

Growing in Knowledge

**RECONCILIATION:** *Our young people grow in freedom and responsibility.*

The act or state of re-establishing friendship between God and a human being, or between two persons. The willingness to be reconciled with another person is a necessary condition for obtaining God's mercy.

**TIMELINE:** February

**READINGS:** Galatians 5:13-14

**VIRTUES:** Forgiveness, patience, self-discipline, compassion, cleanliness, responsibility, consideration, peacefulness, tolerance, understanding.

**TEACHER REFLECTIONS:** How is the key message of "Our young people grow in freedom and responsibility" reflected in your school/workplace, your role, and your personal life?

**SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMMING:**

**FIRST NATIONS/MÉTIS CONNECTIONS:**

**WE CELEBRATE:**

**SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:**

**STUDENT REFLECTIONS:**

## Prayer Liturgy for Schools

### Gospel Value: RECONCILIATION

**Opening Song:** (see table of suggested songs)

**Leader:** Let us begin our celebration with the sign of our faith.  
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** Let us pray:  
Creator God, you know us as we are and you love us always.  
Strengthen us to do good things in our daily lives and forgive us when we do not. Help us to remember that we are brothers and sisters who need to respect and help one another and to forgive each other when we cause hurt by our words or actions. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who reconciled us by his sacrifice.

**All:** Amen.

**Leader:** Let us listen carefully to the Word of God.

*Readings should always be proclaimed clearly and loudly from a Bible or lectionary.*

**Reader 1:** A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body.

The Word of the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

**Psalm Response:** (CBW III #52) The Lord is kind and merciful.

My soul, give thanks to the Lord  
All my being, less his holy name.  
My soul, give thanks to the Lord  
And never forget all his blessings.

**Response:** The Lord is kind and merciful.

It is he who forgives all your guilt,  
Who heals every one of your ills,  
Who redeems your life from the grave,  
Who crowns you with love and compassion.

**Response:** The Lord is kind and merciful.

The Lord does deeds of justice,  
Gives judgment for all who are oppressed.  
He made known his ways to Moses  
And his deeds to Israel's children.

**Response:** The Lord is kind and merciful.

The Lord is compassion and love,  
Slow to anger and rich in mercy.  
For as the heavens are high above the earth  
So strong is his love for those who fear him.

**Response:** The Lord is kind and merciful.

**Gospel Acclamation:**        *Choose one that is familiar to your school community.*

**Leader:**                    A reading from the gospel according to Matthew.

When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

The gospel of the Lord.

**All:**                            Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**Leader:**                    *You may now share a prepared reflection on the readings that were just proclaimed and how they relate to the school community.*

*Some points that you may wish to include are these:*

- *God loves us and knows everything about us, both good and bad. His compassion and mercy are always available to us.*
- *As followers of Jesus, we are called to be peacemakers; to reconcile and be reconciled. Sometimes that means that we have to let go of anger and forgive others. At other times, we may have to acknowledge that we were wrong and ask others to forgive us.*

- *God's forgiveness is available to us anytime through the sacrament of reconciliation.*

**Closing Song:**      *Music Suggestions (could work for either opening or closing)*

<b>Catholic Book of Worship III</b>	<b>Spirit and Song</b>
#622 I Will Sweep Away Your Transgressions	#63 The Cry of the Poor
#516 Only This I Want	#104 Amazing Grace
	#208 There is a Longing

You may also want to consider songs from the Religion programs, such as:

People of Peace (Grade 5)

