

Heart Speaks to Heart: The Gift of Reconciliation

Exploring Reconciliation Together

What is Reconciliation?

God created us to love Him, to love one another and to love and care for all of His creation. We often fail to love, and we harm our relationship with God and with one another through our sins. The Sacrament of Reconciliation repairs our relationship with Jesus Christ and with His Church when we have damaged that relationship through our sin.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also known as the Sacrament of:

- **Confession:** because, in this Sacrament, we acknowledge our sins by telling (or **confessing**) our sins to a priest
- **Penance:** because, in this Sacrament, we make an act of penance by doing something (perhaps saying a prayer or doing a little act of kindness) to show that we are sorry for our sins and that we intend to live our lives in a better way and more closely with Jesus



PREPARATION FOR FIRST RECONCILIATION

Our children who are preparing for First Reconciliation are on a journey with Jesus as their friend and guide. In the Diocese of Leeds we have developed a resource to help them on that journey. The resource is called *Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Reconciliation*.

An important part of this First Reconciliation resource is for children and parents and carers to take time to learn together and to talk to each other: there will be suggested questions to answer, activities to do and topics to discuss. It's also very important to be praying together as a family at home.

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

Parents and carers will have:

- Filled in an enrolment form (catechists will help you further with this)
- Attended a meeting or been contacted in some other way to be given introductory information about the preparation programme
- Been given the book *Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Reconciliation*.
- Have acquired a notebook to give to their child; this book will become the child's 'Reflection Book'; catechists should be able to give ideas about these books and where they can be purchased at a reasonable price
- Have planned to set up a 'Prayer Place' at home, where their child can pray; this may simply be a bedside table covered in a cloth, with a cross and prayer cards and other religious objects (like rosary beads) on it; again, catechists should be able to give more advice about this

Parents and carers should give their child the main book (*Heart Speaks to Heart: the Gift of Reconciliation*) and read the introductory pages with their child, who should:

- Fill in the information required on page 3 (their name and the date on which they have been given the book)
- Read:
 - Pages 6-7; at this point, parents and carers could give the child the notebook they have acquired (the 'Reflection Book') and talk about where the child's 'Prayer Place' could be
 - Pages 8-9, which introduce the characters of Grandpa and his twin grandchildren; then read pages 12-13 and think about answers to the questions at the end of page 13

As well as *Heart Speaks to Heart*, a second book (called *The Marvellous Adventures of Max and Droogo*) is available and can be acquired from admin.evangelisation@dioceseofleeds.org.uk or through your parish or school. It's a book of stories which have been written as a fun way for the children to think about the importance of saying sorry when we've deliberately done something wrong, and how wonderful it is to be forgiven. Children could read a story after each of the five Reconciliation sessions, and try to answer the questions at the end of each story.

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Let's have a look at the children's First Reconciliation book in more detail.

There are five sessions in the book. Each session follows a similar format.

1. **A family story**

Using conversation between an imaginary grandfather and his twin grandchildren (Jess and Ryan), the children are prompted to share what they have been doing to prepare for First Reconciliation since the last session.

2. **A virtue**

The practice of virtues (like love and thankfulness and honesty) helps us all to flourish – to grow in friendship with Jesus and to become like Him and so become the best person we can be. For each session, one or two virtues have been chosen for us to think about and to try to practise in our lives.

3. **'Bible Journaling'**

Stories from the Bible have been retold in the First Reconciliation book. During each session, a story will be read out loud. The children will be invited to underline words which stand out for them and to think about what the story means. They will then be asked to write and draw their thoughts in the margins beside the story in their books and to colour in their designs later.

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a collection of writings which helps us to know God more intimately and to journey with Him more closely. The Bible is divided into the Old Testament (which tells the story of God's chosen people) and the New Testament (which tells the story of Jesus, the Saviour, who suffered and died for us and rose from the dead to lead us deeper into the everlasting life and love of God).

4. **Discussion and activities**

During each session, there will be an opportunity to talk together about the topic of the session and to complete some activities.

5. **Things to do before the next time you meet**

At the end of each session, several activities will be suggested for the children to do before the next session.

6. **Concluding prayer time**

There will always be an opportunity at the end of each session for quiet meditation (called Quiet Prayer in the book): sit quietly and listen to your breathing; a short phrase (e.g. 'Come Lord Jesus') is repeated a few times; you reflect on these words during a short period of silence.

What is Prayer?

Prayer is turning the mind and heart towards God. When people pray, they enter into a living relationship with God. Prayer is very important for everyone taking part in our First Reconciliation programme.

- Friendship grows and deepens through spending time together: prayer is the way we spend time in friendship with God.
- Prayer is a two-way process: when we pray, we are spending time with God, talking with Him and listening to Him (and He listens to us too).
- Prayer comes in lots of different forms: we talk to God; we thank Him; we ask Him for things; we say sorry and seek forgiveness for our sins; etc.

There will usually be a rehearsal before the celebration of First Reconciliation. Priests and Catechists will provide more information about this.

Online you will find links to download:

- A **card** called ***How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation*** which guides the children through what to do to make their First Confession
- A **Book of Reconciliation Prayers**
- A **Glossary** of difficult words used in *Heart Speaks to Heart*
- A **Feelings Chart** to check how you are feeling!
- **Stickers** of the virtues to mark when the children complete each session
- Ideas for **Extra Activities**
- Information and Advice about how to use the **Story Book**

Videos which guide you through the sessions and reflective readings (Audios) of the Bible Passages are also available.

We do hope that you enjoy this special journey, a journey which will end in our children celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation and making their Confession for the very first time. May the Lord bless you, as together you make this journey.

Important Note for Parents and Carers

- If your child has any special educational needs or disabilities, it is important that you speak personally to a lead catechist and/or the Parish Priest.
- If you have *any* concerns about being involved in this preparation programme, please speak to a catechist and/or the Parish Priest.