1. **A child needs love and security.**
   Forming a child’s conscious begins (and continues) with a parent's love. Your affection, firmness and encouragement can teach your children that they are good. If a child grows up with the impression that their parents (or God) will stop loving them when they misbehave, their conscious development will be crippled. They learn to love and trust when they are loved.

2. **A child needs to experience forgiveness.**
   If a child is to believe in God's forgiveness and mercy, he/she must experience the forgiveness of parents. Your child needs to feel pardoned by you.

3. **A child needs to experience the fact that God is a loving Father.**
   Be careful not to present an image of God as a "law enforcer" in order to pressure the child to obey. Rather, let us teach our children that God loves us always - His love never changes regardless of what we do.

4. **A child needs to understand the reason for Rules and Laws.**
   Does your child realize that there is love behind your rules at home? Does he/she see that the commandments are rooted in love of God and of our neighbor?

5. **A child needs a true understanding of sin.**
   Sin is failing obey God on purpose. It is very important for us to help the child recognize the difference between sins (deliberate acts done on purpose) and temptations, accidents, or making mistakes. Sin is doing wrong on purpose and choosing not to love.

6. **A child needs to learn to make choices.**
   In this area of moral development, the parent can help his/her child learn how to make good choices by discussing some of the simple choices he/she makes each day. This will lead the child to see what the results might have been if different choices had been
made. It is important that the child recognize his/her responsibility for words and actions.

7. A child needs to understand the reason for Reconciliation. Reconciliation is the process of making up and becoming friends again. Encourage your child to understand that we feel happier and much better about ourselves and others after we have apologized and been forgiven.

8. A child needs to understand why we go to receive the Sacrament of Penance. We receive the Sacrament of Penance to confess our sins to the priest for the purpose of being forgiven and restored to friendship with God's family. The priest is a sign of Jesus' presence and is also a sign that the Church, the family of God, is happy to see us back home.

9. Please be sure to review the Examination of Conscience several times with your children. Your child's readiness to receive the Sacrament of Penance manifests itself in the child's ability to relate to others; in his/her daily experience of forgiving and being forgiven; in his/her attitudes towards sharing and accepting responsibility.

   But perhaps the most important element of readiness is the child's experience of your love, which is the foundation for understanding a loving God.