

# THE GIFT OF RECONCILIATION

---

For Parents of Children  
Celebrating First Penance

MARY KATHLEEN GLAVICH, SND

*acta*  
PUBLICATIONS

# CONTENTS

---

Making Things Right • 7
Our Need for Forgiveness • 9
Jesus Christ, the Reconciler • 13
History of the Sacrament • 17
The Healing Process • 21
What to Confess • 27
Examination of Conscience • 31
The Three Rites of Penance • 35
How Can I Prepare My Child? • 39
Questions and Answers • 43
How Can We Celebrate the Event? • 47
Scripture Readings for Reconciliation • 49
Prayers for Reconciliation • 55
Resolutions for Parents • 59

Let us set things right, says the LORD:  
Though your sins be like scarlet,  
they may become white as snow;  
Though they be crimson red,  
they may become white as wool.

Isaiah 1:18



# MAKING THINGS RIGHT

---

DEAR PARENTS,

Our world cries out for peace and reconciliation. The news is filled with stories of countries and peoples at war. Conflict also exists between races, neighbors, coworkers and relatives. If your family is normal, its members occasionally hurt one another and live in pain and tension for days, even years. As a result of sin, relationships are broken on all levels: relationships with God, with other people, and with self.

Your child will soon celebrate for the first time the gift God has given us to help bring about healing and peace: the sacrament of penance, or reconciliation.

In great love and mercy, God, through Jesus, has provided this way to ease the suffering that comes from sin and help prevent it in the future. God always enables us to make a fresh start. Because you have seen to it that your child was baptized, he or she can participate in this sacrament. Your child, for the rest of his or her life, can share in the gift through which God repairs relationships and brings peace to the heart.

It is your unique privilege and responsibility to prepare your child to encounter Jesus in the sacrament of penance. You have entrusted religion teachers to help you with this task. Your role, however, has a far more powerful impact than anyone else's. Your attitudes toward this sacrament and the way you model forgiveness and ask forgiveness from your child leave a lasting impression. Through your guidance your child can come to understand and appreciate the sacrament of reconciliation not as a burden but as a gift. He or she will approach the sacrament not in fear or solely out of obligation, but in joy and gratitude.

The explanations and activities in this book are intended to help

you lead your child to God, who is our compassionate Father. Jesus assures us that God welcomes sinners with open arms, pardons us, and rejoices over our return.

If you are not up-to-date on church teaching regarding the sacrament of reconciliation, or if you are not Catholic, this book will be a valuable source of information—and perhaps inspiration—for you.

May the Holy Spirit be with you as you walk with your child on this stage of life's journey. When your child makes wrong moral decisions, may he or she always receive the grace to turn to God with confidence and trust. That way your child will live in peace and joy as a holy child of God. Then he or she will contribute to the world's peace and justice—the hallmarks of God's kingdom.

# OUR NEED FOR FORGIVENESS

---

We live in an imperfect world with imperfect people. Why does the same world that has glorious sunsets also have earthquakes and tornadoes? Why are talented and creative people also marked by pride or greed? Why do marriages and friendships fall apart? Why can all of us say with Saint Paul, “I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want” (Romans 7:19)? Sin is a shared human experience. Some disaster at the beginning of time must have spoiled God’s good creation. The Bible presents this concept through the story of the fall of Adam and Eve.

Our first parents were intended to share life and love forever with God their creator. Unfortunately Adam and Eve opposed God and rejected God’s friendship and plan for them. This was the first sin. Because the original couple represented the human race, their sin shattered our relationship with our creator too.

The good God, however, offers us a second chance. As a loving Parent, God sent Jesus to repair the damage sin has done. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, all sin was atoned for and forgiven: the original sin of Adam and Eve, our collective sin, and our personal sin. Moreover, in his mission as a Jewish preacher Jesus taught us by his words and by his own actions how to live in right relationships.

Following Jesus is not easy because the scars of the original offense remain. We are weakened and do not always choose what is good. We are not always loving. In other words, we sin against God, others and ourselves. The Hebrew word for sin is literally translated as “missing the mark.” When we sin, our aim is off. We do not act as the reasonable, loving human beings we were meant to be. We sin in small ways

(venial sin) and in serious ways (mortal, or deadly, sin). By mortal sin we sever ourselves completely from God.

Every time we pray the Creed we declare that we believe in the forgiveness of sins. God always gives us the opportunity to start over with a clean slate. We can do this through the prayers and ministry of the church. Whether or not we do so is up to us.

### ILL EFFECTS OF SIN

Recall a time when you sinned. How did you feel afterwards? If you have a healthy, informed conscience, you probably felt guilt, remorse and shame—all uncomfortable feelings. These negative feelings can affect our mental and physical health. In addition, sin is divisive. It isolates us from God and other people.

By giving us the sacrament of penance Jesus offered us a way out of this painful situation, a way to live fully again. Russian Orthodox Christians refer to this sacrament as the “kiss of Christ.”

Your child knows when he or she has done wrong and experiences the effects as keenly as you. Celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation will bring relief and joy to his or her heart too. For good reason another name for this sacrament is the sacrament of peace.

### THE BALM OF FORGIVENESS

We have an innate desire to be forgiven, to be united with God and others again. Yet asking forgiveness is one of the most difficult tasks we must learn as human beings. Recently countries have been asking forgiveness for sins against groups of people. The church herself has felt the need to apologize for mistakes made in the past. Occasionally a great act of forgiveness catches the world’s attention: The pope forgives the man who tried to assassinate him, a cardinal forgives the man who falsely accused

him of sexual misdeeds, a spouse forgives a spouse for infidelity, a parent of a murdered child forgives the murderer. Reconciliation—forgiving and being forgiven—plays an important role in history and human life.