

**A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat:
Read-Aloud Lessons, Stories,
and Poems for Young Catholics
Preparing for Confession**

**Compiled and Edited by
Janet P. McKenzie**

A RACE for Heaven Product

**Biblio Resource Publications
108½ South Moore Street
Bessemer, MI 49911
2011**

©2011 by Janet P. McKenzie

All right reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the author.

ISBN 978-1-934185-38-4

Published by Biblio Resource Publications, Inc.
108½ South Moore Street, Bessemer, MI 49911
info@biblioresource.com

A Read Aloud Curriculum Enrichment Product
www.RACEforHeaven.com

Cover art: Windows in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, CA; originally created for St. Vibiana Cathedral, Los Angeles, by Franz Borgias Mayer

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible with Revised New Testament* © 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Excerpts from the English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America Copyright 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc.—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with Permission.

Excerpts from the English translation of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* Copyright © 2005, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. All rights reserved. The exclusive licensee in the United States is the United States Catholic Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington D.C., and all requests for United States uses of the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* should be directed to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Printed in the United States of America

Table of Contents

Introduction	i
Making a Retreat	iii
Preparation Prayer	iv
Lesson One	
The Sacrament of Confession.....	1
Read-Aloud Story and Poem	9
Lesson Two	
The Sacrament	17
Read-aloud Stories and Poem	27
Lesson Three	
Sin	41
Read-aloud Story and Poem.....	49
Lesson Four	
Resolution	59
Read-aloud Stories and Poem	67
Lesson Five	
Preparing for Confession.....	79
Read-aloud Stories and Poems	89
Lesson Six	
On Bad Confession	103
Read-aloud Stories and Poem	113
Lesson Seven	
Satisfaction	125
Read-aloud Stories and Poem	135
Appendix	145
More RACE for Heaven Products	155

Introduction

THIS BOOK is intended to supplement a young Catholic's preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation by providing a basic doctrinal review of the sacrament as well as resources to assist in a thorough examination of conscience—a seven-day read-aloud formation retreat. Begin one week before the day of First Reconciliation, i.e., if Reconciliation day is a Saturday, begin the Saturday before. One possible format would be to read and discuss the lesson in the morning, the read-aloud stories in the afternoon, and work through the day's section of the examination of conscience in the evening. Continue this pattern each day, concluding the day before the sacrament is received.

Contained within this book are chapters pertinent to the Sacrament of Reconciliation from two Catholic books for children from the 1920's: *I Belong to God, Great Truths in Simple Stories for Children and Lovers of Children* by Lillian Clark; and *Children's Retreats in Preparation for First Confession, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation* by Rev. P.A. Halpin—the latter of which have provided the primary lessons for this book with Lillian Clark's material interspersed with other appropriate out-of-print Catholic material for children. Both of these primary sources carry the imprimatur of Patrick Cardinal Hayes of New York.

As with all RACE for Heaven products, the aim is to teach the tenets of the Roman Catholic Church in a read-aloud format that encourages families to *live* our Faith on a practical level. Therefore, the lessons have been supplemented with short stories and poems that provide insights in applying the doctrines of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to daily life. Several discussion points have been provided to promote the holy habit of

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

spiritual conversation within your family—to encourage family members to speak holy thoughts—and to help you grow together in holiness. In addition, each lesson ends with an opportunity to pray about important aspects of the lesson and to learn new prayers.

The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses (nos. 303 and 304) a careful examination of conscience as an essential element of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Towards this end, an examination of conscience has been formulated according to the dictates of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 1454). Each day of this retreat you are encouraged *as a family* to prayerfully read-aloud and consider each point of this examination as provided in the Appendix. As the retreat should, ideally, conclude with all members of the family participating in the Sacrament of Penance, please spend adequate time on this important section.

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat is designed to not only prepare those making their first confession but also to enhance the experience of this sacrament for the entire family. Please attempt, as best as possible, to make these seven days truly a time of retreat. Allow time for recollection, quiet meditation, and Eucharistic adoration. Families may wish to read books or view movies on saints of interest. Cease as much as possible the frenzied activities of busy family life. Ask the Holy Spirit and your guardians angels for their intercession.

May our Risen Lord, who is present through His holy priests in the Sacrament of Penance, bless your family as you prepare to obtain His mercy and forgiveness in this sacrament.

Janet P. McKenzie
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord
February 2, 2011

Making a Retreat*

WHY AM I MAKING this little retreat?—to learn to know God and myself better.

