

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

- Warm welcome to parents and students. Lead a short prayer asking for guidance, understanding, and a spirit of forgiveness.
- Briefly discuss the program, expectations & provide handouts with dates and other important information.
 - Distribute catechism books
 - Reminder to tell parents to send their child's Baptism certificate

2. Icebreaker: "Forgiveness Web" (15 minutes)

- **Materials:** A ball of yarn.
- **Instructions:**
 - Gather everyone in a circle. Start by holding the yarn and sharing a simple example of forgiveness (e.g., "I forgave my friend for borrowing my book and returning it late").
 - Toss the yarn to someone else while holding onto the string, creating a web as each person shares their example.
 - Conclude by explaining how forgiveness connects us and strengthens our relationships.

3. Teaching Moment: "Understanding Reconciliation" (15 minutes)

- **Read aloud and discuss story of The Lost Son**

4. Activity: "Steps to Reconciliation" (20 minutes)

- **Materials:** Large paper footprints, markers, and tape.
- **Instructions:**
 - Write the steps of Reconciliation (e.g., Examination of Conscience, Confession, Penance, Absolution) on separate footprints.
 - Place the footprints on the floor to create a "path."
 - Have students walk the path, stopping at each step to discuss its meaning with their parents.
 - Encourage parents to share how they practice these steps in their own lives.

5. Craft: "Forgiveness Bookmark" (20 minutes)

- **Materials:** White cardstock for bookmark, markers, stickers, and glue.
 - **Instructions:** Students and parents decorate a cross together, writing words like "love," "mercy," and "forgiveness."
 - Encourage them to display the cross at home as a reminder of God's forgiveness.

6. Closing Reflection and Prayer

- End with a prayer of gratitude for God's mercy and a commitment to practice forgiveness.

Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church

First Confession and First Communion

Although all of us should exhibit appropriate respect and dignity when receiving the Sacraments at any Mass, the first reception of these Sacraments marks specific milestones in your Candidate's faith journey. Please adhere to the following dress code on these occasions:

Dress Code for First Confession

Day/Date: First Confessions will be heard on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at 9:00 AM. A parent/guardian must be present in church with the Candidate.

Acceptable: nice slacks or jeans; dress shirt or polo shirt; modest skirt and blouse with sleeves; modest dress with sleeves; socks or stockings, clean closed toe/closed heel shoes

NOTE: A clean school uniform shirt and pants (**not** shorts) is acceptable!

Unacceptable for receiving Sacraments: distressed jeans, capris, shorts, t-shirts, athletic clothing; flip flops



Dress Code for First Communion Mass

Day/Date: First Communion Mass is scheduled for 5:00 PM on Divine Mercy Sunday; April 12, 2026.

Girls: modest white dress with sleeves, white Communion veil, white socks or stockings, white closed toe and closed heel shoes; gloves are optional only because the Blessed Sacrament is received directly on the tongue at First Communion Mass

REMINDER: Gloves are not allowed when receiving Holy Communion in the hand at any Mass.

NOTES: No purses or dangling earrings. Teenage candidates may wear a very light application of makeup.

Boys: black dress pants; white long-sleeve, button-down dress shirt; black socks; black dress shoes (no tennis shoes); black tie



Cupcake/Punch Reception to immediately follow the First Communion Mass in the Church Parish Hall.

*We will have a professional photographer to take individual pictures and a group photo. Photos will be available to order directly from the photographer. More information will be provided.

(Teacher's Copy)

The Lost Son

(A children's version of Luke 15:11-32)

There was a man who had two sons. The younger son was not satisfied with his life and wanted to leave his father's house. He said, "Father, give me my share of your estate (*family's money*)."

So the father divided his estate between the two sons.

A few days later, the son gathered his belongings and set off on a journey to a distant town where he lived a lifestyle filled with poor decisions and wasted all of the money he had received from his father. Just when he realized that he had very little money left, a severe famine struck that area. There was little food to eat and very few jobs. He finally found a job tending to the swine (*pigs*) on a farm. The farmer wanted him to feed the pigs and clean the pig sty (*pigpen*) every day. Because he had no money for a place to live, he had to sleep with the pigs under the roof of the pigpen! The farmer could not afford to provide much food for the young man to eat. He was so hungry that he wished he could eat some of the pigs' food! He said to himself, "My father's hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here I am, dying of hunger. I will get up, go to my father, and say, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son. Please treat me like you would treat one of your hired workers.'" *(In other words, he was going to ask his father for a job in exchange for food to eat and a place to sleep. He didn't expect his father to welcome him back into the family.)*

The young man got up and walked back to his father's house. As he approached his father's house, the father saw him in the distance. Filled with love and compassion, the father rushed up the path to meet his son. He hugged him and kissed him. The young man said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." Before he could say anything else, the father ordered his servants, "Bring the finest robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. We will celebrate my son's return with a feast because, for a while, he was dead, but he has come to life again! He was lost, but has been found!" Then the celebration began.