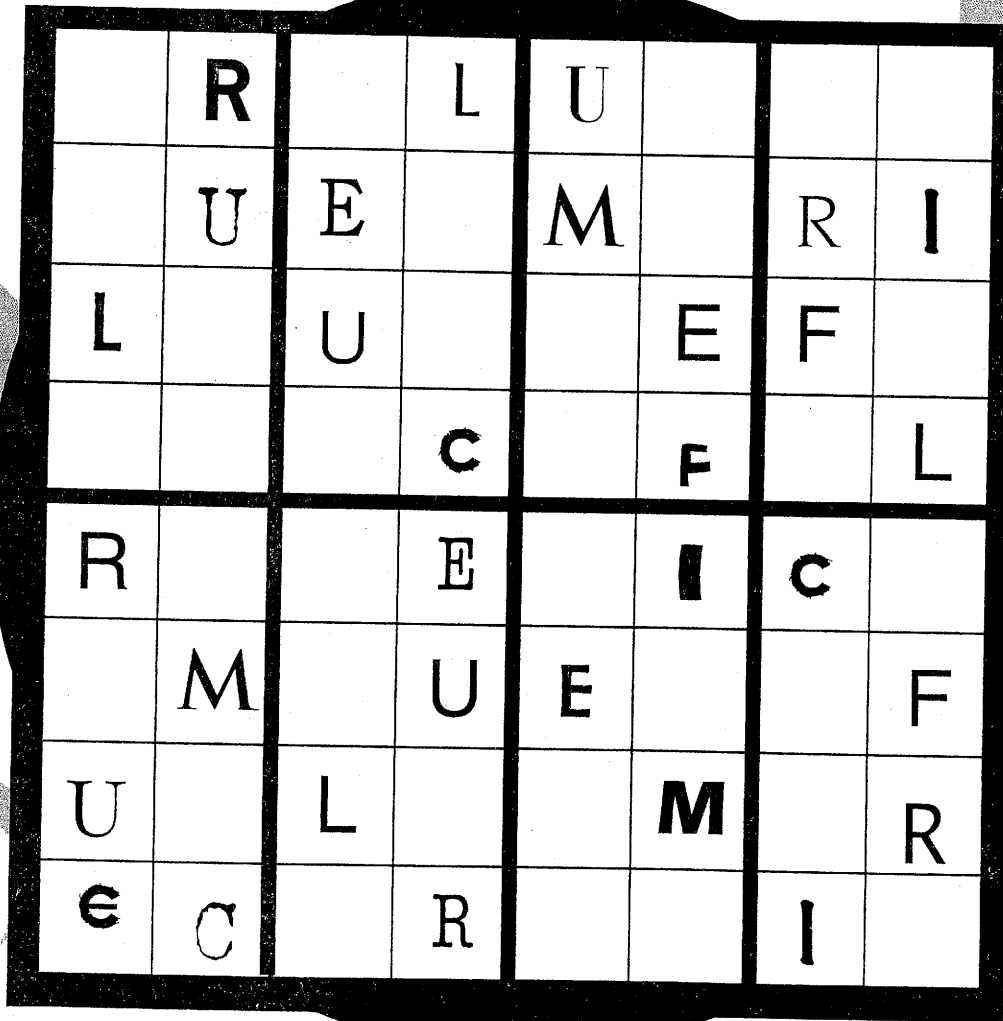
I Am You (Grade 7)

Forgive your Brothers and your Sisters (Grade 8)

## Our Merciful Lord

Sudoku puzzles are fun and challenging. Use the clues provided to complete this sudoku-style puzzle. Solve the puzzle below using the letters M E R C I F U L. Each letter is used once per block and should be used once per row, both across and down. No letters may be repeated in each row or each block.

**Hint:** Find the row that spells out *merciful*.




# GOD WASHES US CLEAN

11

Use the following letters to complete the puzzle:

**W O N S**

Each letter will be used only once per row, once per column, and once per square. Find the row or column that forms the word that correctly completes the Bible verse.

