

Celebrate Religious Education Resources

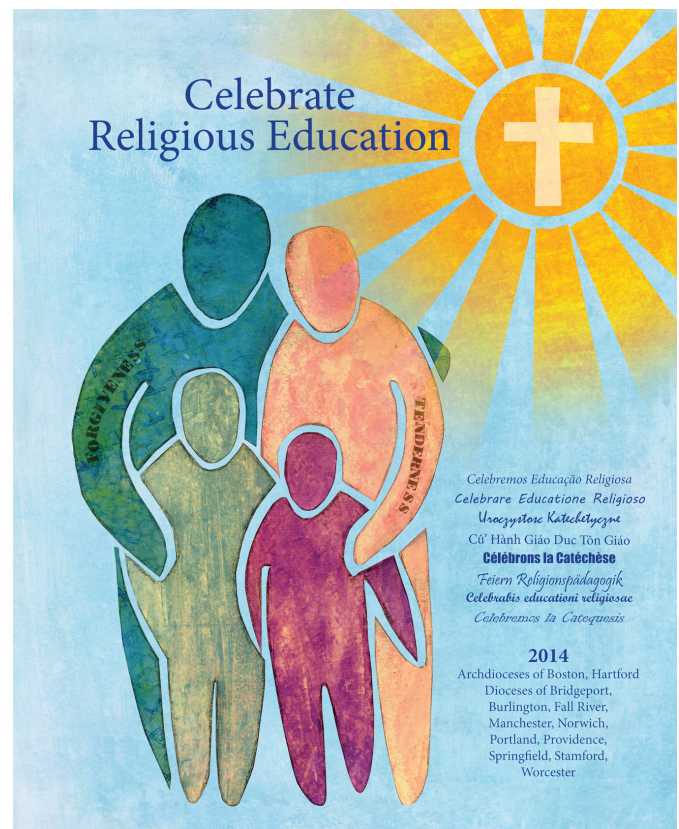
2014

God's Gift of Forgiveness

Gift given, gift received; invitation and response. What do we do when we are given a gift? Hide it under a bed or in a closet? Give it away? Throw it away? Open it? We could choose any or all of these options. Gifts can be expected or unexpected, requested or a complete surprise, something we might need or didn't know we needed. Whatever the gift might be, for the receiver to benefit from the gift requires a response or an action. To benefit from a gift the receiver would need to take action; accept the gift, open the gift, and utilize the gift. To give and receive a gift also suggests a relationship between the giver and receiver. This relationship might be impersonal or personal; human or divine.

God's gift of forgiveness cannot be earned it is offered by God's grace. As a gift from God, receptivity and openness on our part are necessary to receive it. Once we accept God's gift of forgiveness we are invited, led and begin to see what was invisible without the gift of faith.

First experiences of forgiveness are in our homes. Non-verbal and verbal experiences in our families shape our earliest understandings of relationships, God, love, forgiveness and mercy. The design of the 2014 Celebrate Religious Education poster created by Kathryn Costa, Diocese of Manchester, offers an image of family with parents' arms wrapped around each other and their children. The image of the father has an arm reading forgiveness the image of the mother has an arm reading tenderness. The whole family is inspired by the light of God resting on them through the rays of the sun.



Inside:

Resources for catechists and parents.

Lesson plans for different age groups including adult learners.

Scripture, quotes, and prayers.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Dramatizing the Gospel (Grades K-3).....	3
Examen and Doorknob Hanger Activity (Grades K-6)	5
Adult Reflection: An Invitation to God’s Gift of Forgiveness	7
Whole Family Catechesis Session: Day of Reflection	10
How to go to Confession.....	17
Examinations of Conscience.....	18
Scripture Resources.....	19
Pope Francis Quotes and Writings.....	23
Prayers	24

Dramatizing the Gospel

Overview

This drama activity of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) is appropriate for primary school age children to catechize God's mercy and forgiveness. Here are three themes of this gospel to help children understand:

Jesus taught us about God's forgiveness.

God never stops loving us.

God will always forgive us when we are sorry.

Activity

Opening/We Gather:

God, thank you for your love and friendship

How do you feel when you forgive someone?

How do you feel when someone forgives you?

