

# First Reconciliation SSM Information Letter 2020-2021

Parents and families,

The Sacrament of Reconciliation “restores us to God’s grace and joins us with him in an intimate friendship” (CCC 1468) and you have a child preparing to receive this Sacrament of healing for the first time. That’s something to celebrate!

Please read carefully to learn important information about the preparation and celebration of this Sacrament at St. Stephen the Martyr.

## I. First Reconciliation Dates and Assignments

Monday, Jan. 11 <sup>th</sup>	7:00pm <i>Arrive between 6:45-6:55pm</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Day School Section A (Gill),</li><li>• RE Tuesdays at 4:15,</li><li>• RE Tuesdays at 5:30</li></ul>
Saturday, Jan. 16 <sup>th</sup>	10:00am <i>Arrive between 9:45-9:55am</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Day School Section B (VanGerpen),</li><li>• RE Wednesdays 4:00</li></ul>
Monday, Jan. 25 <sup>th</sup>	7:00pm <i>Arrive between 6:45-6:55pm</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Day School Section C (Schweers),</li><li>• RE Wednesdays 5:00</li></ul>
Saturday, Jan. 30 <sup>th</sup>	10:00am <i>Arrive between 9:45-9:55am</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• RE Homeschool,</li><li>• RE Wednesdays 7:00</li></ul>

We are planning for a penance service in the Worship Space with several priests available for individual confessions.

If you have a conflict, contact Ally ZimmerMas ([a.zimmermas@stephen.org](mailto:a.zimmermas@stephen.org)) to request a date change as soon as possible. We will do our best to accommodate based on date availability. Changes considered up to one week prior to assigned date.

## II. Expected Adaptations

Due to anticipated continued restrictions in January, we will be making many of the adaptations we adopted for first Communion over the summer. Instead of two services, we will have four. Attendance will be limited to the child receiving and parents. Seating will be assigned and social distanced and masks will be required. We will not hold a reception in the dining room following and the candle lighting portion of the evening may be altered. I know it is always difficult to make changes to such special events (especially if you have had a child receive first Reconciliation at St. Stephen before), but we had such positive feedback from first Communion that I am confident we will offer this Sacrament in a way that is just as sacred and memorable. Your child will receive the forgiveness of God and be reunited with Him and it will be beautiful!

Of course, it is impossible to predict what January 2021 might bring us, so our expected adaptations may change!

### III. Program Preparation

The National Directory for Catechesis states that readiness for the “reception of this sacrament includes knowledge of the person of Jesus and the Gospel message of forgiveness, knowledge of sin and its effect, and understanding and experience of sorrow, forgiveness, and conversion” (pg. 135). It is the shared duty of the parish, the pastor, and the parents to ensure children are ready! Here at St. Stephens, we offer several roads for preparation:

- Second grade students enrolled in the day school and in-person RE classes will work through the *Encounter with Christ: Reconciliation* booklet during class time.
- RE Homeschooling students will meet monthly on Zoom with the DRE for Reconciliation preparation. *Encounter with Christ: Reconciliation* booklets are available for home use.
- Students receiving Reconciliation on an adapted timeline will work individually with the DRE for Reconciliation preparation.

### IV. At Home Preparation

Parents, your example and time are most valuable in the preparation of your children. Here’s what you can be doing at home to ensure that your child is ready and excited to receive God’s love and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

- **My First Reconciliation Preparation Booklet:** this booklet contains Scripture, prayers, the steps for Reconciliation, etc. and was created especially for SSM students. Work through the pages as a family over the next three months.
- **Practice, practice, practice!** The more you practice the steps of Reconciliation with your child, the more comfortable they will feel at their first Reconciliation. Steps found in the preparation booklet.
- **Pray the Act of Contrition** together often. Help them become familiar with the words and explain what the prayer means. Words and meaning found in preparation booklet.
- **Practice Contrition and Forgiveness.** Show sorrow when you do something wrong. Freely offer forgiveness to your family members. Make God’s love come alive in your home.

This booklet will be sent home with the day school students and in-person RE students in the coming weeks. It will be emailed out to homeschooling students and we will also have printed copies available to pick up.

### V. Further Information

As the January dates approach, we will schedule a parent meeting or email out more information on the following:

- Dress code
- Logistics of arriving and other practical details
- Overview of liturgical service
- COVID adaptations
- Any other relevant information

In the meantime, thank you for your part in the preparation of your child. We are so looking forward to this Sacrament in January! Contact the RE office with any questions or concerns.

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