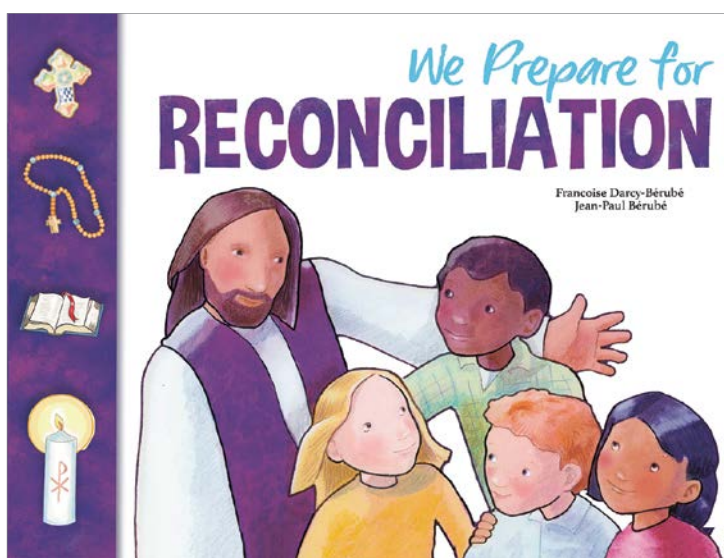


Guide for at-home and virtual use

Preparing Children for the Reception of First Reconciliation using

We Prepare for Reconciliation

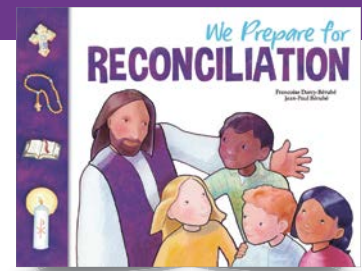
*"In following Jesus, you discover the ways of God, and find a special joy:
the joy of God's love and forgiveness"*



HOPE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

- During these unprecedented times of COVID-19 we find we are not able to gather as we would normally do for sacramental preparation. Parishes are depending on parents and group leaders to take the lead in the preparation of children for the celebration of First Reconciliation.
- Both parents and group leaders are feeling overwhelmed and unprepared for the task at hand. This Guide offers practical suggestions to manage both virtual encounters and at-home sessions with a minimum of worry.
- ***We Prepare for Reconciliation*** is a faith-filled resource to aid in the journey towards the sacrament. This journey of preparation, which we can share with our children, is a perfect opportunity to learn and grow in faith as a family and as a parish.

FOR PARENTS



How to Use *We Prepare for Reconciliation*

- In the parent guide, located in the centre of the book, you will find carefully worded prompts and questions to further the discussions with your children. Step-by-step instructions make it easy to use the material to teach concepts and then to deepen the experience through shared conversations.
- Each chapter sets out the goals for the session, and then provides suggestions on how parents can guide their children through the chapter together. Just follow the guidelines or prompts.
- With stories, easily understandable scripture passages and the “Words to Remember” feature, parents are made to feel comfortable in this process. For each chapter, the guide provides conversation starters and suggestions for integrating the content into the daily life of the family.
- The guide encourages you to spend one-on-one time together discussing and reinforcing what your child is learning. It is easy! Just read a few pages together from your child’s book and follow the ideas provided to begin your conversations. Good conversations happen in an atmosphere of joy, peace, and prayer.

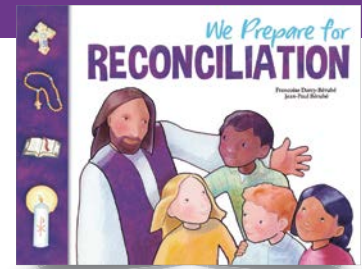
Importance of Your Role as a Parent

As you prepare your child for the sacrament of First Reconciliation you will:

- **Teach** them to walk in the path of God’s love, which strengthens their self-esteem and at the same time makes it easier for them to accept their personal limitations and shortcomings.
- **Help** them discover that Jesus shows them the way to God.
- **Encourage** them to develop simple habits of prayer that will sustain their spiritual life while strengthening their character.
- **Enable** them to acquire gradually a more precise sense of right and wrong, and make their own moral decisions.
- **Instill** in them a deep trust in the infinite love of God.