Questions/Answers:

1. At the beginning of the story, was the young man happy? *No. He wanted to leave and he wanted to take his share of the family's money with him because he wasn't planning to return home.*
2. Once he was living away from his father's house, did he spend his money wisely? *No. He wasted his money.*
3. What kind of job did the young man find when he ran out of money? *He had to work on a farm feeding and cleaning up after the pigs.*
4. Where did he live? *He had to sleep with the pigs.*
5. Was he happy doing this kind of work? *No. He realized that his father's hired workers had better places to sleep and better food to eat.*
6. What kind of plan did the young man make? *He decided to return to his father's house to apologize and ask to be treated like a hired worker.*
7. Did he expect to be treated like a member of the family? *No.*
8. How did the father react when he saw the young man? *The father ran out to meet him and wanted to throw a party to welcome him home!*
9. Did the father treat him like a hired worker? *No! He wanted to celebrate the young man's return to the family!*

Activity: If time permits, allow children to draw a picture of the young son feeding the pigs in the pig sty (*or* of the Father welcoming him home) on the back of the story sheet.

What Happens During Holy Confession?

Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church
Erath, Louisiana

Catholics have a special way of celebrating forgiveness. It is called the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** (also called the Sacrament of **Penance** or **Confession**). The word **reconciliation** means “to make up” or “bring together again.” We go to Confession to “make up” with God after we have intentionally “broken” (committed sins against) His Ten Commandments.

REMEMBER: Accidents are not sins! We commit sins when we intentionally choose to disregard God’s Commandments!

1. **Examine your conscience** before going to the church to meet with the priest. (We must be truly sorry for the sins we confess.)
2. When you arrive at the church, you may have to stand/sit in line to meet with the priest. **Please be patient.**
3. Quietly enter the Confessional when it is your turn to do so. Quietly close the door behind you. Your Confession is a private matter. No one else needs to see you or hear your conversation. Many priests **encourage** their parishioners to **kneel behind the curtain** (for the sake of remaining anonymous), but if it’s available, some people choose to **sit in a chair** facing the priest.
4. Confession begins with The Sign of the Cross.
 - a. **REMEMBER:** If you choose to sit in the chair facing the priest, he will make The Sign of the Cross in the air while facing you, so his hands will move in the opposite direction. Don’t let his movements confuse you! Make the Sign of the Cross as you were taught to do so—touch your left shoulder, then your right shoulder.
5. You speak first!
 - a. First Communion candidates begin their First Confession by saying, “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. This is my First Confession. I have...” (verbally list your sins for the priest).
 - b. Those who are returning to Confession say, “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been ____ weeks (or months or years) since my last Confession. I have...” (verbally list your sins for the priest).
6. Once you have finished listing your sins for the priest, say, **“For these and any other sins I may have forgotten, I am truly sorry.”**
 - a. **REMEMBER:** We are sorry for two sets of sins! We’re sorry for the sins we **remembered** to mention and we’re sorry for the sins we **forgot** to mention!

7. If the priest has a little time to spare, he may offer suggestions about how to avoid committing those sins in the future so that you can follow the teachings and lifestyle of Jesus more closely.
8. He will assign a **penance**. Although **absolution** (God's forgiveness) takes away sin, it does not **remedy** (remove) all the **disorders** (effects) sin has caused (CCC 1459), so the priest assigns to us a penance which can take the form of "prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear" (CCC 1460). **Pay close attention to what the priest tells you to do!** You will pray these prayers (and/or perform this good deed) after you leave the Confessional to show God that you are very sorry for:
 - a. committing sins against His Ten Commandments,
 - b. how your sins may have hurt other people, and
 - c. how your sins may have caused other people to sin!**NOTE:** Completing your assigned penance also helps express your desire to make better choices in the future!
9. The priest will then ask you to pray an **Act of Contrition**. This prayer tells God that you are truly sorry, that you don't want to offend Him, and that you will do your best not to sin again. **Recite this prayer slowly and loudly enough with intent** (meaning, purpose) so that the priest will hear you say the words of the prayer and know that you are truly sorry. **If you get nervous and forget the words, don't worry!** The priest will help you! However, because we are grateful for God's unconditional love and mercy, we should take the time and make the effort to learn how to pray this sacred, traditional prayer. (We should also pray it every night!)
10. The priest will then stretch his hand toward your head and pray the words of **absolution** (God's forgiveness). His prayer ends with the words, "and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Don't be surprised if he prays this prayer in another language—perhaps in Latin!) As he says those words, make **The Sign of the Cross** with him.
 - a. **REMEMBER:** If you are sitting in a chair facing the priest, don't let his movements confuse you.
11. Now you are ready to stand up and leave the Confessional with a forgiven soul. (For many of us, God will remove the lingering "stains" of our sins from our soul in **Purgatory**.) Before you leave the Confessional, as a common courtesy, please consider saying, **"Thank you for hearing my Confession today, Father."** After all, on any given day, he could have chosen to spend more time teaching classes or in other appointments—or even visiting with his family—rather than hearing Confessions. Instead, he spends time in the Confessional for our benefit! Let's tell him how much we appreciate his effort to share God's mercy with us, encourage us, and welcome us back when we return to the Confessional after we "mess up" (again) and/or fall away from our faith!
12. Don't forget to **leave the Confessional door open** so the next person who approaches the Confessional will know he/she may enter.
13. Go back to your pew (or to the assigned kneeler) and **pray your assigned penance prayers**. If the priest assigned a "good deed" type of penance, perform it as soon as possible after leaving the church.

"Steps to Reconciliation"

Instructions:

- Write the steps of Reconciliation (e.g., Examination of Conscience, Confession, Penance, Absolution) on separate footprints.
- Place the footprints on the floor to create a "path."
- Have students walk the path, stopping at each step to discuss its meaning with their parents.
- Encourage parents to share how they practice these steps in their own lives.



