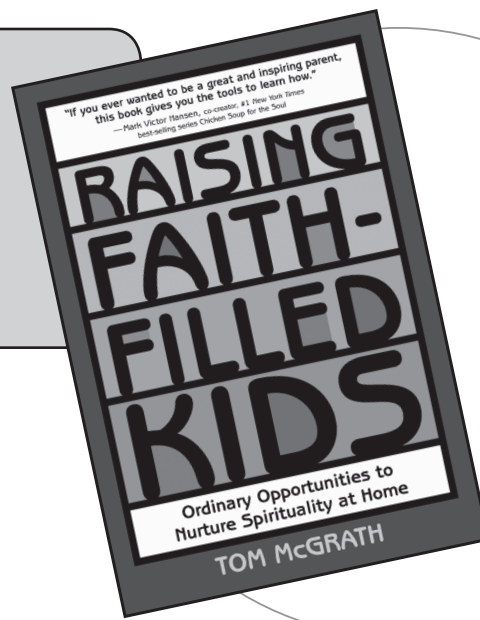


How to Cultivate a Forgiving Spirit in Your Home



Cultivate a spiritual partner or two with whom you can be honest about your ups and downs as a parent. It helps to get the wisdom of people you think have done a good job raising their own children. They can help you keep your own struggles in perspective and offer you the benefit of the lessons they learned the hard way.

Attend reconciliation services as a family. Make it clear that the work of forgiveness, though tough and messy, is part of any Christian home. Seek God's help and the support of the larger community.

Explain what it means to examine the conscience. We begin the Mass by acknowledging our faults and asking for God's mercy. It's easy for us to assemble in church as strangers, disconnected from one another. This rite at the start of Mass is a step toward making us one rather than a splintered group. Explain this part of the Mass to your children. Invite them to do a brief examination of conscience at this point in the liturgy.

Read and meditate on the story of the prodigal son. Picture yourself in all the roles: the forgiving father, the wayward son, the son who stayed behind. (Both sons were in need of forgiveness, but only the wayward son realized it.)