



St. James Parish

Religious Education Program

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Suggestions for Families

It is in the home that children learn by their experiences of forgiving and being forgiven. When does reconciliation take place in the home? How does the family celebrate reconciliation?

- Take time to review the lessons your child has finished. Your enthusiasm will enhance your child's interest in learning about the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Ask your child why he or she does certain actions. Ask about the good as well as the bad actions. Celebrating the "good" helps a child discover how pleasing it is to be good.
- Encourage your child, in storytelling form, to talk about the day at school or at home, mentioning the good and the bad things that happened. Finding the "why" in these things helps the child form his or her conscience. Then guide the child about ways to change actions and behaviors.
- Take advantage of opportunities to discuss with your child how to reconcile when reconciliation is needed. Find ways to celebrate that reconciliation—for example, a special cake, playing a favorite game together.
- Give your child a respect for rules. When you set rules for your family, be consistent in their applications. Children become confused when rules are sometimes enforced and sometimes overlooked. If an exception is made to the rule, be sure to explain why.
- Offer your child choices whenever you can. Let him or her discover the consequence of the choice—then talk about it.
- Imitate Jesus: make sure your child knows he or she is loved even when something wrong has been done. For example: "I love you, but I don't like the way you treated your sister."
- Remember, God's mercy and love shines through you.

The Wolf Within

(a Cherokee story)

An old grandfather said to his grandson, who came to him with anger at a friend who had done him an injustice, "Let me tell you a story." I too, at times have felt a great hate for those that have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times." He continued, "It is as if there are two wolves inside me. One is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him, and does not take offense when no offense was intended. He will fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way. But the other wolf, ah! He is full of anger. The slightest thing will send him into a fit of temper. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing. Sometimes, it is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit." The boy looked intently into his grandfather's eyes and asked "Which one wins, Grandfather?" The grandfather smiled and quietly said, "The one I



feed.”

Reflection:

Children will learn to feed their better nature (the good wolf) only if they see you set the example. Family life is the sacred ground where you teach your children sincere and true forgiveness (tell your own personal stories). You help them grow in awareness in the damage that we do to others and ourselves through anger and hurt. Your child’s capacity to ask for forgiveness and trust in God’s forgiveness is learned from how you model God’s love. If your child never hears or sees you offer or ask for forgiveness, it will be very difficult for him to imagine the unending mercy of God.

Prayer

Help, us Lord to form our children’s conscience so that they may learn to follow your will and truly come to know your “peace that surpasses all understanding,”