

1

For some children who tend toward perfectionism, admitting that they sometimes do things wrong might be difficult to admit.

Help your child by **giving examples from your own life** that the child might recognize: getting angry and impatient, shouting at your child or spouse, not helping a poor person, etc. It is good for them to hear adults admit their faults. (However, consider first what is appropriate to tell him or her. Don't burden them with adult problems.)

Explain that even though we sin, God still loves us. Assure your child that **you still love him or her, too**, even when they do bad things. Let them know it is possible for you and God to love them but not approve of what they did wrong.

4 | Disobey the Rules Sometimes

Even when we disobey the rules, God still loves us!

We do commit sins sometimes: everyone does: you, your parents, your teachers, even priests.

Sin hurts us and others, sometimes in ways that can be seen, sometimes invisibly.

Sin also hurts our relationship to God.

Reconciliation helps heal us.

How does the Church celebrate God's forgiveness?

- At Mass, in one of the opening prayers when admit we have sinned, we say we are sorry and learn about contrition.
- Through the sacrament of reconciliation we are reminded that God forgives us.



2

Explain how sins (including the ones you used as examples from your own life) hurt the people around us. They also hurt **our relationship with God**.

3

Explain that contrition means being sorry and also being willing to change and do better.

1

Pray this with your child.

Be sure your child understands that we use the terms sacrament of reconciliation, confession and penance to refer to the same thing.



Prayer Celebration

Growing up Catholic means we start celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Everyone begins by making the Sign of the Cross.

All: **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Leader: Jesus, thank you for bringing us all together here today. We love you and want to learn to love you more through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

All: **We love you Jesus. Thank you for loving us.**

Leader: You have given us courage and strength, Jesus. You have given us the Holy Spirit to be with us.

All: **We open our hearts to you today.**

Please listen to the reading: Matthew 18:21-22.

Leader: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!**

Please listen to the leader.

Leader: Let us pray together.

Please pause after each line:

All: **Oh Jesus,
Thank you for forgiving us
every time we sin
Please give us the love in our hearts
To forgive our friends and family
when they hurt us or make us angry.
Amen.**



2

With your child:

As you form your child in the process of Growing up Catholic, there are certain customs and traditions which are important. Here is the Catholic custom of **reverence**.

When we enter the parish church, we do so with an air of reverence for everything and everyone present there.

“Reverence” means we honor something by our actions and thoughts – so in the church, we remain quiet. If speaking, we talk quietly. We allow others to have quiet time for prayer. It is reverent for us to bless ourselves with Holy Water when entering and leaving the church. We bow or genuflect to the altar or tabernacle.

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Help your child understand **grace**.

2

Have your child **tell a story** about each of these pictures. For example: in the family supper it is good to pray first and share the food willingly so everyone has enough, but it is wrong to repeatedly complain about the food.

3



What Is a Sin?

A sin is choosing to do something we know is wrong or intentionally not doing something we know is right.

Free will – God gives us the freedom to make choices between good and bad things. No one can force us to do what is right or what is wrong: not our parents, and not even God. But God also gives us **grace**. Grace is the power of the Holy Spirit within us, helping us choose love and good.



Family supper



Learning to ride



Talking with friends

Look at these three pictures. Tell a story about how these people could choose to be good and loving – or choose to be bad and mean.

What is Our Conscience?

Our conscience is God's voice within us, helping us know right from wrong. Sometimes we have to listen very closely to our hearts to hear that voice.

Growing up Catholic means we learn to pay attention to our conscience and follow it. The Church helps us by teaching us God's rules of love.

In the pictures above, tell how each child's **CONSCIENCE** helped them make a decision for good and to be loving.

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Read this wonderful story of the Prodigal Son together with your child.

2

Ask your child if he/she ever feels like the son in the story and assure them it's ok if he/she has.



Meeting Jesus in the Bible

As we prepare for First Reconciliation, we want to know Jesus as a friend and learn to love him more.

Jesus calls all of us to return to him just as the son in this story returned to his father.
God is waiting for us.



From Luke 15:11–24 (NRSV)

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them.

"A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to

him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'"

"So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate."

3

Help your child see the flow of the story. Explain that this is the same process the Church has for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- We commit sins.
- We are sorry.
- We ask for forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- God takes us back. God never stops loving us, even when we sin.

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Help your child see how this Bible story plays out in real life.

- A. Answers could include lying, stealing, cheating, being mean to others, being lazy, eating too much, and so forth.
- B. Each of these sins hurts us and we feel bad about them.
- C. Like the prodigal son, we can become conscious of how we sin and hurt others or ourselves.
- D. We must reach a point where we feel sorry for our sins. We have to be willing to confess them and not repeat them.
- E. God waits for us to return to him with our whole hearts. Help your child understand why it is so important for us to keep our hearts open to God by going to him with our failings and sins. Use an example from your own life, even if you are not Catholic. We all believe in returning to God when we've done wrong.



How Do We Live This Story?

Notice the parallels in the story of the prodigal son and in your life.

The Prodigal Son	The Sacrament of Reconciliation
How did the younger son offend and hurt his father?	We sometimes do bad things. We sin. We act selfishly even though we know it is wrong. Give some examples of this.
The sins of the son backfired on him and they caused him to suffer.	Our sins backfire on us too. The lies we tell come back to haunt us. The selfish acts we do make us lonely. Give some other examples of how our sins end up hurting us.
The son realized he was wrong.	The Church, the Holy Spirit, and our consciences help us to "come to our senses" about our sins and be conscious of the wrong we have done. Tell how any of these help us see our sins more clearly.
The son decided to return to his father and ask forgiveness.	We do this, too. We decide to confess our sins and not repeat them. Tell why this is so important. Why must we reach a point of contrition?
When he went home, his father was waiting to meet him and forgive him.	God wants us to return to him. He waits for us to "come to our senses" and admit we went off the track. How does God treat people who return to him with humility, ready to admit their sins and be sorry for them?

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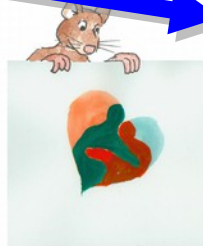
Explain to your child that after he or she confesses his or her sins, and after the priest has talked with them and given them advice, the next thing which happens is that **the priest gives a penance.**

2

When we are truly sorry for our sins, **we promise not to do them again.** Read and discuss together this section on penance.



Sacrament of Reconciliation



The Penance

What is a "penance" and why does the priest give us one?

- A "penance" is a task given to us by the priest after we confess our sins
- It helps us turn our hearts back to God
- It helps us turn away from sin

Your penance might be an action that makes amends for your sin, a prayer, some other way to help you change your life and avoid sin in the future.

It might be something like:

- praying for a person you have spread rumors about
- returning something you have stolen
- giving up something we like for a period of time
- donating money for a good cause

You should perform your penance as soon after your Confession as possible – it will help you feel free!



From Papa Francis

In Lent 2014, Pope Francis presided at a reconciliation service and was expected to start hearing confessions along with 61 priests. But he surprised his master of ceremonies (and many others) by first going to one of the priests at an open confessional to make his own confession.

Just beforehand, he preached about the call to conversion: "It is the call to change one's life. Conversion is not a matter of a moment or a year, it is a commitment that lasts a lifetime. Who among us can be assumed not to be a sinner? No one."

Photo by Presidência da República/Roberto Stuckert Filho, Agência Brasil.

1

This week, help your child understand what it means **to make a promise to do better**. Help them choose ways to change based on this chart. They should write in their responses.

Find the online page for this session at GrowingUpCatholic.com/reconciliation4.



At Home This Week

In the Act of Contrition, we promise to try our best to love more and sin less, especially the sins we have committed in the recent past. This week, practice making promises. Use the chart below to help you.

Sins we may have committed in the past What will you promise to do in the future?

I fought with my siblings	
I did not talk to God in prayer today	
I lied to a friend about how I really felt	
I played instead of doing my homework	
I complained when my mom or dad asked me to do my chores	
I stole a book from someone in school	

 **Tips and Activities for This Week**
<http://GrowingUpCatholic.com/reconciliation4>