

# First Penance Family Handbook 2016 – 2017



*“The LORD is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.”*

*Psalm 23*



Saint Maurice Church

Stamford, CT

## SAINT MAURICE CHURCH

358 Glenbrook Road  
Stamford, CT 06906

October 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome!

You and your child are entering a special time of preparation for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation – the celebration of God’s love and mercy. Because your child learns through your example, you, as parents, are very important to the process of preparation. Your home is where faith is developed and lived.

Our parish is happy to help you bring your child to this encounter with Jesus. This handbook provides general information, key ideas, and resource suggestions to assist you in your role as a Catholic parent. Please take the time to review the material. We are ready to help you. Do not hesitate to call on us with questions or concerns.

May God bless you with every good thing.

Fr. Alfred Riendeau, Jr.  
Pastor

Ms. Sandra Kluun  
Coordinator of Faith Formation

## The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

*The desire for God is written on the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself.”*

*Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 27*

### The Invitation

Welcome to Saint Maurice Church and the First Penance parent meeting!

We begin by recognizing that God calls us, draws us to himself because of his love for us. We are grateful for the gift of faith, which has brought your child to this moment. We hope that your entire household will find this preparation for and celebration of First Penance both enjoyable and meaningful.

### Penance Confession Reconciliation

#### Why does one sacrament have so many names?

The Sacrament of Penance is also often referred to as *Reconciliation* or *Confession*. Each of these names refers to a different aspect of the Sacrament in which we **CONFESS** our sins and do **PENANCE** as a sign of our new **RECONCILIATION** with God and the Church. The baptized faithful are invited to celebrate this Sacrament of Healing beginning at the age of seven because the Church has deemed this as the "age of discretion" when a person can now understand right from wrong and therefore recognize their need for reconciliation and forgiveness.

### Our Relationship with God

Just like in any relationship, there are going to be things said and done that cause harm or hurt in the relationship. In our relationship with God, we are the ones who offend, and sometimes even turn away. Despite this, God prompts us to come back to him. He waits patiently for us to return, then pours his mercy on us.

From the time we are young we are taught to say "I'm sorry" when we hurt someone. It is the same with our loving God. Through our sins we choose to disobey God and turn

away from his love. We need to be able to accept responsibility for our choices, and ask for God's forgiveness. This is why the Sacrament of Penance is so important. It not only restores, but also strengthens, our relationship with God.

In learning what it means to be truly sorry, children must be helped in gradually coming to understand that if a person is sorry, that person:

- Tries to change his or her behavior;
- Does something about the wrong he or she has done;
- Makes promises to try not to repeat the wrong.

### Understanding Sin

In our parish, children are introduced to the concept of sin within the context of understanding the nature of their friendship with God. They learn about the loving relationship through their experiences with family and friends. Through these experiences and stories of Jesus' special love for them, children begin to understand the nature of sin, and the effects of selfish choices on these relationships.

The Church is the family of God. We become a part of this family at Baptism. Anytime a member of God's family sins, the entire family is affected. That is why the Sacrament of Penance is sometimes a community celebration where the parish family comes together asking for forgiveness before individual reconciliation.

Below are some Bible stories you and your child may enjoy:

The Lost Sheep (Luke 15)

The Prodigal Son (Luke 15)

The Woman at the House of the Pharisee (Luke 7)

Zacchaeus (Luke 19)

The Paralyzed Man (Matthew 9)

### Parent Involvement

Parents are the primary educators of their children in developing their image of who God is, in developing their relationship with God, and in seeing the place God has in their lives. No matter what your child learns in Catholic school or faith formation class, your involvement is vital to their understanding of the sacrament. Here are some suggestions:

- First and foremost, attend Mass together as a family on a regular basis.
- Show forgiveness in your own life.
- Pray together as a family.
- Know what your child is learning in class, and try to reinforce at home what your child is learning in class.
- Listen carefully to your child. Answer the questions he or she asks, and even say, "I don't know" if you don't know the answer. When you find the answer, tell him or her what you have discovered.
- Help your child learn "by heart" these important prayers: the Our Father, the Sign of the Cross, the Act of Contrition, the Hail Mary.
- Celebrate the sacrament yourself! Even second graders can see a double standard if they are asked to do something that you don't.

### First Penance at Saint Maurice Church

At Saint Maurice Church, the First Penance program has three interlocking components. The first, foundational piece is the classroom; the second, home school lessons guided by parents; and third, a workshop. A portion of each in-parish class will be devoted to an enrichment opportunity, such as a video, art, or music, to illuminate the lesson topic. The classroom formation corresponds with the at-home lessons and is supplemented by hands-on experiences.