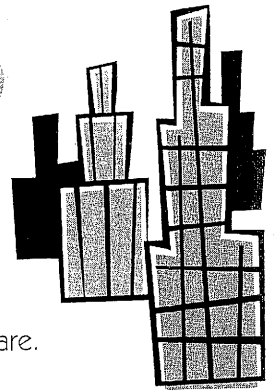


	N	W	S
S			
			O
	O		W

*Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Isaiah 1:18*

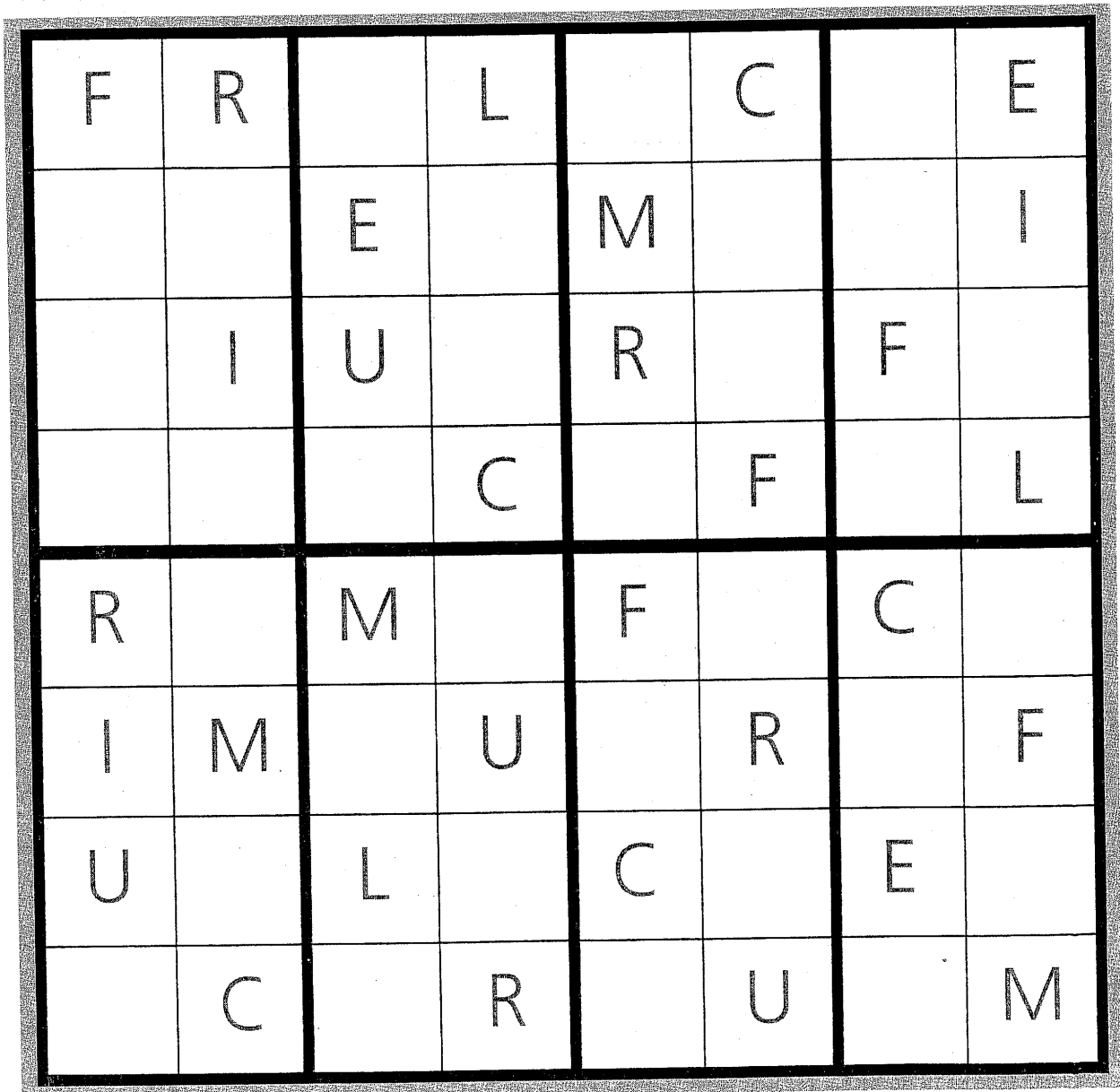
# A FORGIVING GOD



Use the following letters to complete the puzzle:

**U M R C F E I L**

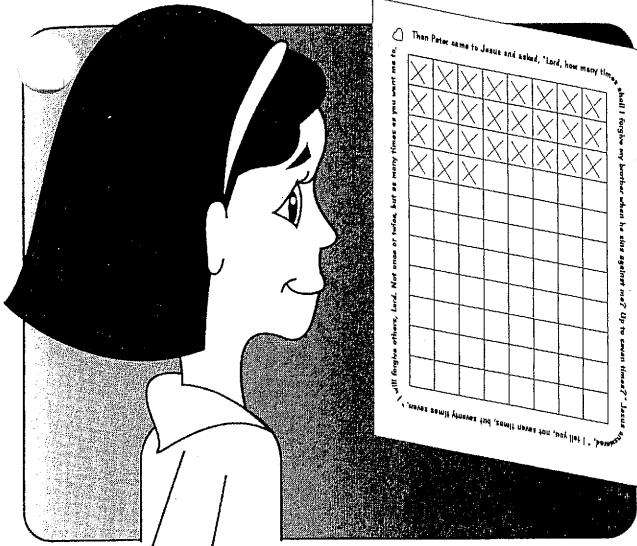
Each letter will be used only once per row, once per column, and once per square.  
Find the row or column that forms the word that correctly completes the Bible verse.



For the LORD your God is a \_\_\_\_\_ God; He will not abandon  
or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers.

Deuteronomy 4:31

# FORGIVENESS POSTER



## Prayer Thought

I will forgive others.

## Memory Verse



Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven."  
~ Matthew 18:22

## What You Need



- page 34, duplicated
- crayons or markers



## Prayer

Help me to forgive not just once or twice, but as many times as I know You want. Amen.

## Before Class



If your copy machine has enlargement capabilities, consider duplicating page 34 to poster-size paper.

## What to Do



1. Review the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant from Matthew 18:21-35 as the students color the posters from page 34. Ask, **Why do you think Jesus gave a specific number of times to forgive our brother or sister? If we only needed to forgive seven times, it would be easy for us to count. But, if we have to forgive many, many times, we cannot keep track. Jesus wants us to have a forgiving attitude all of the time. Take home your Forgiveness Posters. Every time you do something for which someone else has to forgive you, put a black slanted line - half of an X - in a square. Every time you forgive someone else, mark a red line slanted in the other direction. You will soon notice that you need to be forgiven many more times than you have to forgive anyone else.**
2. Close with prayer.



## Bible Lesson

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant  
Matthew 18:21-35

## Prayers of Commitment





# Unbound!

## OVERVIEW

Praying for forgiveness sets us free. In this prayer the young people experience this message through a ritual of reconciliation. This strategy, which is ideal for a retreat or as a conclusion to a session on forgiveness, allows the participants to dramatically ritualize both the paralysis of sinfulness and the release brought about by reconciliation.

### **Suggested Time**

20 to 30 minutes

### **Group Size**

This activity works best with groups of fifteen to thirty young people. Larger groups will require greater attention and the assistance of additional adults.

### **Special Considerations**

This prayer requires a good deal of space because it attempts to demonstrate the change that occurs when forgiveness is experienced, by having the young people move from one location to another. With a large group, this process works well in a hall, a cafeteria, or a school gym. If such a room is not available, use hallways or adjacent rooms.

Ideally, you should have four adults or leaders to help conduct this prayer activity. It is important to affirm to the group that this is a ritual, intended only to be a symbolic exercise.

### Materials Needed

- ☀ a pillar candle and matches
- ☀ other faith symbols
- ☀ a Bible
- ☀ 2-by-30-inch strips of white or light-colored fabric, one for each person (for use as blindfolds; use old sheets or other material—thin materials such as cotton or flannel work best)
- ☀ washable colored markers, at least one for each participant

### PROCEDURE

*Preparation.* Place a pillar candle in a central or prominent part of the room and create a focus area by placing around the candle other faith symbols, such as a crucifix, a bowl of water, a blanket or cloth, and an appropriate picture, poster, or statue. Place strips of white or light-colored fabric, one for each participant, in four separate bundles around the focus area. Place a set of washable colored markers on or beside each bundle. Identify four locations, either the corners of the room or adjacent rooms or hallways, where the young people can be sent to be bound.

1. Attention to the environment can help you maintain a prayerful atmosphere for this active prayer. Darken the room, light a pillar candle, and gather everyone around the focus area. Begin by reading Mark 2:1–12 (Jesus forgives and cures a paralytic).

2. Take a few moments to discuss the Scripture story. The following comments may be helpful:



In Jesus' time people believed that illness and disease were punishments for sins committed by individuals or their family, and that God alone could forgive sins or remove curses.