Of course, every day I must try to know and serve and love God; that is really why I am in this world, but while I am making my retreat I am at the school of God—studying Him and studying myself very earnestly.

Often in my life I will be left alone with God, and so I should know Him very, very well and should like to be with Him—then we will be like two loving friends when we are left alone together. . . . When I was born, it was just God and me; in my prayers it is just God and I—in my confession, with my eyes closed, no one but God and I—in Holy Communion, with my head bowed low, I am alone with God—when life is ending and I am dying, all will be left behind, and then, too, it will be just God and I—and again after death, when I am standing before the great white throne, waiting to be sent to heaven or to hell, most surely, I will be alone with God my Creator, and my Father, and the great Lover of my soul.

So I really want to know Him very well. During these days I must try to think as little as I can about everybody and everything else and as much as I can of Him.

Making my meditation means kneeling at His knee, with play and people put out of my mind, reading quietly and very slowly, word by word, what is written here and thinking and praying quietly about it and about what it means.

May God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit help me prepare to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation worthily.

*From *I Belong to God, Great Truths in Simple Stories for Children and Lovers of Children* by Lillian Clark, Longmans, Green and Company, 1936.

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

Preparation Prayer*

Loving Father, through the intercession of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, please grant us the grace of listening attentively and understanding deeply the lessons of this retreat. We ask that you send the Holy Spirit down upon us so that we may be prepared, to the best of our abilities, to receive the mercy and forgiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Through the intercession of our guardian angels, give us the grace to honestly examine our sins and failings in order to make a good confession. Strengthen us, Lord, and inspire us to work diligently so that our first [next] sacramental experience of Your mercy and forgiveness may be the perfect model for all future receptions of this sacrament. Please bless us with your abundant grace and help our family to grow in love for You and for each other as we participate together in this retreat. We ask this in the most precious name of our Friend and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

*Please pray this prayer together prior to each lesson of this retreat.

Lesson One

Introduction to the Sacrament of Confession

MY DEAR CHILDREN, in a few days you will go to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation¹ for the first time. This sacrament must always be made well. So, in order that every time you confess your sins you may be sure that you have neglected nothing, and have told every one of your faults and have been sorry for them in the right way, the greatest care must be taken that the very first confession you make be so good that it will be the beginning of many, many confessions, all ending with the last, which will be at the hour of death, and will be so well done that you will not be afraid to die, but rather be glad. If this was not the case, we would not go to all the trouble to which you see we have gone to teach you how to perform this act as you should and as you must. You have been coming to catechism classes for several years. You may have had catechism lessons to learn by heart, and to learn in such a way that you will never forget them. You have probably been examined by your teachers and by your priest. Other children may have begun with you, but they are not receiving this sacrament with you, because either they did not learn their catechism well enough or they did not come regularly to their class.

¹ Although known formally as the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, this sacrament is also (according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1423-1424) called the Sacrament of Confession, the Sacrament of Conversion, the Sacrament of Penance, the Sacrament of Forgiveness, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These terms are used interchangeably in this book.

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

You know well the part of your little book that must be learned before one can be allowed to approach the Sacrament of Penance. You have won a very great prize—the prize of being permitted to go to confession. It is a reward so great that it is only when you have entered heaven that you will know how great it is. You have not yet done all that is necessary; that is, you have not done enough to make yourselves ready for this wonderful sacrament. For the next seven days, we will meet and discuss the elements of this sacrament and you will work to examine your conscience quite thoroughly so that there will be nothing to prevent you from receiving this sacrament with sincere devotion and complete honesty with your sins and failings.

In the prayer we say at the beginning of each instruction², you will ask God, through the most Sacred Heart of Jesus and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to give you the grace of being attentive, of understanding, and of being made every minute more ready for the great day of your first confession. In this way I feel that, with God's help, you will be so happy after your first confession that you will always remember the day on which you made it, and will always be glad whenever the time comes for you to make other confessions. Pope Pius X, the great apostle of the early reception of the sacraments, wrote to all the bishops of the world begging of them to take care of all his little children, and to see that they were well prepared for

... we want the
world to be good.

all the sacraments, especially for those of Penance and Communion. Now, I ask you—since all that I say is true—I ask you, do you not think you should do your best to fit yourselves for the great sacrament? I hear every boy and every girl here

² See page iv of this book.

Lesson One

say “Yes “to my question. You know we want our children to be very good in every way. I think that you all want to be good, too. I am sure there is no one here that intends to be a bad girl or a bad boy, a bad man or a bad woman, is there? Why do we want you all to be good? Because we want the world to be good.

