

Forgiveness Stones*

* This family reconciliation ritual is not appropriate for children younger than about eight years old.

You will need:

Twenty minutes or longer

Bible

Some reminder of Jesus such as a small crucifix,
statue or picture

Candle and matches

Stones

1. Place your crucifix, statue or picture of Jesus on a table next to the unlit candle.
2. Gather the family and begin with prayer such as:

God, you sent your only Son, Jesus, to live a human life like us, to live on earth and show us how to love and forgive. Through his death and Resurrection we are saved from our sins. We try to follow his example of love and forgiveness, but we sometimes fail. We are here together as a family to admit our mistakes, to ask forgiveness and to become more united in love. We ask your blessing. Amen.

3. Read John 8:3-11

4. Talk briefly about this Gospel reading. Though children will not understand the sin of adultery in this story, make sure they take in the point that no one is perfect. All of us fail from time to time. Explain that now you will go for a short walk outside so each person can find a small stone which will be his or her "forgiveness stone," a symbol of our need for forgiveness.
5. When you come back, explain that like the characters in the Gospel stories, you will each think about the fact that you are not without sin and in turn drop your stone at the feet of Jesus.
6. Parents, let's take a moment to remember the times we have failed. Maybe we have hurt one another, been impatient, unkind, unwilling to share or have let our anger take hold.

7. A parent might now take the lead in voicing acknowledgment of failure, apologizing and asking forgiveness. While speaking, the parent drops a forgiveness stone at the foot of the cross or other symbol of Jesus.
 8. When all family members have placed their stones and voiced their need for forgiveness, light the candle as a sign of God's forgiveness and healing shining on the family. Join hands and pray the Our Father together.
- ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE ON FORGIVENESS: Psalm 51:1-2; 103:8-10; 145:8; Isaiah 49:15-16; Luke 11:4; Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 4:32

JUGGLING HOLY WEEK AND HOMEWORK

- SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE: Exodus 12:21-30

Holy Week is the most sacred time of year for Christians, but it is sometimes challenging for families to focus on the meaning of these important days. The prevailing culture does not pause to mark Jesus' last days on earth. Unlike Christmas, there's no school vacation. If you are juggling the kids' homework, piano lessons, sports and church services, it helps to look ahead at the calendar and make plans in advance.

The church offers a powerful way of moving through this climax of the liturgical year in the Easter Triduum. It begins with Holy Thursday Mass and continues through Good Friday service and Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday Eve. Experiencing these celebrations with your family and parish community can be the height of the liturgical year.

For single-parent families, those with several young children or others with busy teenagers it can difficult, even impossible, to get the family together for Holy Week services. If your family cannot attend the Triduum, you may want to consider a simple celebration at home. The examples on the following page, one for each of the three holy days, can serve as starting points. Adapt them to fit the needs of your family.