

Let the Children Come: The Sacrament of Reconciliation and Children

To Such Belongs the Kingdom

Jesus loved children. As a child himself, he was raised by Joseph and Mary in their home at Nazareth (cf. Mt 2:23). Growing up among relative and townspeople, Jesus experienced the concerns and problems common to all children, such as sickness and death among family members. Within this setting, Jesus “grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him” (Lk 2:40).

Jesus’ affection for children is clearly affirmed in the Gospels. When his disciples attempted to halt people from bringing children to Jesus for his blessing, he insisted: “let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs” (Mt 19:14).

Jesus also demonstrated his solicitude for children by healing them and raising them from death. He restored life to Jairus’ daughter (cf. Mk 5:21-43; Mt 9:18-25; Lk 8:41-56) and the son of the widow of Nain (cf. Lk 7:11-17). He healed an epileptic boy and the demon-possessed daughter of a Greek woman (cf. Mt 15:21-28, 17:14-18; Mk 7:24-30; Lk 9:37-43).

His fundamental concern was always for the spiritual development of children. The greatest gift which God the Father can give to anyone, including children, is faith in his only begotten Son. Jesus declared that the Father reveals his Son to children more readily than to the learned and clever (cf. Lk 10:21; Mt 11:25).

Recalling these examples of Jesus’ attention to children sets the proper context for helping children examine the conscience and preparing them for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament allows Jesus to express his love for children today. Through it, he continues to influence their lives; he demonstrates his power to heal them, to free them from the bondage of sin, and raise them to new life. In turn, this sacrament allows children to come to know and love Jesus. For these reasons, Jesus still exhorts us: “Let the children come!”

An Examination of Conscience for Children

Responsibilities to God:

Have I prayed every day?
Have I prayed my morning prayers and night prayers?
Have I prayed with my parents and family?
Have I been moody and rebellious about praying and going to church on Sunday?
Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me whenever I have been tempted to sin?
Have I asked the Holy Spirit to help me do what is right?

Responsibilities to others:

Have I been obedient and respectful to my parents?
Have I lied or been deceitful to them or to others?
Have I been arrogant, stubborn or rebellious?
Have I talked back to parents, teachers or other adults?
Have I pouted and been moody?
Have I been selfish toward my parents, brothers, and sisters, teachers, or my friends and schoolmates?
Have I gotten angry at them? Have I hit anyone?
Have I held grudges or not forgiven others?
Have I treated other children with respect or have I made fun of them and called them names?
Have I used bad language?
Have I stolen anything? Have I returned it?
Have I performed my responsibilities, such as homework and household chores?
Have I been helpful and affectionate toward my family?
Have I been kind and generous with my friends?

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