If everybody in the world was good, what a different world it would be! There would be no more cursing, nor swearing, nor stealing, nor becoming angry or jealous. Nobody would hurt another. There would be no more murder, and, perhaps, or rather certainly, no more wars. What a beautiful place this would be to live in then! Besides, then everybody would be saved, that is, everybody would go to heaven and be with God forever.

Now you see why we want all our children to be good, because then there is a chance that they will keep on growing good until they are men and women, and thus the world will be better for all that. Nothing helps more to make and keep children as they should be than going to confession. But if your confession is not made well, it will not help at all. It is pretty true that if your first confession is made properly, all your following confessions will be made properly, too. Now I have given you some reasons why you should do all you can to so prepare yourselves for this first confession that when it is over it will be something you will never forget and will always be glad to remember.

I am going to tell you about a remarkable CCD teacher. He is on the list of the holy ones of our Church; he is a saint. He is now in heaven. He has been there with God and Christ and the Blessed Virgin and the angels and the saints ever since he died, and that was over three hundred sixty years ago. That is a long while to be in heaven. So it may seem to you and me, but to him it has all passed like a flash. This saint’s name is Joseph Calasanctius. He founded a society of priests. They were

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

called “The Poor Regular Clergy of the Pious Schools of the Mother of God.” When he was a child and during his boyhood, he practiced all the virtues. At school he spoke very often of the wonderful things in the catechism, and especially about the best way of praying. He became a very learned man. He made a vow. Do you know what that means? It means a most solemn promise. He made a vow that he would be as good in thought, word and deed as it was possible for him to be. He was very fond of children, and they were very fond of him and liked to listen to him talking about confession and Communion and the other things of God. When he was but a child himself, he used to call them around him. He became a priest. He was a Spaniard, but went to Rome, and there did very many striking things for God and the Church. He was a lover of the poor, and during a plague he carried the bodies of the dead on his shoulders and buried them.

Finally, when the Holy Spirit spoke to him, he started a society of poor priests, and the duty of that society was to teach children. The poor children of that day did not have so many to teach them as you have now. That society went all over Europe gathering children together, teaching them the catechism and preparing them to receive the great sacraments of Penance and Communion.

This St. Joseph lived until he was ninety-one years old. The blessed Mother of God, to whom he was very dear—first, on account of his pure life, and, secondly, on account of the care he took of children—told him the day on which he was going to die, and on that day his sinless soul was received by her into heaven. This happened in the year sixteen hundred forty-eight. One hundred years after he left this world, his heart and tongue were found just as they had been in life.

Now I am sure you are asking me why I talk of this holy man. I know you are all asking what has this St.

Lesson One

Joseph to do with our catechism. The reason I spoke of him is this: If God loved him so much because he made teaching catechism the work of his life, I ask you, does that not show what God thinks of the need of children to know their catechism? Now what God thinks, my dear children, you must try and think, just as what God hates you must hate, and what God loves you must love.

You understand now that you should know your catechism better than anything else you know. In fact, you might know everything else—you might become very learned in all other things—but if you do not hold your catechism firmly in your memory, everything else will be worth nothing at all. You wonder why the priest speaks so very often about religion classes and the catechism. You see why now. You have learned in your religion classes and you have read in your catechism that God made you. Why did He make you? I

God must have made you for some reason.

I see the answer on your lips. God made you. God was not obliged to make you—nobody could force Him to make you; He made you of His own free will. He must have made you for some reason. God never acts without a reason. You and I do sometimes, but the Lord—never.

Your catechism tells you that He created you to know Him and to love Him and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next. If you do not know Him, or if you know Him and do not serve Him, you cannot be happy in the next world. If you are not happy in the other world, you are certainly going to be unhappy and miserable. And as the other world has no death in it—as in the next world everybody is going to live forever—it is as certain as certain can be, if one is unhappy there and wretched, one is unhappy and wretched forever and ever.

Not one of us wishes to be unhappy, even for a second, and surely not one of us could bear the thought of

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

being unhappy forever. Children meet with all sorts of accidents about which we hear and read every day. They meet with terrible accidents; they lose their legs and their arms. They are crippled for life. Not only that, but they are killed. We cannot bear even to think of these things. Can you tell me which is worse: to be lame or blind, or deaf and dumb, or even to die, or, to go on living forever—forever, mind you, in the other world, without being cared for or loved by anybody, to be in darkness and in suffering more cruel than anything anybody has known in this life, and that always and without end? I know what your answer is. You will tell me at once that it is better—oh, better than anyone can think—to be in all kinds of pain here for years and years than to be in torture forever in the life after the grave.

