

You May be Wondering...

How do I know my child is ready to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Penance?

Concerning a child's readiness to prepare for First Penance, parents can discern this by reflecting on the following:

1. This child is baptized and has reached the age of reason (around 7).
2. This child knows the difference between right and wrong. (Know this because you've seen them choose one over the other)
3. This child knows the difference between mistakes and deliberate choices to do wrong.
4. This child can express sorrow for choosing to do wrong (sin).
5. This child can forgive others (you have to know the signs this is happening but the key one is restored/continued relationship, and ability to learn from the encounter and to move on appropriately).
6. This child can pray at home and at Mass.
7. This child relates to Jesus as a forgiving person.

From *Instruction for Sacraments: First Penance* Diocese of
Richmond, 2013.

What does my child need to know intellectually to be ready to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance?

- A child needs to know the difference between right and wrong.
- The child needs to understand that accidents or mistakes are not sins.
- When we deliberately choose to do what is wrong and turn away from God, we sin.
- God is loving and merciful. God will always forgive us if we ask.
- Jesus has given us the sacrament of Reconciliation through which our sins are forgiven and we receive the grace to live as God's children.
- We must be willing to forgive others, just as God forgives us.

How can I tell if my child is ready for their First Reconciliation/Penance?

There are many indicators of readiness for first reconciliation, most of which are intangible. As a parent, listen carefully to what your child says about wrongdoing and misbehavior. Encourage the child to take responsibility for his/her behavior rather than blaming others. Watch to see if your child is capable of being sorry and asking forgiveness of others without your prompting. Then, ask yourself the following:

- Is prayer a part of your child's life?
- Does your child have the capacity for sincere sorrow and make an honest effort to do better?
- Can your child express sorrow and describe wrongdoing in his/her own words?

With thanks to: <http://faithfirst.com/RCLsacraments/reconciliation/family/faqs/faqs.html>