There are many ways that we can be paralyzed in life: being unable to care, unwilling to listen to someone, or reluctant to see clearly, or feeling powerless to reach out and help.

Jesus healed as a way of demonstrating that the power of God's love and forgiveness sets us free.

3. Using the following questions or similar ones of your own, invite the young people to reflect quietly on the message or meaning of this story:



How could the paralyzed person symbolize you or your life?

Have you ever felt cursed, punished, held back, or kept down in life by something that has happened to you?

How have your sins, or the sins of others, paralyzed you, or stopped you from reaching out to, making peace with, or caring about other people in your life?

4. Invite the participants to come forward one by one to select a fabric strip binding and a colored marker from one of the four piles. Lead the group through the following brief reflection exercise:



Marked by the sins of the past, we can be paralyzed by those who have sinned against us. Yet we have the power to forgive those who have hurt us. As you listen to the questions that follow, call to mind a person who has hurt you:

Has someone said words against you?

Has someone done something to cause you pain?

Have people ignored you or turned their back on you?

Do you find it difficult to forgive or care about someone?

With the marker write on the binding strip a name or a set of initials that symbolize a sin committed against you.

5. After the participants have marked their binding strips, ask them to reflect on the second part of this examination of conscience:



We are bound by what we have failed to do.

By refusing to care, to listen, to speak up, or to notice others, we can become paralyzed, bound by the things we have failed to do. As you listen to the questions that follow, let your mind reveal how you have been bound.

Have you failed to help someone because you have allowed your hands to be tied?

Have you ignored someone or chosen to be blind to others?

Have you failed to speak up for someone because you have let yourself be gagged?

Have you refused to listen to someone because you have let yourself be deaf to others?

Which of those scenarios brought a situation or a person to mind immediately? Which of the four bindings fits most tightly with the things you have failed to do?

6. Send an adult or a leader to each of the four locations you have identified. Challenge the young people to select one of the four forms of symbolic binding: to be blindfolded, to have their hands tied, to have their mouth covered, or to have their ears covered. Indicate one location for each form of binding and direct the group members to move to the location of their choice, taking their fabric strip with them.

Have the leader at each location carefully use each participant's fabric strip to loosely bind him or her. Affirm to the group that this is a ritual, intended only to be a symbolic exercise.

7. When all the participants have been bound, instruct the leaders to bring their group back to the central area or main room. Read the following paraphrase of John 20:20–23:



Though the doors were closed, Jesus came and stood among them and said: "Peace be with you. As God has sent me, so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; and those whose sins you retain, they are retained."

8. Have each leader invite one bound group member to come forward to the candle, where while removing the binding, the leader recites the phrase, "You are forgiven, now go and do likewise!" Then have the leader give the fabric strip to the person who had been bound and challenge the young person to turn to a neighbor and, using the same words, to release that person from his or her binding. Guide this process until everyone is released.

9. Encourage the young people to examine the cloth they are holding. Recite the following line from the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us," and challenge the young people to forgive the people involved in the sin they had marked on their binding. Invite the young people to take their strip home and carry it until they find a way to forgive those who have hurt them. Suggest that after they extend forgiveness, they can wash out the strip of fabric until the name or initials they had written on it are removed.

Conclude the prayer service by inviting everyone to recite the Lord's Prayer together.

### ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

- ⊗ With the proper permission, set this activity inside the church, beginning in the gathering area and ending in the sanctuary.
- ⊗ Extend this activity by adding a concluding reading and reflection on the parable of the unforgiving debtor, Matt. 18:23–35.

- ⊙ Invite the participants to return at a subsequent session with their washed fabric strips. Have them tie together the strips to form a chain of forgiveness. This chain of knotted fabric can be displayed in the youth room or classroom or even draped around a large crucifix or cross.
- ⊙ Adapt this ritual and use it to prepare the young people to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation. It also fits well with the themes of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.
- ⊙ If this activity takes place at a camp, it can be effective to have the participants burn their fabric strips in a pit or bonfire.

