

Ways to Reconcile at Home

Establish Forgiveness

Establish a habit of forgiveness between parent and child.

Say the words "I'm sorry for . . ." and "I forgive you" as often as necessary.

Teach your child to say them by asking "Can you say . . . ?" or "Are you ready to say 'I'm sorry'?"

Never force or demand an apology.

See "Eye to Eye"

The word reconcile comes from the Latin, meaning "seeing eye to eye." Express forgiveness or sorrow by looking straight at the other person, touching their shoulder or hand, or hugging.

Body language speaks as loudly or louder than words.

Forgiveness Rituals

Establish family and individual rituals of forgiveness in the home. Choose a space at home where you can go to reconcile differences (staircase, bedroom, front porch, etc.). Also choose certain times for reconciliation (bedtime, a Saturday trip to church, Sunday morning in the car on the way to church, etc.).

Make forgiving one another a part of your family's everyday life.

Examination of Conscience

Help your child examine his/her conscience on a daily basis. There are numerous examples in children's prayer books or make up your own. Follow it by talking about ways to change bad habits. End with an act of contrition or informal prayer expressing sorrow and gratitude for forgiveness.

Eucharist

Remember that there is a special time at the celebration of the Eucharist for reconciliation. Remind children before Mass to mention the things they are sorry for at the appropriate time. Remind them about the meaning of the term "contrite heart" that the priest uses.

Celebrate Forgiveness

When a serious hurt has been forgiven between family members, find a way to celebrate together: go out for a treat, do a puzzle together, or read a special story. Time together heals hearts when words aren't enough.

Model Forgiveness

Children need to watch adults forgiving each other and resolving conflicts. It helps if parents can share examples of forgiveness such as: "I was very angry with Mrs. _____ for what she said, but I have forgiven her."

Don't Fake Forgiveness

If you are genuinely hurt by someone over a long period of time and cannot forgive him/her, explain to your child that you understand the necessity and value of forgiving the person. Let your child know that you are trying to forgive and are praying for the grace of forgiveness. Never give children the impression of forgiveness and then turn around and show unforgiving behavior toward the person who has hurt you.

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