The home sacrament program is part of the Sadlier Sacrament Program. Sadlier Keepsake Books help children learn about the Sacrament of Penance and include a scrapbooking option to help them respond creatively to what they have learned. We ask you to work through the sessions of the book with your child using the Home Lesson Plans provided. Please keep to the following schedule when completing the sessions. (Additional ideas and information may be found on the Sadlier website: [www.webelieveandcelebrate.com](http://www.webelieveandcelebrate.com))

## Saint Maurice Home School Sacrament Schedule

### Orientation for Parents and Guardians

Sunday, October 16, 2016 9:15 a.m. in the Church or 1 p.m. in Doran Hall

The week of 10/23: Chapter 1 We are Followers of Jesus, pp 7-18

Submit for review on 11/20: Sharing Faith with My Family chapter 1, pp 81-82

The week of 11/6: Chapter 2 We Remember God's Love and Forgiveness, pp 19-30

Submit for review on 11/20: Sharing Faith with My Family chapter 2, pp 83-84

**On 11/20: Please hand in the review pages for chapters 1 and 2**

The week of 11/20: Chapter 3 We Prepare to Receive God's Forgiveness, pp 31-42

Submit for review on 12/18: Sharing Faith with My Family chapter 3, pp 85-86

The week of 12/4: Chapter 4 We Prepare to Celebrate Penance, pp 43-54

Submit for review on 12/18: Sharing Faith with My Family chapter 4, pp 87-88

**On 12/18 Please hand in the review pages for chapters 3 and 4**

The week of 12/18: Chapter 5 We Celebrate Penance with the Church, pp 55-66

Submit for review on 1/8: Sharing Faith with My Family chapter 5, pp 89-90

Sunday, 1/8/2017 First Penance Workshop (in-class) 9 - 10:15 a.m. in Doran Hall

The workshop will include chapter 6, a video, a possible visit to the day chapel, a mock practice of the Rite of Reconciliation, and a prayer activity.

**All review pages and the completed book must be submitted for review by 1/8/2017.**

### **Celebration of First Penance**

Saturday, January 21, 2017 in the Day Chapel at 10 a.m.

## Important Points

### "GUIDELINES FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION"

(Diocese of Bridgeport)

- Every baptized child is to be prepared for and encouraged to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Catechesis for children must always respect their natural disposition, ability, age and circumstances. Since the family is intimately involved with the formation of a child's moral conscience, parents or guardians should be involved so that they can affirm and reinforce frequent participation in the sacrament and orient the child toward God and encourage continual growth in understanding of God's mercy and love. (NDC, 135)
- Children must receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time before their first reception of the Eucharist. (NDC,135)
- Before entering into the immediate preparation for Reconciliation, a child is to have completed one full year in a catechetical program and be currently enrolled in the second year of the regular catechetical program.
- Since the celebration of Reconciliation precedes First Communion, catechesis for the sacrament must be kept distinct by a clear and unhurried separation so that the specific identity of each sacrament is apparent. (NDC, 135)
- The immediate preparation for First Reconciliation is to be a parish program of at least six hours apart from and in addition to the regular ongoing parish or school catechetical program.
- Curriculum for the reception of the sacrament must adhere to the curriculum guidelines of the NDC, 2005 and the Diocese of Bridgeport Curriculum Guidelines for Grade Level Competencies, 2004.
- Parents or guardian and the parish catechetical leader together with the pastor are responsible for determining when children are ready to receive First Reconciliation.
- The child's first experience of sacramental Reconciliation and its celebration should be as meaningful and positive as possible.
- Children have the right to celebrate Reconciliation face to face or anonymously and are free to choose their own confessor whenever this is possible.
- A child sufficiently prepared is to be invited, not coerced, to celebrate the sacrament.

SAINT MAURICE CHURCH – FIRST PENANCE/FIRST EUCHARIST  
358 GLENBROOK ROAD, STAMFORD, CT 06906

Please type or print clearly

Candidate Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(last) (first) (middle)

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City/Town) (State) (Zip)

Home Telephone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell # \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

[verified by St Maurice staff \_\_\_\_\_]

Father/Guardian Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City/Town) (State) (Zip)

Mother/Guardian Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (Maiden) (First)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City/Town) (State) (Zip)

Parish where is family is registered and regularly attending \_\_\_\_\_