

A Family Cleansing

In early December, I was standing in line with my 7-year-old daughter, Maddie, as she was preparing to make her first reconciliation. The line was long; hundreds of children were taking a big step that weekend toward full initiation with the Catholic Church at Our Lady Fields in Millersville.

As the line slowly moved forward, Maddie and I chatted about what was about to happen. She had studied and prepared for her first confession; she was ready. As we got toward the front of the line, the moment was at hand. Maddie looked up at me and said, "Dad, I am excited, do you know why?" I said, "Why is that?" Maddie responded, "Because my teacher said your heart feels clean after confession."

I could almost feel the air go out of my chest. As a father and a deacon, I could not have been prouder. If people weren't watching, I might have cried.

The day was a special one for Maddie in her journey of faith, but experiencing the grace of forgiveness was a family affair – my wife, my oldest daughter and I all availed ourselves to the sacrament of reconciliation. The saying that the family that prays together, stays together, really rang true to me as we walked out of church that day.

When all was said and done, four hearts felt a lot cleaner.

Deacon Brent L. Heathcott was ordained a deacon in the Archdiocese of Baltimore in May 2011. He is assigned to Our Lady of the Fields parish in Millersville. His primary vocation is as husband and father to five children. He can be reached at brent.heathcott@archbalt.org.