

LESSON 12: MY FIRST CONFESSION

To culminate the children's study of the Sacrament/Holy Mystery of Reconciliation, it is suggested that a special day be chosen for them to make their first Confession as a group together. This should be a very special event for the children, their families, and the parish.

A suggested SERVICE OF CONFESSION has been included here for your convenience. It presents a framework upon which to build and should be adopted/altered according to the traditions and practices of your own parish/diocese/jurisdiction. Note that the teacher should go over procedures before the actual service. They will need their "Lord, help me. . ." slip(s) from Lesson 11. Also, a special basket or tray should be prepared before the service and placed near the icon stand or place of confession. (Save the slips in the basket until the students receive Communion at the next liturgy following their first Confession. Perhaps it can be placed near the icon of Christ on the iconostas as a visual reminder for the children and the entire parish.)

In keeping with the "specialness" of the children's celebrating this Sacrament/Holy Mystery for the first time, it is recommended that this be a "dress-up" occasion, followed by the celebration "feast," reminiscent of the feast given by the father to celebrate the return of the Prodigal Son. Your entire parish should be invited to take part in this event, which might be a "covered dish" social, or a "box lunch" get-together, or even a parish banquet! Perhaps the newly-confessed students can present a re-telling (mime, puppet show, role-play, etc.) of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Or, a parents' group or older church school class might do such a presentation for the benefit of all at the celebration.

Other suggestions may include giving each newly-confessed student a small gift (icon, prayer book, cross or medal, etc.), giving each a commemorative certificate marking the event, and/or whatever the parish priest, teacher(s), and parents might deem appropriate.

One further note: the rest of the church school (and, of course, the parish) should also be prepared to receive the Sacrament/Holy Mystery of Reconciliation following the First Confessions of this class.

SERVICE OF CONFESSION

Priest: Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: Amen.

O heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good one.

Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us.
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Holy God! Holy Mighty! Holy Immortal! Have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. AMEN.

O most-holy Trinity: have mercy on us.

O Lord: cleanse us from our sins.

O Master: pardon our transgressions.

O Holy One: visit and heal our infirmities, for Thy Name's sake.

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. AMEN.

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Priest: For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

People: AMEN.

Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, for laying aside all excuse, we sinners offer to Thee, as to our Master, this supplication: have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

O Lord, have mercy on us, for in Thee have we put our trust. Do not be angry with us, nor remember our iniquities, but look down on us even now, since Thou art compassionate, and deliver us from our enemies; for Thou art our God, and we are Thy people: we are all the work of Thy hands, and we call on Thy name.

Now and ever and unto ages of ages. AMEN.

O blessed Theotokos, open the doors of compassion to us whose hope is in you, that we may not perish but be delivered from adversity through you, who are the salvation of the Christian people.

Priest: Behold, Christ stands here invisibly and receives your confession, so do not be ashamed or afraid. Conceal nothing from me, but tell all the things you have done. Then you shall have pardon from our Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, His Holy Image is before us, and I am but a witness, bearing testimony before Him of all things which you say to me. But if you conceal anything from me, it will be a greater sin. Take heed, therefore, lest having come to the physician you depart unhealed.

Each individual now approaches the place for Confession. He/she places his/her "Lord, help me. . ." slip(s) in the special basket, then makes the sign of the Cross, kisses the Gospel and Cross and says:

Person: O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, I confess to You all the hidden and open sins of my heart and mind, which I have done: and I ask You the loving judge, for forgiveness of my sins and the grace to sin no more.

Priest: Now, confess your sins with sincerity and honesty, to the best of your ability. *(Father stands next to you to help you.)*

When the individual's Confession is finished, the Priest says this Prayer, making the sign of the Cross over the Penitent:

It was God Who forgave David through Nathan the Prophet, when he confessed his sins, and Peter weeping bitterly for his denial and the sinful woman in tears at his feet, and the Publican, and the Prodigal Son. May that same God forgive you all things, through me a sinner, both in this present world, and in that which is to come, and set you uncondemned before His dread Judgment Seat. And now, having no further care for the sins which you have confessed, go in peace.

Following the Prayer of Absolution, Father will remove the epitrichilion from your head. Kiss the Holy Gospel and the Cross. Then receive Father's blessing and kiss his hand. Then, return to your place and pray quietly, thanking God for His forgiveness, and asking Him to help you be sorry and sin no more.

PRAYERS AFTER CONFESSION

1.

O almighty and merciful God, I truly thank You for the forgiveness of my sins. Bless me, O Lord, and help me always to do what is pleasing to You, and to sin no more. AMEN.

2.

O Lord God of my salvation, the Saviour and Benefactor of my soul. I am truly sorry for my every transgression. And I firmly resolve never again to offend You by my sins, and sincerely promise to amend my way of life. Implant in me the fear of Your blessed commandments, that I may trample down all worldly desires and may lead a godly life, both thinking and doing always the things which are pleasing to You. Grant me the Grace of Your Holy Spirit, that being strengthened, I may shun all evil deeds and works, and words and thoughts, and may avoid all snares of the Evil One. Shine in my heart with the true Sun of Your Righteousness. Enlighten my mind and guard all my senses, that following Your commandments, I may gain eternal life. AMEN.