It is your catechism which teaches you all this, and remember that in many parts of the world there are boys and girls who know nothing at all about these things. You would know nothing yourselves if there had not been your parents to tell you about it or to send you where you would hear about it. Suppose I ask you what you ought to do now that I have been telling you how necessary the catechism is; what will you answer? I think I hear you all say that, no matter how well you studied your religion lessons before, you are going to study harder now and until you make your first Communion and until you are confirmed, that is, until you receive the sacrament which gives you the Holy Spirit. I think I hear you all say that, no matter how careful you have been up to now in being present at every religion class, you will let nothing in the future keep you away.

Those are two good resolutions. “Resolution” is a big word, but I have an idea that you know what it means. When you make a resolution, you make a strong promise to God and to yourself that you will do something that pleases Him and is useful to you. Your catechism

Lesson One

has taught you that it is more worth your while to be happy in the next world than to be happy here, that you must take more care of your soul than of your body, for the simple reason that the body will die one day and the soul will never die.

There is only one thing that can hurt the soul. What is that one thing? Sin. If, when you leave this world, there is a mortal sin on your soul, your soul will not die—because it cannot—but your soul will be in punishment always. You see at once that there is really only one thing to be afraid of, and that one thing is sin. There are very few who do not commit sin. Thank God there are a great many who never become guilty of mortal sin. But in case somebody does something that is so bad that we have to call it mortal sin, must that person keep that sin with him forever? Is there no way of getting rid of it? You will at once tell me that there is one sure way, and that one sure way is the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. This sacrament, if it can take away sin from a man's soul, must be a wonderful thing, a most wonderful thing. Yet the Sacrament of Confession can do all that.

You are getting ready for that wonderful sacrament. Is it not clear to you that you cannot prepare yourselves too well? In these instructions, I am going to help you to be so ready the day you go to confession so that you will make no mistake, and do everything so well that when the priest tells you to leave the confessional, there will not be a single sin on your souls.

We are going to talk about confession and about confession only, and about everything that is a part of confession and about everything that has anything to do with confession—therefore about sacraments, examination of conscience, and above all about sin, so that you may learn to hate it more than anything in this life, so that you may learn to love with all your heart

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

that great sacrament which has the power not only to wash away sin, but to make you so strong that you will be better able to resist sin.



Discussion Questions

1. How can one person, striving to be good—to become more like Jesus—make the world a better place? How does confession help us toward this goal?
2. Why is it important to prepare well for your first confession?
3. How can you imitate and honor St. Joseph Calasancius?
4. What is your resolution as you begin this retreat?



I Talk with God

Kneel down and pray before a crucifix or an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, asking God to help you make a good confession, how to be heartily sorry for your sins, and how to keep your promise never again to sin. Then pray the “Miracle Prayer” of Fr. Peter Mary Rooker of the Servite Fathers:

Lord Jesus, I come before you just as I am. I am sorry for my sins. I repent of my sins, please forgive me. In your name I forgive all others for what they have done against me. I renounce Satan, the evil spirits and all their works. I give you my entire self, Lord Jesus, now and forever. I invite you into my life, Jesus. I accept you as my Lord, God and Savior. Heal me, change me, and strengthen me in body, soul and spirit.

Come, Lord Jesus, cover me with your Precious Blood, and fill me with your Holy Spirit. I Love You, Lord Jesus. I Thank You, Jesus. I shall follow you every day of my life. Amen.

Lesson One Read-aloud Story and Poem

This story, "God Creating, God Redeeming," is from *I Belong to God, Great Truths in Simple Stories for Children and Lovers of Children* by Lillian Clark, Longmans, Green and Company, 1936, pages 3-14.

TODAY YOU ARE GOING to ask yourself a new question. Say once, twice, three times: "Do I belong to myself?" Ask it once more with your eyes closed: "Do I belong to myself?"

My! But that is strange! . . . "Do I belong to myself?" Yes, it is strange. It makes you feel like rubbing your eyes a bit; you want to look around cautiously, and you hope someone is near . . . and sure enough here am I—but let us see about it together.

Let us imagine that—

All night long the snow has been steadily falling and covering everything with "a silence deep and white," and today is a holiday—how glorious! You dress in a flash; your breakfast is hardly more than a pause on your way to the door—and out you go into the yard. "I say, this is great," you cry, "packs fine." Then an idea comes into your mind.