We Believe:

Jesus told stories to teach about God's love and forgiveness. He taught that God always loves us and is ready to forgive us. Another word for God's love and forgiveness is *mercy*.

This play comes from a story Jesus told to teach about God's mercy.

Luke 15:11-24

All: There was a loving father who had two sons. One day the younger son asked his father for his share of the family's money.

Son: Father, I need money.

Goodbye, I've got to run.

I am going away.

I just want to have fun.

All: The young man did not always follow the Ten Commandments. He spent his money on parties and new friends.

Friends: You've lost all your money. No more parties for you. We don't really care what happens to you.

All: The young man began to think about the choices he had made. He remembered his father's love.

Son: I am so sorry now. Just look at what I have done! Can my father forgive me? I'm a very selfish son!

All: The young man was on the road home when his father saw him. The father ran to welcome him back.

Father: Son, I really missed you and I can hardly wait to show my love for you. Now let's all celebrate!

"Then the celebration began." (Luke: 15:24)

The father in this story showed mercy to his son. God the Father shows each of us his mercy. He will always forgive us when we are sorry.

Reflect

How do you feel knowing that God is always ready to forgive you?

What does it mean to show mercy?

(To show mercy means to show love and forgiveness.)

What did the father in the story do when his son asked to be forgiven?

(The father forgave his son and celebrated his return.)

Learn More

[Sadlier, *We Believe with Project Disciple School Edition: Jesus Shares God's Life, Teachers Guide, Grade 2, 2011* \(pp126-127\)](#)

Resources for additional Scripture:

Matthew's Second Chance based on Matthew 9:9-13

Healed through Forgiveness based on Mark 2:1-12

Coming Home based on Luke 15:11-24

[Loyola Press, *God's Gift of Reconciliation Catechist Guide, 2009* \(pp 77-79\)](#)

Examen and Doorknob Hanger Activity

Overview

This activity is designed to guide children to begin thinking about how their actions affect others.

Activity

Create a simple doorknob hanger and use it at bedtime as an opportunity for an examination of conscience with your child.

