

Getting Started



How can we make these sessions enjoyable for our children?

Children always love to learn from the stories of others. Share stories about your own childhood and childhood faith. Don't just tell the stories of virtue—relate the funny and embarrassing tales as well.

Invite guests to come and share their stories of faith or ministry. For example, you might invite grandparents, a neighbor who assists in your parish, or perhaps your children's godparents. Your sessions together should be fun and enjoyable. Don't be afraid to laugh and have a good time. Remember, we refer to the New Testament as the Good News.

Can this program be used in ways other than home-based?

Reconciliation Family Guide can be adapted to almost any group. It can be used as a supplemental resource for parish-based sacrament preparation programs. Its flexibility allows catechists to present the student lesson and families to do the family activities and discussion.

When used with family clusters, RCL's *Reconciliation* program allows catechists to group the children by similar ages, while not necessitating that they all be of the same age. The catechists can teach as much or as little of each lesson as time allows, and the parents can complete the lesson at home with their children.

Tips to Get You Started

1. Set a schedule of times when you will meet.
2. Choose a place to meet. Ask your child for input.
3. Choose a place for your family to celebrate the opening rituals and closing prayer.
4. Choose a Bible.
5. Select items with your child that you can use for your prayer environment, for example, a cloth to cover a prayer table and a candle that can be safely passed from one family member to another.
6. Make certain that you always affirm all the appropriate answers your child offers.
7. Young children will need some assistance when reading and working in their textbooks. Offer encouragement during the activities.
8. Do everything possible to eliminate or limit distractions and interruptions.
9. Remember that working with your child to prepare them for the celebration of first Reconciliation is truly a privilege. By learning together as a family, your family will grow in faith together. Your family's spirituality will be greatly enhanced.
10. Make a commitment to one another.



www.FaithFirst.com
Click on "Sacraments"

RCL's "Sacraments" web site enriches and expands RCL's Eucharist and Reconciliation programs. Visit RCL's "Sacraments" web site which is found by following the link "Sacraments" at **www.FaithFirst.com**.

(See page 40.)

Making a Commitment

Find a piece of paper, a pen or pencil, and a piece of ribbon. At the top of the piece of paper write, "We Will Grow in Faith Together." Then gather your family together in the place where you have chosen to pray. Set up your prayer cloth, Bible, and candle. Light the candle.

LEADER: God, our loving Father, we thank you for all the blessings that this day has brought. We are especially thankful for this opportunity to gather as a family and pray together. We ask you to be with us as we pray.

READER: *Read aloud John 14:15-17, 25-27.*

ALL: *Pass the commitment paper from one person to another. Have people sign the paper as a sign of their commitment to the whole family. After each person signs the paper, they say, "I want to grow in faith!" The rest of the family responds, "Let us grow in faith together!" After everyone has signed the paper, roll it up and tie the ribbon around it. Keep the paper with your other prayer items as a reminder of your commitment.*

LEADER: God, our loving Father, help us be faithful to our promise. Grant that we may grow in faith and hope and love. Send the Holy Spirit to help us share your mercy and forgiveness with others. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

We are reborn to new life in Christ through the waters of Baptism. God shares his life with us. We are joined to Christ and reconciled with God. We receive the gift of God's love, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps us live as followers of Christ.

Jesus proclaimed God's love for all people. Using parables, Jesus taught about God's unconditional love for people. In one parable Jesus told the story about a good shepherd and his one lost sheep. The good shepherd goes to great lengths to find and care for the sheep. Like the love of a good shepherd for his sheep, God's love for us has no limits.

When children experience the caring of someone who loves them, they experience security and trust. Children, in turn, enjoy and value caring for other people. In their experiences of people truly caring for them and their caring for other people, children can get a glimpse of the unique relationship God has entered into with them.



Each lesson will begin with a family ritual. These rituals are essential to the lesson. The rituals provide your family with a common prayer experience on which to reflect. The rest of the lesson builds upon your family's reflections.

