

Suggestions for Helping Your Child Understand Reconciliation

- Remember that children must learn to develop a **sense of life** before they can develop a sense of sin. In other words, show them, by word and example, the way to live – in love and concern for others. This is what Jesus did – he showed us how to love, and didn't dictate rules. Concentrate more on the do's than on the don'ts!

- Emphasize that God is loving. God's love and forgiveness is available to all who ask. God is like the Good Shepherd. God is NOT an avenger or punisher. Never use the phrase, "God will punish you for that!"



- Children will come to understand the importance of expressing "I'm sorry", when it has also been expressed to them. Let them see you express sorrow for your own hurtful actions toward them or toward others.

- Lend a listening ear to your child's concerns, no matter how trivial they may seem to you. Discipline with love and teach your child to be responsible and accountable for his/her actions. Call out the wrong-doing, not the child – for example, "Calling your sister that name was a very mean thing", not "You are such a mean child".



- Give your child the opportunity to heal situations and relationships, so they learn how to do this themselves and own their actions. Prompt him/her by saying, "You hurt your sister by calling her that name, what

do you think you can do to make things right?" Let the child come up with solutions. Avoid telling child what to do – for example, "Go tell your sister you are sorry right now and tell her you will never do it again".

- TV can be a useful tool if used correctly. As you watch a show together, point out hurtful actions or attitudes. Examine the consequences of those acts/attitudes. Explore how things might be different if the characters made more loving choices.

- With young children (4-6 years of age), encourage them to identify actions they see as “kind”/ “unkind”, or “loving”/”unloving”, “accidental/”on purpose”. When a child knows that a sin is something unloving that they do on purpose, then s/he is ready to prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



- Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation from time to time to model the necessity to experience Jesus’ peace and forgiveness as we grow in faith.