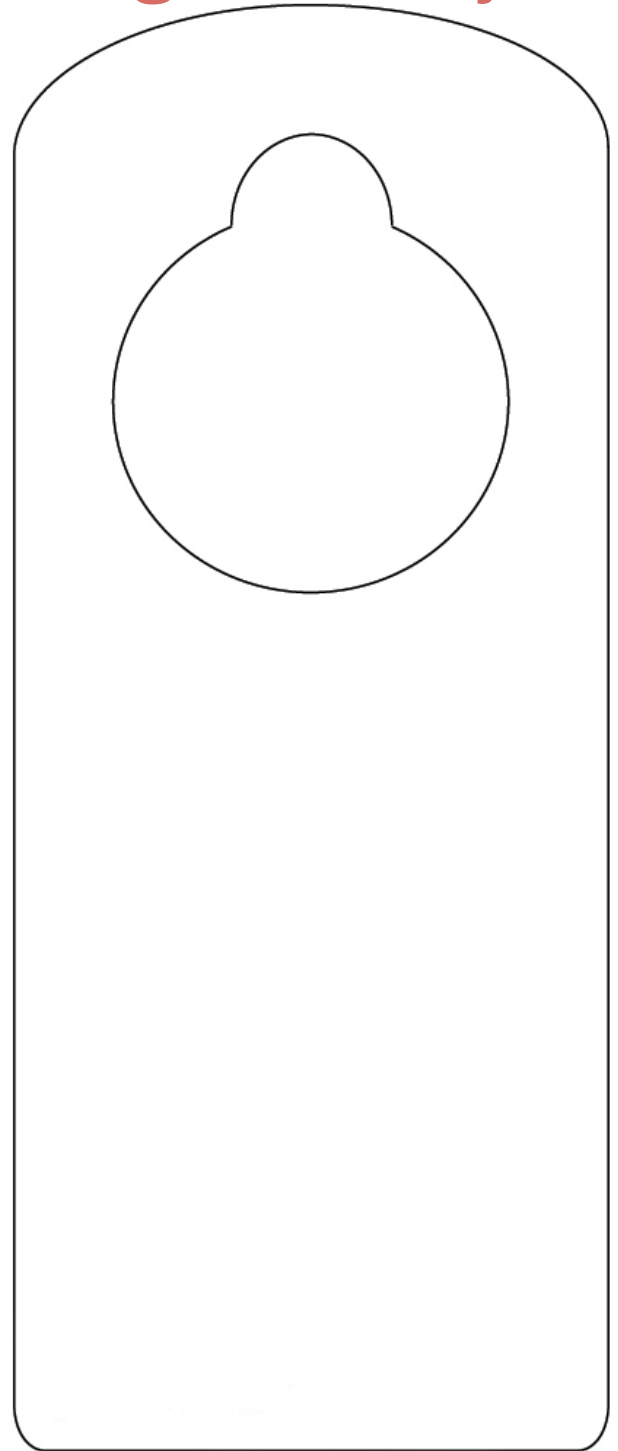
Instructions to Create Doorknob Hanger

Things You'll Need: *Fun foam, Pen knife, Paint pens or markers*

Set up your shape. Get a piece of paper that is at least 10 inches long and 6 inches wide. Sketch the shape for your door hanger with a pencil. Sketch a hole near the top where you will insert the doorknob. Make sure the hole is at least 1 inch from the top and sides, and large enough to accommodate a doorknob. Cut out the sketch and place it on a doorknob to make sure it hangs properly.

Cut your foam. Place your paper outline on top of a piece of fun foam. Use a pen knife to cut along the outside of the shape. Cut the hole where the doorknob will fit. Place your fun foam door hanger on a doorknob to make sure it hangs properly. Make sure the door can open and close and the hole is large enough for the doorknob.

Add images. Once you've created your doorknob hanger you want to apply images to each side. On one side a smiley face, on the other side a sad face. This can be done with paint, markers, etc.



Hang on the doorknob. After your child has created this doorknob hanger it can be hung on your child's bedroom door and used at night for an age appropriate examination of conscience. This may be a dialogue for you both, feel free to share in an age appropriate way your own answers to these questions.

Reflect

Suggested dialogue and questions for smiley face side of doorknob hanger:

Think about your day so far.

What happened today that made you happy?

Did you do something to help someone today?

What was the best thing that happened in your day?

What was the best thing you did for someone in your day?

What made this the best thing in your day?

Name things you are grateful for today.

Suggested questions for the sad face side of the doorknob hanger:

What was the worst part of your day?

Were you hurtful to someone today?

Was there anything you did that you felt bad about or would do over if you could?

What made this the worst part of your day?

Is there something you can do tomorrow to show sorrow for the worst part of the day?

(Apologize, speak kindly, do something nice for a person, share, include at lunch or recess, volunteer to be helpful to someone)

After these questions using the doorknob hanger continue:

When did I feel close to God today?

When did I feel far away from God today?

To complete this examen with your child:

Pray a simple prayer with your child in their own words:

Asking God for forgiveness

Asking for God's help to do better tomorrow

Thanking God for his presence in your life

Or you can pray an Act of Contrition.

Resource: [God's Gift of Reconciliation, Loyola Press 2009](#)

An Invitation to God's Gift of Forgiveness

Overview

For adult reflection, discussion, faith sharing.

Activity #1

A Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

“Peace be with you!”

With these words, the Risen Lord greeted his frightened Apostles in the Upper Room on the day of his Resurrection. They were troubled, anxious, and fearful—much like each one of us at some point in our lives. Christ repeated the words, “Peace be with you.” But then he added, “Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them” (John 20:19-23).

What an extraordinary gift! The Risen Lord was proclaiming that all the suffering he had just endured was in order to make available the gifts of salvation and forgiveness. He wanted the Apostles to receive these gifts. He wanted them to become apostles of this forgiveness to others.

In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, also called confession, we meet the Lord, who wants to grant forgiveness and the grace to live a renewed life in him. In this sacrament, he prepares us to receive him free from serious sin, with a lively faith, earnest hope, and sacrificial love in the Eucharist. The Church sees confession as so important that she requires that every Catholic go at least once a year.¹ The Church also encourages frequent confession in order to grow closer to Christ Jesus and his Body, the Church. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we seek forgiveness and repentance, let go of patterns of sin, grow in the life of virtue, and witness to a joyful conversion. Since the graces of the sacrament are so similar to the purpose of the New Evangelization, Pope Benedict XVI has said, “The New Evangelization . . . begins in the confessional!”²

We bishops and priests are eager to help you if you experience difficulty, hesitation, or uncertainty about approaching the Lord in this sacrament. If you have not received this healing sacrament in a long time, we are ready to welcome you. We, whom Christ has ordained to minister this forgiveness in his name, are also approaching this sacrament, as both penitents and ministers, throughout our lives and at this special moment of grace during Lent. We want to offer ourselves to you as forgiven sinners seeking to serve in the Lord's name.