Blessing with Water

Gathering

Gather your family around a table on which there is a large bowl of water. Invite everyone to become aware of God's presence. After a moment of quiet, begin the celebration of the ritual.

LEADER: Let us begin by praying the Sign of the Cross to remind us of our Baptism.

ALL: Making the sign of the cross, say,
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: God, our loving Father,
you are with us as we gather in prayer.
Send the Holy Spirit to
open our hearts to your word.
We ask this in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ.

ALL: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Proclaim or invite someone to proclaim the Scripture story "The Lost Sheep" (Luke 15:4-6) from your family Bible. An adapted version of the Scripture story can be found on page 6 of your child's Reconciliation book.

LEADER: Let us now listen to a story from the Bible.

READER: A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

ALL: Reverently make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and over their heart as they say,
Glory to you, Lord.

READER: Proclaim the Scripture. Conclude the reading, saying,
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ritual

Point out that you will call everyone by name and sign each person's forehead with water, saying the words: "(Name), you belong to Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Everyone will respond "Amen" after each person has been called by name and signed with water.

Take the bowl of water. Carrying it in your left hand, walk to your child and anyone else who is present. Dip your right thumb into the water. Make the sign of the cross on each person's forehead, saying,

LEADER: (Name), you belong to Jesus Christ.
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen.

Closing

LEADER: Loving God, Creator and Father,
we belong to you.
You call us by name and bless us.
We thank you for the gift of water
that reminds us that you share your life and
love with us.
Send us the Holy Spirit
to help us live as children of God.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

We Follow Jesus

Jesus teaches us to love God with our whole heart and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. This is the Great Commandment. As his followers, we are called by Jesus to live the law of love spelled out in the Great Commandment.

We begin by living this law of love among our families, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. It is often these people, who are closest to us, who cause us to think about how we are living. As we grow in faith and love, we can reach out beyond those closest to us to share the love of God with others.

Reverence is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This gift shapes our attitude of respect not only for God but also for other people—and for all life. Help your child discover that all life, especially human life, is sacred.

Nurture in your child the development of the gift of reverence.

Help them to love every person as a child of God. It is on this foundation that children can truly learn to love God with their whole heart and to love others as they love themselves.

Reverence for the Word of God

Gathering

Holding a Bible in your hands at the level of your forehead, invite your family to follow you in procession around the inside or the outside of your home to a table. Place the Bible on the table and invite everyone to settle themselves and to become aware of God's presence. After a moment of quiet, begin the celebration of the ritual.

LEADER: Let us begin by praying the Sign of the Cross to remind us of our Baptism.

ALL: *Making the sign of the cross, say,*
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: God, our loving Father,
we gather around your word,
the Sacred Scriptures.
Send the Holy Spirit
to prepare our minds and hearts
to listen to your word.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ
our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Proclaim or invite someone to proclaim the Scripture story "The Great Commandment" (Matthew 22:34–40) from your family Bible. An adapted version of the Scripture story is found on page 14 of your child's Reconciliation book.

LEADER: Let us make the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips, and over our heart and ask the Holy Spirit to help us listen to the word of God.

READER: A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

ALL: *Reverently make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and over their heart as they say,*
Glory to you, Lord.

READER: *Proclaim the Scripture. Conclude the reading, saying,*
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ritual

Point out that you will call each one to reverence the Bible in their own way. Suggest that they might kiss the Bible, touch the Bible reverently, or bow before the Bible.