You work away quickly and noiselessly. Balls are rolled, balls are shaped, and at the end of a happy morning you are not alone in the yard. I see standing beside you a portly figure in white—a motionless, silent man is reflecting your pleasure in a broad, merry, and unchanging smile. Snowbirds stop their rapid flights, and resting on a branch of a nearby tree, admire your work. You do look pleased, and you have certainly made a splendid snowman. Presently, you are joined by your friends and I hear you say, "Isn't he great!" And then—

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

“Say, look out, he’s mine. . . . Look what you’re doing; he belongs to me. I made him.”

You have grown fond of him as you worked over him, and you are quite right—yes—quite, quite right in saying, “He is mine,” because the work of your hands is your own and you can honestly say, “I made him; he belongs to me.”

[Keep “I made him—he belongs to me—he is mine” in the back of your mind for a time, and we shall consider another picture.]

This morning—

On your way to school, you bought a new ball. It is springtime, and the air is thrilling with the twittering of the birds, and the lightness of your heart is in accord with the gladness of the morning. Of course, the ball is to remain out of sight until after school. You work earnestly, trying not to hear the distracting chirpings coming in through the open windows—trying hard, too, to stay put at your books for the year-end exams are coming. You keep at it even though you get the scent of apple and peach blossoms, and can almost hear the new grass growing and the gentle swaying of the ripening grains.

At last the day is finished, and the lines are forming for dismissal. Blessed three o’clock! “Is there any hour quite like three o’clock?” you are thinking when you are roused by the teacher’s voice. “Who owns this ball? It was found in the aisle.”

“Oh,” you say, darting forward, “that is mine. I bought it this morning.” Of course, it is given back to you at once for it is quite true that what you buy belongs to you.

[Keep also in your mind—“What I buy belongs to me. It is mine.”]

Lesson One Read-aloud Story and Poem

And now again—

It is a balmy autumn day, and the dog your father gave you for your birthday is romping on the lawn in the long shadows of the late afternoon sun. A friend comes to visit you, and you say, “Oh, come along, you must see my new dog.”

“Rex, Rex,” you call. “Is he not a beauty?” He comes to you with a bound and as you stroke his tan coat you say, “He’s mine, all mine. Is he not a great birthday gift?”

[Keep this too: “What is given to me belongs to me. It is mine.”]

Now let us get back to our question. Can you say really and honestly, “I belong to myself”? Be fair.

“W-e-l-l, I belong to myself if I can say I made myself, I bought myself, I gave me myself.”

Yes, can you say it? Can a person make himself? Men can make wonderful things—pictures that move and rockets that fly to the moon, but can a man make himself? . . . No, no man can make anything that has life in it, not even a blade of grass.

Can a person buy himself, or can a person be the gift of anyone on this earth? . . . No, these things are impossible. Then you did not make yourself, nor buy yourself nor were you your own gift. So you do not belong to yourself, nor do you belong to anyone in this world.

“Who then owns me, do I belong to no one, am I a lost child?” No, there is Someone to whom you belong and not only in one of these ways but in all three, and that Someone is the great GOD. Yes, this is so, and it is very, very wonderful. . . . The work of His Hands is surely His. . . . You had snow to start with, but He has made everything and everybody in the wide, wide world out of nothing—even you and me.

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

Have you never seen men in large cities flying along high above your head on a cloudless day writing signs across the blue sky in fluffy, white rope-letters that you easily read from the ground? How fitting if they should write in the heavens: I BELONG TO GOD . . . and not only there but swing these popcorn rope-letters over trees and lands and seas and fields—across everything in this marvelous world—having everything proudly repeating these blessed words—“I belong to God.”

“Did God make Himself, too?” Ah no, He was never made. Do you not remember the catechism says, “God had no beginning—He always was and always will be”?

Jane will help us here—

She had come to the church with her brothers, Jack and Jesse, to stay for a three-day retreat for First Communion. They were earnestly trying to prepare themselves for the great day when our Lord would come into their hearts for the first time, and they had had many periods of silence in the chapel to think over what they would say to the dear God when He was really the Guest of their hearts.

Finally, the evening before the eventful day had arrived, and all was ready. Quite angel-like—snow-white souls and yearning hearts—they were seated quietly on the lawn for a last talk before bedtime when Sister asked, “Jane, what are you going to say to our Lord when He comes tomorrow?”

Jane moved out to the edge of the garden seat, as she always did when she had something important to say, and sitting up straight and tall, she began: “I am going to ask Him”—her clear voice quivered slightly with emotion, but she did not hesitate a second—“I’m going to

Lesson One Read-aloud Story and Poem

ask Him where He was when He had that first beginning. . . .”

