

Chapter 1 Jesus Is Always with Us

Background Focus

Every sacrament is a treasure because every sacrament is a gift of the presence of God. Given to the Church by Jesus Christ, the sacraments bring his presence to us through human words and actions and through material elements like water, bread, wine, and oil.

The sacraments use the gifts of the material world to bring us into the realm of the spiritual. The sacraments are “doorways to the sacred.” There is a particular place in the Mass in which the water and wine are mingled in the chalice, and the priest prays, “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity” (*The Roman Missal*). Our humanity is the water. The divinity of Christ is the wine.

In every sacrament, our lives are mingled with Christ’s living and risen presence. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the sacraments that does not have an external material or earthly element (like water, bread, or oil) as part of its celebration. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the earthly element is the confession of sins. The presence of Christ, in his love and forgiveness, is mediated by the priest’s hand extended in blessing and the comforting sound of his human voice offering absolution and forgiveness of sins, in God’s name.

(The quotation is from the English translation of *The Roman Missal* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation [ICEL] [Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011]. Copyright © 2011, USCCB, Washington, D.C.)

Family Strategies

Our first community is the family, and learning to live in harmony at home is a first lesson in living in harmony with others. Harmony often involves following rules and procedures for the good of all. Present and enforce these rules and procedures as a source of family pride and identity. For example: In our family, we do not use electronics during meals; in our family, we do not call names; in our family, we serve guests first. You may soon hear your child explaining proudly to friends, “In our family . . .”

Family Activities

- Congratulate your child on beginning to prepare for Reconciliation. Talk about the sacrament together, and present the sacrament as an opportunity to experience God’s love and forgiveness and a chance to start over.
- Read together the Featured story on page 1702 of *The Catholic Children’s Bible* (John 20:11–14, 16), or the longer version, (John 20:11–29). Remind your child that the Risen Jesus will be present at the Sacrament of Reconciliation but will not be seen.
- Watch the YouTube video “In Good Hands (Baby Dedication Song) Studio Version with Lyrics,” by Ben Chilcote (5:04), which expresses a parental perspective on caring for “God’s child.” Emphasize to your child that we are precious to God and are in God’s good hands our entire lives.

Pray It!



Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

Risen Jesus, be with us each moment, especially as [name of child] prepares to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Help us all to become good followers of Jesus. Amen.