LEADER: *Hold the Bible in your hands and show reverence for God's word. Allow each person to reverence the Bible in their own way.*

ALL: *One at a time, each family member reverences the Bible.*

Closing

LEADER: God, our loving Father,
today we show our reverence
for your word, the Sacred Scriptures.
Send us the Holy Spirit
to help us remember and follow
your word every day.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

We Listen to the Holy Spirit

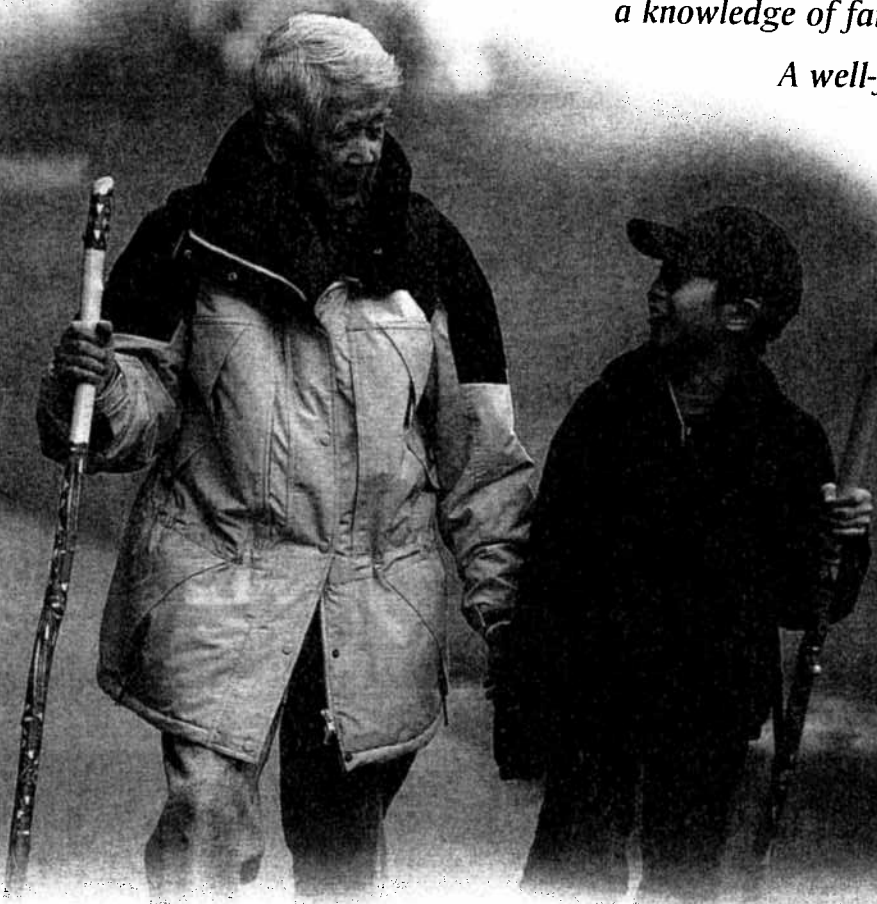
God has given us the special gifts of free will and conscience. By giving us these gifts God has given us the ability and the choice to love him. The choice to grow closer to God or away from God is ours to make. We can choose to turn toward God and respond to his love, or we can turn away from God and his love.

Our choice of God's love is reflected in the many choices we make each day. Making good choices is not always easy. Fortunately we have a conscience that helps us make good choices by guiding us in knowing right from wrong. Conscience, like the muscles in our body, can be strengthened or allowed to grow weak.

A good conscience is one that is well formed and strengthened by prayer and a knowledge of faith through the Church's teachings.

A well-formed conscience strengthens our freedom to make good decisions.

The more we train our conscience to know what is good and what is evil, the better we will be at making those decisions that help us live as followers of Jesus.



Jesus, Light of the World

Gathering

Gather your family around a table on which you have placed your child's baptismal candle or a large white candle. Invite everyone to settle themselves and to become aware of God's presence. After a moment of quiet, begin the celebration of the ritual.

LEADER: Let us begin by praying the Sign of the Cross to remind us of our Baptism.

ALL: Making the sign of the cross, say,
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: God of goodness and mercy,
you send us the gift of the Holy Spirit.
Open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit,
who is our teacher and helper.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Proclaim or invite someone to proclaim the Scripture story "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:29-37) from your family Bible. An adapted version of the Scripture story can be found on page 22 of your child's Reconciliation book.

