



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

Office of the Bishop

February 1, 2023

Dear Parents,

As the season of Lent approaches, I thank each of you for involving your children within our Catholic schools, religious education, and youth ministry programs. Your role as the primary educators in the faith of your children cannot be overstated. Your involvement of your children and youth in these programs demonstrates your commitment.

During the seasons of Advent and Lent, many of you help your children to prepare to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation. Through your influence and example, you have a unique opportunity to foster the practice of the sacrament of reconciliation so that it may become a regular part of your child's life of faith. The more the sacrament is encouraged and experienced, the higher the likelihood that this sacrament will become a source of strength and grace that will be hard for our young Catholics to leave behind as adults. The regular practice of reconciliation has many benefits for you, your family, and indeed the whole Church.

What are the benefits? The gift of sanctifying grace; a habit of personal examination; knowing how to go to confession; relief of guilt or remorse; and a desire to do better over time leading to personal conversion and holiness. This sacrament is indeed a gift to the Church and to our young people.

Therefore, I urge you to make every attempt to see that your child participates in the sacrament of reconciliation during four regular time periods within the school or catechetical year—at the beginning of the year, during Advent, during Lent, and at the end of the school/catechetical year.

In support of this effort, all Catholic schools, religious education, and youth ministry programs, beginning on Ash Wednesday and following each day thereafter, will conclude the day or program with a school-wide period of examination followed by the recitation of the Act of Contrition. Some schools, religious education, or youth ministry programs already make this a daily practice, and for this I am grateful. This practice will help to accomplish two important goals: a regular habit of examination of conscience, and the removal of the fear many students have about coming to confession because they do not know the Act of Contrition. A copy has been attached for your use as well.

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You play the primary role in the Churches ministry of evangelization to our children and young people. Thank you for all you do to invite your children into a deeper relationship with God and for helping them to seek to fulfill God's plan for their lives.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, preceded by a small cross symbol. The signature is cursive and appears to read "D. Walkowiak".

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids