



ASCENSION RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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Fall, 2011

Dear Reconciliation Preparation Families,

The people of Ascension welcome you and your child as you prepare for the celebration of Reconciliation this year. Reconciliation is one of the sacraments of healing offered to baptized Catholics. This is a grace-filled time for you and for the Ascension community. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with your family during this time of preparation and we pledge our support.

In its celebration of the sacrament of Penance, the Church reveals itself as the sacrament of God's mercy in the world, but also as a sinful community, still "on the way" to the perfection of the Kingdom. The structure of the liturgical process of conversion, repentance, and forgiveness is important but more so is the fact that it goes on continually within the church (Catholicism, McBrien).

Preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is ongoing and occurs at various age appropriate stages in the life of the child and adults in the community. The first stage occurs prior to First Eucharist. Children and parents prepare for reconciliation by reflecting on God's mercy and forgiveness, learning about the rite of the sacrament and being introduced to an examination of conscience. Together they attend a reconciliation service offered during the Lenten season.

The second stage of preparation occurs at about the age of ten. During this stage, children prepare to receive Form Two Reconciliation. The ten year old's growing sense of justice and fair play provides the basis for the exploration of Christian morality as a way of life. Emphasis is on our covenant relationship with God and responsibility to the community. Three out-of-classroom preparation sessions are held. Two of these sessions are attended by parents and children together. One is held for parents only and focuses on the history of the sacrament and our current adult understanding of Reconciliation. The children's preparation is supported and expanded with materials sent home to the parents and with topics covered in religion classes geared to that age group. Topics such as the Commandments, the Beatitudes, the Sacraments and the rite of Reconciliation itself are part of the curriculum. A Reconciliation Service is celebrated on two weekends of March. Families may choose to attend either service. Parents are encouraged to receive the sacrament with their children.

Stage three of the preparation is the continuing catechesis on Reconciliation which occurs in the on-going religious education of the students. Each year their understanding of the sacrament deepens as they are exposed to more information and opportunity for reflection. Each year their celebration and appreciation of the sacrament broadens as they have an opportunity to participate in a Reconciliation service during the Lenten season.

Reconciliation Preparation Sessions

- January 19, 2012** **Inscription Ceremony** **7-8 PM** **Church**
(Parents and children)
At this service the children are formally invited to begin preparing for the sacrament of Reconciliation. This preparation is appropriately geared to their development and level of maturity. We reflect on a story from scripture, the children write their names on an enrollment banner and the parents and children pray together at the beginning of this special time of preparation.
- February 28, 2012** **The Rite of Reconciliation** **7:00-8:00 PM** **Pine Room**
(Parent and child)
This session will involve the children in a discussion and reflection on the meaning of Reconciliation in their lives. This will be done through the use of Scripture stories, moral parables and daily life examples. The children will participate in a model presentation of the Rite of Reconciliation which they will experience when they celebrate the sacrament. Families will receive a sign-up sheet so that they may choose which Reconciliation Service they wish to attend.
- March 3, 2012** **Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation**
March 10, 2012 **(Families of the Reconciliation candidate)**
9:30 AM **Church**
Families choose the date on which they will celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Children and their families attend the ceremony which is the celebration of Rite Two form of Reconciliation. The service consists of song, prayer, scripture reading, reflection, examination of conscience, act of contrition, individual reconciliation, and communal prayer of thanksgiving. The service is followed by hospitality. The entire experience takes about one and one-half hours. Children are invited to come dressed for church. Parents are encouraged to receive the sacrament during the service along with their children.

Each time we gather to ask forgiveness of God and of one another it is a time of hope for our entire community. Christ himself has called the Peacemakers “Children of God.” We rejoice with you and your child in the goodness and mercy of our God. We pray that you will experience God’s peace and forgiveness many times this year and that each experience will mend your brokenness, bless and strengthen you and make you whole.

God bless your family as you begin this year of preparation. May you treat one another with kindness and respect, being willing to ask for and extend forgiveness when it is needed. May each of these experiences bring you closer to our loving God who goes out to meet us as the Father met the Prodigal Son, who searches for us as the Shepherd does for the one lost sheep.

Sincerely yours,

Christine Ondrla, DRE

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