



**DIOCESE OF SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU
SACRAMENTAL GUIDELINES
FIRST PENANCE AND RECONCILIATION**

- I. CATECHESIS FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IS TO PRECEDE THAT OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND MUST BE KEPT DISTINCT BY A CLEAR AND TIMELY SEPARATION. BEFORE RECEIVING FIRST HOLY COMMUNION, THE CHILD SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE REVISED RITE OF PENANCE AND AT EASE WITH THE RECEPTION OF THIS SACRAMENT. THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE MUST BE CELEBRATED PRIOR TO THE RECEPTION OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION.**

- II. CHILDREN SHOULD BE ENROLLED FOR A MINIMUM OF ONE YEAR IN A PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM BEFORE BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN IMMEDIATE CATECHESIS AND PREPARATION FOR THIS SACRAMENT.**

- III. PARENTS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN PREPARING THEIR CHILDREN FOR THE RECEPTION OF FIRST PENANCE. PARISHES SHOULD PROVIDE HELP TO ASSIST THEM.**

- IV. CATECHESIS FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IS AN ON-GOING PROCESS AND SHOULD BE CONTINUED FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND ADULTS.**

- V. PASTORS HAVE THE FINAL RESPONSIBILITY TO DETERMINE THE READINESS OF A CHILD FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.**

EXPLANATION OF GUIDELINES

- I. CATECHESIS FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IS TO PRECEDE THAT OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION AND MUST BE KEPT DISTINCT BY A CLEAR AND UNHURRIED SEPARATION. BEFORE RECEIVING FIRST HOLY COMMUNION, THE CHILD SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE REVISED RITE OF PENANCE AND AT EASE WITH THE RECEPTION OF THIS SACRAMENT. THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE MUST BE CELEBRATED PRIOR TO THE RECEPTION OF FIRST HOLY COMMUNION.**
- A. Catechesis for children must take into account the maturity, natural disposition, ability, age, and circumstances of each individual. It should seek:
- To make clear the relationship of the sacrament to the child's life
 - To help the child recognize moral good and evil, be sorry for wrongdoing and turn to Christ and the Church for forgiveness
 - To encourage the child to see that faith is expressed by forgiving and being forgiven
 - To encourage the child to approach the sacrament freely and regularly (Sharing the Light of Faith #126)
- B. Children should be familiar with the revised Rite of Reconciliation and be at ease in the celebration of the sacrament.
- C. Children should become aware of their baptismal commitment and be led to a desire of living the life to which God has called them.
- D. Non-sacramental "penitential celebrations" provide an environment for continued catechesis and promote an understanding and appreciation of penance, reconciliation, contrition and the other elements of this sacrament.
- E. A child's first opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance should be non-threatening and a festive occasion. The celebration should be in a manner consistent with the maturity and understanding of the participants.
- II. CHILDREN SHOULD BE ENROLLED FOR A MINIMUM OF ONE YEAR IN A PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM BEFORE BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN PROXIMATE CATECHESIS FOR THIS SACRAMENT.**
- A. Sacraments are not isolated events in the lives of individuals, but celebrations of graced stages in a continuous process of spiritual growth. Remote preparation provides initial formation.

B. Gradual participation in the sacramental and community life of the Church is important for young children. Programs and textbooks may be selected from several recommendations approved for use in the Diocese and listed in these guidelines. Elements of catechesis for the sacrament include the following:

- We are members of God's family through Baptism
- Jesus wants us to love others and to be responsible for our actions and their consequences
- Sin is a rejection of God's love and destroys our relationships
- Jesus forgave sin; He forgives us, too, when we are sorry
- Jesus reconciles us to God and others
- We celebrate reconciliation through the Sacrament of Penance

III. PARENTS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN PREPARING THEIR CHILDREN FOR THE RECEPTION OF FIRST PENANCE. PARISHES SHOULD PROVIDE HELP TO ASSIST THEM.

- A. Parents are the first and foremost educators of their children. Sacramental preparation programs should be designed to offer assistance in the parental role of support and instruction.
- B. The home environment can support concepts of reconciliation and forgiveness through familial experiences of forgiveness. Attitudes are important since parents are examples for their children.
- C. Sessions should focus on deepening the parent's own understanding of the Sacrament of Penance and call them to continued conversion and renewal. An experience of forgiving and being forgiven in a family context is an important element of understanding for children; the concept begins in the home.
- D. Parent sessions should include presentations on Church teaching on the sacrament, an overview of the children's program, home activities that can be shared with all family members, and clarification of the roles of parents, catechists, DRE and pastor.
- E. Both parents should be encouraged to attend and participate in the parish program.

IV. CATECHESIS FOR THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE IS AN ON-GOING PROCESS AND SHOULD BE CONTINUED FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND ADULTS.

- A. Since a child's understanding of the sacrament is limited at the time of first reception, further development is necessary. Catechesis for the Sacrament of Penance should be an on-going process for all Catholics.

- B. As one grows and matures, it is important to grow and mature in one's faith life.
 - C. The development and formation of conscience is "gradual". Psychological and moral maturity is enhanced through study, discussion, and life-experiences.
 - D. Faith calls us to continual renewal and conversion.
- V. **PASTORS HAVE THE FINAL RESPONSIBILITY TO DETERMINE THE READINESS OF A CHILD FOR THE RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.**
- A. Ordinarily, catechists and parents can determine maturity and readiness. Consultation between the pastor and parent/child/catechist is required only in those cases where doubt exists regarding the readiness of a child.
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OUTLINE FOR COMMUNAL RITE OF PENANCE WITH INDIVIDUAL CONFESSIONS

I. Introduction

- A. Gathering Song
- B. Greeting and Theme
- C. Opening Prayer

II. Celebration of the Word of God

- A. Reading(s)
- B. Responsorial Psalm or Song
- C. Homily
- D. Examination of Conscience

III. Rite of Reconciliation

- A. Litany of Confession
- B. Lord's Prayer
- C. Individual Confession, Penance, Act of Contrition, and Absolution
- D. Song of Thanksgiving
- E. Closing Prayer

IV. Concluding Rite

- A. Blessing/Dismissal