The Parent Guide prepares parents to address each of the above goals with ease.

FOR GROUP LEADERS/ CATECHISTS



- As Group Leaders/Catechists we are looking for ways to continue to build the beautiful gift of community, given to us by our faith. The difficulty is that the pandemic has made it harder to gather, in person, as a community.
- More and more groups leaders are using technology to aid in maintaining group gatherings. Whether you use Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, Go-to-Meeting, or others, having strong material to share will make the online process easy to facilitate.
- The *We Prepare for Reconciliation* student book and accompanying Leader's Guide are a complete resource package of material that provides Group Leaders all the support necessary for navigating the pathway to the sacrament. It offers clear guidelines for the use of the material as well as a step-by-step approach in addressing the material found in each chapter.

Here are a few tips for handling on-line encounters:

Select your platform

- **Digital group gatherings can be as effective** as in-person gatherings if the technology is handled well. Select a platform that your group is comfortable using. Before your first gathering, ensure everyone feels equipped to join the event.
- **Designate a tech-savvy group member to be the platform** facilitator and manage the technology. That will let you focus on the content of the discussion.
- **Establish ground rules:** The facilitator might remind everyone of basic online discussion etiquette, such as muting your microphone when not speaking and staying present on-screen as much as possible.
- **Take breaks:** Sitting in front of a computer screen can be tiring — just like sitting for long periods of time in a social hall — so build in bathroom and coffee breaks. Give everyone a moment to stretch and refresh.
- **Embrace the silence:** Silent reflection or prayer may feel awkward in a digital setting. Embrace it and keep going. Allowing space for quiet is an important part of our spiritual practice and growth.

Gather your group

- **Keep it small:** Digital leaders have found that small groups work best in digital discussion groups. Aim for no more than 15 attendees per session.
- **Encourage sharing:** Every group has people who are more comfortable sharing and those who take time to process before speaking up. Welcome all voices into the discussion.
- **Focus the discussion:** Choose one or two sections to discuss per session to not overwhelm the group and to allow for deep discernment and reflection.

Dig in!

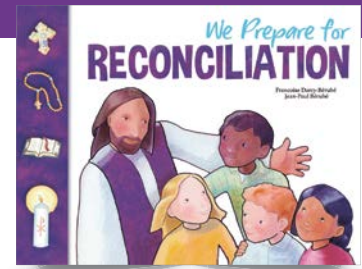
- **To minimize distractions and help keep everyone focused**, each member of the group should have their own copy of [We Prepare for Reconciliation](#).
- As the facilitator, **communicate** page numbers clearly if you ask everyone to read a section together. Feel free to read short sections of the book aloud and repeat discussion questions as needed so everyone on the video gathering is “on the same page.”
- **Before beginning each session**, it may be helpful to come to a shared understanding of terms that may arise (for example: What does accompaniment mean?)

Follow up

- **You matter:** Send a brief follow-up email or text to attendees to thank them for their participation and to let them know how much they matter to your parish.
- **Remind and connect:** A few days before the next discussion, send an email or text reminding attendees of the date and time of the next discussion, as well as sending a digital link to the online platform. Remind the participants of the topic for the next discussion and the book or booklet that will be used.

FOR BOTH PARENT'S AND GROUP LEADERS

The Importance of Prayer in the Process



- Prayer is such an important part of our spiritual journey and during our sacramental preparation period it is a perfect opportunity to develop the habit of daily prayer, which will be important for your child's whole life.
- We know that we cannot text, tweet, call or write to God. Our way of developing our relationship with God is through prayer: our conversation with God.
- At the centre of the parent guide you will find six prayer cards, one for each of the six themes in your child's book along with suggestions on how to make prayer an important part of family life.
- The most important thing to remember is to pray WITH your child, not to simply listen to their prayers.

We Prepare for Reconciliation affords great learning opportunities to take place within a shared online/ digital experience.

By using the *We Prepare for Reconciliation* student book and Leader's Guide as a road map for the children's journey and preparation for First Reconciliation you will have shared this life changing moment as both family and fellow pilgrims on the journey towards a closer relationship with God.

Above all relax and enjoy the journey together.