An excerpt from: [A Pastoral Exhortation on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation](#)

¹Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1457-1458.

²Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Annual Course on the Internal Forum

[Organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary](#)

Activity #2

Penance and Social Justice

Reconciled to Right Relationship, Called to Heal and Restore

The new life in Christ that begins in Baptism may be weakened or lost through sin. Sin ruptures not only our relationship with God but also with our brothers and sisters. By the nourishing light of the Holy Spirit, we are able to prepare for the Sacrament of Penance by examining our consciences to identify those ways in which we are not in right relationship with God and with others. This examination also challenges us to recognize our own participation in the “structures of sin” that degrade others’ lives and dignity. Through the Sacrament of Penance, God offers mercy and forgiveness. In response to this gift, we are called to become vehicles of Christ’s love, making amends and restoring justice and the bonds that have been broken. Healed and forgiven, we are sent to work for peace, justice, and love in our communities

Sin damages our relationship with God and neighbor. In the Gospels, Jesus teaches that love of God and love of neighbor are intimately connected (Mt 22:38-39; Mk 12:29-31). When we sin against those in need by failing to act compassionately toward them, we ignore Christ himself (Mt 25:31-46). In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “Closing our eyes to our neighbor also blinds us to God” (Deus Caritas Est [God Is Love], no. 16).

Sin ruptures our relationship with God and also with other members of the Body of Christ (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], no. 1440). Take a moment to consider ways that you have broken any of the Ten Commandments: Are there any false “gods” (e.g., material things, pleasure, etc.) that you place above God and other people? Have you treated family members or others with disrespect? Have you

lied, gossiped, cheated, or stolen? Sin is never an individual affair. Sin damages our relationships with others and all of creation. Thus, sin is never a purely individual affair and has social dimensions (Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis* [Sacrament of Charity], no. 20; Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* [Reconciliation and Penance], no. 15).

Sin becomes manifest in unjust structures. The collective actions (or failures to act) of individuals create “structures of sin,” which “grow stronger, spread, and become the source of other sins” (Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* [On Social Concern], no. 36). For example, widespread poverty, discrimination, denial of basic rights, and violence result from many peoples’ actions (or failures to act) because of greed, racism, selfishness, or indifference (*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, nos. 2, 16). We are all called to consider how we contribute to structures of sin in our personal, economic, and public choices. For example, do we take into account the treatment of workers when we make purchases? How do our consumption choices contribute to environmental degradation? Are we aware and informed? Do we take the time to educate ourselves about issues that affect the community and advocate on behalf of those who are poor and vulnerable?

We are called to examine our consciences and admit our failings. The Sacrament of Penance challenges us to examine our hearts inwardly and then express outwardly the ways we have failed to love God and neighbor—through both personal sin and social sin. Examining our consciences teaches us how to “look squarely at our life” to see how well we are living the Gospel (Pope Benedict XVI, Address to participants in the Course on the Internal Forum organized by the Tribunal of the Apostolic Penitentiary, March 25, 2011). Only in recognizing our failings can our hearts be converted to God so that we can receive his forgiveness and allow his grace to heal us and our relationships.

We receive God's forgiveness and mercy. The Sacrament of Penance allows us to receive forgiveness of sins and be reconciled with God, self, the Church family, and the human family—restoring our broken communion. Through Penance, we return to right relationships (Sacramentum Caritatis, no. 20).

We work to repair the harm we have done. Reconciliation absolves us of our sin, but it does not repair the damage that was caused. We must do what is possible to repair the harm. The Catechism provides these examples: return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, and pay compensation for injuries (no. 1459). We must work to repair the relationships with God and our neighbors that sin has impaired. We must also consider how we can work to transform the structures of sin that threaten human life and dignity. By making amends and working to build a more just community, we can repair the damage and also restore our own spiritual health.