LEADER: Let us make the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips, and over our heart and ask the Holy Spirit to help us listen to the word of God.

READER: A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

ALL: Reverently make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and over their heart as they say,
Glory to you, Lord.

READER: Proclaim the Scripture. Conclude the reading, saying,
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ritual

Point out that after you light the candle that is on the table, you will ask everyone, one at a time, to name things that the Holy Spirit can do to help your family be lights in the world. For example, "Be kind to others," "Listen respectfully to one another." After each statement everyone will answer, "Jesus is the Light of the World. Holy Spirit, help us be lights in the world."

LEADER: Light the candle on the table, saying,
Jesus is the Light of the World.
Ask each family member, one at a time, to name something that the Holy Spirit can help them do or say to be lights in the world.

FAMILY: Family members, one at a time, name something that the Holy Spirit can help them do.

ALL: Everyone responds,
Jesus is the Light of the World.
Holy Spirit, help us be lights in the world.

Closing

LEADER: God of goodness and mercy,
thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit.
We know that the Holy Spirit is always
with us.
Help us live as lights in the world.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Jesus' work among us was a work of reconciliation and healing. When he walked among us, Jesus forgave sins and restored the health of numerous people whom he met. This healing now stretches out through the ministry of the Church, the Body of Christ, to all who call upon Jesus.

We receive the forgiveness of Christ through the sacrament of Reconciliation when we are truly sorry for our sins, confess our sins to a priest, accept and do a penance, and are absolved from our sins. The healing forgiveness of God restores us to spiritual health.

Praying the Our Father reminds us of God's forgiving love and our call, as children of God, to share that forgiving love with others. We show our joy and gratitude for God's forgiveness by forgiving others as Jesus taught us.



Praying the Our Father

Gathering

Gather your family around a table or in a circle. Invite everyone to settle themselves and to become aware of God's presence. After a moment of quiet, begin the celebration of the ritual.

LEADER: Let us begin as we were baptized.

ALL: Making the sign of the cross, say,
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: Loving God,
you are our Father.
Help us know and trust your love for us.
Send the Holy Spirit to open our hearts
to your word.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Proclaim or invite someone to proclaim the Scripture story "Zacchaeus" (Luke 19:1-10) from your family Bible. An adapted version of the Scripture story can be found on page 30 of your child's Reconciliation book.

LEADER: Let us make the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips, and over our heart and ask the Holy Spirit to help us listen to the word of God.

READER: A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

ALL: Reverently make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and over their heart as they say,
Glory to you, Lord.

READER: Proclaim the Scripture. Conclude the reading, saying,
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ritual

Point out that you will pray the Our Father together, slightly extending your arms and holding the palms of your hands upward. This is a sign that you are opening your hearts to God's mercy and love.

LEADER: As a sign of our unity and that we are children of God, let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

ALL: Slightly extending their arms and holding the palms of their hands upward, pray aloud,
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.

Closing

LEADER: God, our loving Father,
we gather today
to remember your great love for us.
Send us the Holy Spirit.
Help us both to forgive
and to seek forgiveness,
and to live as your children.

✠ We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

We Are Forgiven

One of the most touching parts of the parable of the forgiving father or prodigal son is the son's return home and his being embraced by his father. The son's heart is filled with sorrow for having sinned against his father. The father, knowing and feeling his son's sorrow, embraces his son and welcomes him home—unconditionally—with a heart filled with joy. Help your child understand that God always forgives us when we reach out to him in true sorrow for our sins, just as the son reached out to his father in the parable of the prodigal son.