Sister, as well as the boys, felt it was an awe-inspiring moment. Jane was just six, and the child’s soul was in her eyes, where a little mist of pain had gathered, her earnestness was so intense.

Sister was the first to speak. “Do you remember what the catechism says about that, Jane?” (That lesson had been studied six months ago but Jane had a splendid memory.)

“Yes,” quickly, “but He must have had a beginning—everything has.”

“In His human nature, yes,” Sister softly replied. “He had His beginning in His human nature on that blessed day when the angel Gabriel announced to the little Virgin Mary that she could be the dear Mother of God, and then came the wonderful moment at last, when, as every other little one, the Infant-God was lying in the arms of His blessed Mother—you have seen Him, dear, in the stable of Bethlehem—the lovely, wee, Babe—our precious, tiny Baby-Brother.

“But Jane,” Sister continued, “In His divine nature, he never had a beginning—never, no—never. It is one of God’s privileges, and we do believe it. We cannot easily understand it—but it is true—God had no beginning.”

“Then . . . then,” said Jane, “I shall ask Him to tell me, please, how it could be”—this with a weary little sigh . . . a sigh in which the awful torment of days, perhaps months, seemed to escape. Jane is a philosopher.

But we have wandered—

Besides making you, God bought you from the dreadful slavery of Satan by paying for you with the Precious Blood of His own beloved Son. And still more, on the

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat

day when you were baptized, you were given to Him by the words spoken by your godfather and godmother . . . you are His Gift. . . . That day He reached out eagerly and lovingly to receive you, and He folded you closely to His Heart as soon as the cleansing waters of Baptism made your soul beautiful, and pure, and radiant with grace. Right then, God became your very own Father and you His little child. How very, very wonderful!

Do I belong to myself? . . . Goodness, no. I should say not.

I belong to God. He made me. He bought me. I am His gift—His little child.

Oh, my God, I believe I came from You and I am going back to You fast. . . . While I was a baby, I could not understand these mighty truths, but I am a baby no longer.

Now let us see what it means to belong to God.

Well . . . if your snowman could move or walk, or could work and think and love, you would, of course, expect him to stay near you and work with you and help you. And you would expect him to love you and I am sure he would, for he would not be a snowman but for you.

Oh, my Father, I understand. I can move and walk and work and think and love, and I must be very glad to do all these things for the God who made and owns me. Almighty God, You have a three-times right to expect me to please you—to know You, to love You, to serve you . . . this is why I am here: To know and love and serve You, Lord, and Your Will alone to do—then safely to rest, Father, in Your hands, knowing I belong to You.

Oh, my God, how sweet it is to know I belong to You.

Lesson One Read-aloud Story and Poem

If I belonged to anyone on this earth, someday I should be left alone, but You will always be in Your lovely home up there guarding me, and guiding me, and waiting for me. Your loving Heart is ever the same yesterday, today and forevermore. Help me each day, my dearest Father, to be your good child—knowing You better, loving You better, serving and pleasing You always better.

(Now, happy child of God, close your eyes, and speak to Him as simply as you do to your mother or to your little friends. Speak to Him very lovingly, and very sweetly, and very earnestly, and thank Him again and again for the grace of belonging to Him. Say everything that is in your heart and at the end, say the Our Father.)

The following poem is written by Sr. M. Josita and is from her book, *Sing a Song of Holy Things*, Tower Press, 1945, page 50.

“God’s Help”

God is very near each day,
So when I work or when I play
I say, “My Jesus, help!”

Just as soon as I awake,
And promise things for His dear sake,
I add, “My Jesus, help!”

Whenever hard things come my way,
I always stop and quickly say,
“My Lord, my Jesus, help!”

Jesus hears me when I call;
He gives His helping grace to all
Who say, “My Jesus, help!”

A Reconciliation Reader-Retreat



Discussion Questions

1. For three reasons, we belong to God. In what way has God made us? How has He bought us? How have we been given to Him?
2. We do not always act or think as children of God—as children who belong to God. Describe several actions or ways of thinking that illustrate this. Why is it important to always act and think as someone who belongs to God?
3. What does it mean to belong to God? What are the rewards? What is the cost?
4. Why is it important to ask Jesus to help us throughout each day?

Prayerfully read through Section I of “A Gospel Examination of Conscience” beginning with the introduction on page 146. End this examination session by praying an Act of Contrition or a prayer of your own creation.