The whole Church community plays a role in reconciliation. We do not engage in the act of reconciliation alone. While the priest is the minister of the Sacrament of Penance, the whole Church community participates in the work of reconciliation (Ordo Paenitentiae). When we gather each Sunday, we call to mind our sins and intercede for one another. We hear the Word of God, which challenges us to reflect gospel values in our lives and relationships. As the Body of Christ, we also challenge one another to live lives of holiness, justice, and love. The Church is an instrument of conversion, calling all its members to love and reconciliation with God and neighbor.

We are called to be forgivers and peacemakers. Having received the undeserved gift of forgiveness, we are called to extend the same forgiveness and mercy to others. We take up the task of being instruments of reconciliation in our communities and world, working for peace, justice, and love.

<http://uscgb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/upload/Penance-handout.pdf>

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whole family catechesis

Day of Reflection

Overview

The inspiration for the 2014 Celebrate Religious Education poster is an image of the family wrapped in loving arms of tenderness and forgiveness nurtured by God's loving presence. The theme for USCCB Catechetical Sunday is teaching about God's gift of forgiveness. These themes together invite an opportunity for parish family reflection on the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

This Day of Reflection can be used:

At any time

In conjunction with the Feast of the Epiphany and Baptism of the Lord allowing for an opportunity to remind parish families it is still the Christmas season, questions introducing "gifts" given and received in relationship to Christmas, leading into gifts from God

At the beginning of Lent

As preparation for families preparing children for the celebration of their first Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

Approximate time: 3 hours (longer if you end with a Celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Forgiveness)

Session Goals

Reflections and dialogue on:

- 1) Gifts
- 2) Learning About forgiveness
- 3) Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

Environment

Parish hall to accommodate the group, space for breakout sessions by age, visible prayer table to include felt or fabric in appropriate liturgical color, candle, lectionary or bible, beautifully wrapped gift, background music.

Resources

[Catholic Update Guide to Confession, St Anthony Messenger Press, 2011](#)

[Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

[Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth, St Mary's Press](#)

[Kerper, Fr. Michael, "What is the Act of Contrition?" Parable Magazine, September/October 2014](#)

[YOUCAT](#)

Supplies

Large, beautifully wrapped gift; instrumental background music, bibles, paper, pens

Copies: How to go to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, age appropriate Examinations of Conscience (USCCB website)

Welcoming Prayer, closing prayer- copies if appropriate or project it to be visible to all participants

Name tags

White board, blackboard, easel, or projector

whole family catechesis

Volunteers

Facilitators: available for each age group including adults, teens, and children

Hospitality: to welcome attendees, distribute name tags or necessary supplies

Kitchen: refreshments, coffee, juice, light snack

To Begin

Welcome participants

Introduce retreat facilitators and identify their roles

Invite participants to introduce themselves to who is seated with them

Define structure of the day, when there will be breaks, when participants will be gathered as a whole group, break out discussions, refreshments offered

Invite participants to prayer (If your pastor, parish priest or deacon is available you might invite them to lead prayer)

Prayer: Light a candle on the prayer table and pray your opening prayer which can be distributed or projected so everyone may see it.

Part I/Opening

Reflection of gift (approximately 30 minutes)

All participants

Leader: Holding a large, beautifully wrapped present offer the gift to a participant. After each question offer it to another participant. This should be fun and dynamic.

Questions:

Did you ask for this gift?

Is there a verbal response to being given a gift?

What would you like to do with it?

If you open the gift, what then?

Will you use it?

What if you don't like it?

What if you don't want it?

What if you never bother to open it?

What is the best gift you have ever given?

What is the best gift you have ever received?

Then:

What is the best gift God has given you?

If forgiveness does not emerge in the answers from the group introduce it.

To close Part I ask for definitions of forgiveness. As they are offered list the definitions offered in a visible place to the group.

Definition of forgiveness: an act of will, a decision to let go of pain and hurt caused by another.

Ten minute break

Part II Adults

Learning about Forgiveness
(approximately 45 minutes)

References: CCC 1425, 1657, 2226, 2227, 2631

Participants should be grouped by age, if possible in different rooms and facilitators will lead each group.

whole family catechesis

Begin:

Take a moment to remember something that happened this week with a child or spouse that made you feel angry, hurt or sad. I invite you to share it with someone next to you.