In the ritual for this chapter you will experience the laying on of hands. This gesture has a variety of meanings. During the sacrament of Reconciliation the priest lays hands on our head or over our head as he prays the prayer of absolution. This gesture reminds us that the work of forgiveness is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Laying On of Hands

Gathering

Gather your family. Invite everyone to settle themselves and to become aware of God's presence. After a moment of quiet, begin the celebration of the ritual.

LEADER: Let us begin as we were baptized by praying the Sign of the Cross.

ALL: Making the sign of the cross, say,
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: God, forgiving Father,
you sent your son, Jesus, to us,
to show us how much you love us.
Send us the Holy Spirit
to help us trust your forgiveness and grace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Proclaim or invite someone to proclaim the Scripture story "The Forgiving Father" (Luke 15:11-32) from your family Bible. An adapted version of the Scripture story can be found on page 38 of your child's Reconciliation book.

LEADER: Let us ask the Holy Spirit
to help us listen to the word of God.

READER: A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

ALL: Reverently make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and over their heart as they say,
Glory to you, Lord.

READER: Proclaim the Scripture. Conclude the reading, saying,
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ritual

Explain that you will come to each person, place your hands on the top of their head and pray for them. At the conclusion of the prayer, they are to respond, "Thanks be to God."

LEADER: Placing your hands on the person's head, say, (Name), remember that God always loves you.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

LEADER: After you have placed your hands on every family member's head, invite everyone to join you in praying the Our Father. Begin by saying,
Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

ALL: Our Father ...

Closing

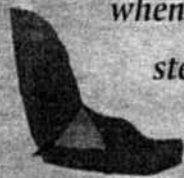
LEADER: God, our forgiving Father,
you always love us.
Send the Holy Spirit of forgiveness upon us.
Help us trust in your forgiving love.
Help us share your forgiving love
with others.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ
our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

We Are Peacemakers

Jesus taught that children of God are peacemakers. Living as peacemakers is a responsibility that is not always easy to fulfill. At Baptism, we are anointed to be messengers of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. At Eucharist we are nourished to be messengers of peace through loving and serving God and one another. Reconciliation also makes us sharers in God's gift of peace. We are freed from our sins and reconciled with God and one another. We are sent forth to forgive and reconcile as God has forgiven and reconciled us to himself and to the church community.

What a difference it makes when we live as peacemakers. What a difference it makes when we face a conflict or violence, to step back, and control our impulse to get even. Then we can remind ourselves that we have been sent by Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to be messengers and agents of peace—not violence.



Sharing a Sign of Peace

Gathering

Gather your family in a circle. Invite everyone to settle themselves and to become aware of God's presence. After a moment of quiet, begin the celebration of the ritual.

LEADER: Let us begin as we were baptized.

ALL: *Making the sign of the cross, say,*
In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

LEADER: God, our loving Father,
you sent us your Son, the Prince of Peace.
Help us know and share the peace that
the Holy Spirit brings us.
Open our hearts to your word that we may
learn to live as peacemakers.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

Scripture Reading

Proclaim or invite someone to proclaim the Scripture story "The Gift of Peace" (John 14:15-27 and 20:21) from your family Bible. An adapted version of the Scripture story can be found on page 46 of the child's book.

LEADER: Let us ask the Holy Spirit to help us listen to the word of God.

READER: A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

ALL: *Reverently make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and over their heart with the sign of the cross as they say,*
Glory to you, Lord.

READER: *Proclaim the Scripture. Conclude the reading, saying,*
The gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ritual

Point out that we will pray together the prayer Jesus taught us and then share a sign of peace with one another.

LEADER: We are all children of God.
Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

ALL: Our Father ...

LEADER: Jesus shared the gift of his peace with his disciples.
Let us share that gift of peace with one another.

ALL: *Share a sign of peace.*

Closing

LEADER: God, giver of peace,
you sent us Jesus, your Son,
who showed us how to live in peace with you and with one another.
Send the Holy Spirit
to help us live as peacemakers.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: The Lord frees us from our sins.
Go and live in peace.

ALL: Thanks be to God.