**SCRIPTURAL CONNECTIONS**

- ⊙ Psalm 130 (From the depths I cry to God, where forgiveness and mercy are found.)
- ⊙ Isa. 61:1–2 (The Spirit of God has anointed me to bring good news and to proclaim liberty to captives.)
- ⊙ Matt. 18:18 (What you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.)
- ⊙ John 8:31–32,34–36 (The truth will make you free. Those who sin are slaves, but Christ will set you free.)
- ⊙ Gal. 5:1 (Christ freed us and meant us to be free.)

**NOTES**

Use the space below to jot notes and reminders for the next time you use this strategy.



**First Nations and Metis Education Resources  
for the Gospel Value of Reconciliation**

1. Retold by Burchac, Joseph, pictures by Vojtech, Anna, *The First Strawberries A Cherokee Story*, (ISBN#9 780140 564099)

This book is available in the school libraries at:

- Bishop Klein
- Bishop Pocock
- Cardinal Leger
- Sister O'Brien
- St. Angela
- St. Anne
- St. Gerard
- St. John
- St. Marguerite
- St. Mark
- St. Mary
- St. Matthew
- St. Michael
- St. Peter
- St. Philip
- St. Volodymyr

2. Friesen, John, W., *Legends of the Elders*, (ISBN # 1-55059-202-5)

This book is available in the school libraries at:

- Bishop Klein
- Cardinal Leger
- Father Robinson
- Father Vachon
- Georges Vanier
- Sion Catholic Middle School
- St. Edward
- St. Frances
- St. Gerard
- St. Marguerite
- St. Peter
- St. Philip

*A Story About Friends  
An Algonquian Legend*

One of the ways that the Plains Indian people used to honor someone was to give them an eagle feather. The elders sometimes gave an eagle feather when that person had done something special for the nation. Eagle feathers were also used on arrows or to decorate a dancing costume. Warriors were always looking for good eagle feathers.

There was once an Indian warrior who went to the Rocky Mountains to look for eagle feathers. On the mountainside he found a nest of little eagles in a large tree. He climbed the tree where the nest was located, only to find that the eagles were too young and had hardly grown feathers. The man decided to go home and return when the eagles were old enough.

A month later the warrior returned to the eagle's nest. He was sure that the baby eagles would be sufficiently grown to provide him with the feathers he wanted. Since the warrior's tribe had moved, it took several days for the warrior to travel up to the nest. It was evening when he found the nest, and when he climbed up to the nest he was delighted to note that their feathers were big enough.

A sudden storm hindered the warrior from obtaining the feathers and he quickly climbed down from the tree and found a cave to wait out the storm. There was a heavy downpour of rain so the man decided to go to sleep and visit the eagle's nest the next day.

Before he entered, the warrior quickly cut down a tree branch to protect himself in case a wild animal was in the cave. It was dark in the cave and he couldn't be sure that a bear might not be lurking in the shad-



ows. As the warrior curled up and prepared to fall asleep, there was loud thunder and bright lightning outside.

Suddenly, as the lightning flashed, the Indian saw the shadow of another man entering the cave. The visitor did not know that anyone else was in the cave. The visitor also carried a stick for protection. When the visitor saw the warrior in the cave he spoke some words of greeting which the warrior did not understand. The visitor was also an Indian and he also wore braids, but he was clearly from a different tribe who spoke a different language.

In the morning both men were reluctant to leave the cave because they did not know if they could trust one another. They tried to communicate by using Indian sign language and it soon became clear that they were both there to obtain eagle feathers.

When their meaning was clear, the men shook hands and played a hand-game they both knew. Whoever won the game would get the eagle feathers. Soon the visitor won the game and claimed the right to the feathers. The warrior motioned that they should play again. He still wanted the feathers and indicated that if the visitor won again he could have one of the warrior's braids as well as the eagle feathers.

The warrior lost again, and the visitor took a knife and cut off one of the warrior's braids. The warrior was nervous, thinking the visitor might harm him. This did not happen.

The visitor put down his knife and a gun that he carried and offered them to the warrior as a gift. The warrior put down his weapons as well and offered them to the visitor. As they traded weapons they shook hands and came to an agreement. The warrior did not get any eagle feathers and he lost his braid, but he gained a friend. Today Indian tribes still regard eagle feathers with respect and often award them to individuals as a way of honoring them.