Ask:

Are you still hurt, sad or angry about this incident? Why or why not?

Have you forgiven the spouse or child?

If so, how did you forgive them?

Does the person know you forgave them?

Allow time for larger group to share responses.

Now, take a moment to remember something that happened this week with a spouse or child that you did that may have made them feel hurt, sad or angry. Invite sharing at their tables.

Ask:

Did you apologize or make amends?

If the answer is yes, how did you apologize and/or make amends? If the answer is no, why didn't you apologize?

Does the family member hurt, sad or angered know you asked for their forgiveness or tried to make amends?

Is it important to hear the words of forgiveness?

Is there someone who needs to hear them from you?

God's gift of forgiveness is learned first in the witness and experience of family life.

Invite a discussion of the previous definitions of

forgiveness in small groups. Ask if their group has changed or refined their definitions. Then have a spokesman offer definitions for the larger group.

Biblical references: Consider ending this session with a prayerful reading of the Prodigal Son. Suggested reflections: Do you see yourself in this Gospel? If so, where or who are you?

Part II Teens

Begin:

Take a moment to remember something that happened this week with a sibling or parent this week that made you feel angry, hurt or sad. I invite you to share it with someone next to you.

Ask:

Are you still hurt, sad or angry about this incident? Why or why not?

Have you forgiven the parent or sibling?

If so, how did you forgive them?

Does the person know you forgave them?

Allow time for larger group to share responses.

Now, take a moment to remember something that happened this week with a parent or sibling that you did that may have made them feel hurt, sad or angry. Invite sharing at their tables.

Ask:

Did you apologize or make amends? How?

Does the family member hurt, sad or angered know you asked for their forgiveness or tried to make amends?

whole family catechesis

Is it important to hear the words of forgiveness?

Is there someone who needs to hear them from you?

Optional Activity: Show a clip from the movie “The Giver”, or use the book by Lois Lowry if the clip is not yet available. In the scene where Jonas (the receiver) apologizes to the “Giver” during his training; how do you perceive this apology? Why does the Giver reject it? What is missing from the apology?

Explain:

God’s gift of forgiveness is first learned in the witness and experience of family life.

Part II Children

Dialogue:

What is an accident? What is a sin?

Ask children to share an event in their families that were accidents but someone was hurt (their feelings, their person). Reinforce what made them accidents.

Ask children to share something they did on purpose that hurt someone in their family.

Is it important to hear the words of forgiveness?

Is there someone who needs to hear them from you?

Examination of Conscience with Doorknob hanger activity found on page five of this resource.

Ten minute break.

Part III: Adults

(approximately 45 minutes)

Perceptions of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Forgiveness

References: CCC 277, 1422-1433, 1440-1470

Adults Facilitator: Be prepared to explain the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, what it is, how to celebrate it. Facilitator might reflect on the questions first to be prepared for suggestions, questions or inaccuracies that may come up.

Source: [Catholic Update Guide to Confession, St Anthony Messenger Press, 2011](#)

Adults:

Invite adults to remember their last experience of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

If it is recent invite them to reflect on why they celebrated the Sacrament recently.

If it’s been a long time invite them to reflect on why.

If participants are willing invite them to share in their small groups.

For Discussion:

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

What is it?

Are we required to go?

Why do we celebrate it?

To confess to another out loud

To come back (Prodigal Son)

To believe in sin

To see and hear forgiveness

whole family catechesis

To recognize our sin is linked with society's weakness or sin

How do we do it?

Gathering: greet the priest

Liturgy of the word: to inspire our participation in the Sacrament and understand sin in relation to God's love

We say what is in hearts, confession of sins

Giving and accepting of a penance

Reconciling: Act of Contrition

Absolution

Commissioning: Priest "... go in peace."

Response: Amen

Or : Reconciliation

Contrition: We identify our sins through our examination of conscience, express sincere sorrow for our sins, and commit ourselves to not repeating them

Confession: We name the sins aloud to the priest.

Absolution: We are set free (loosened) from our sins by the priest through the words of absolution.

Satisfaction: We strive to repair the damage our sins have caused by performing works of penance.

Source: [Paprocki, Joe, *A Well-Built Faith*, Loyola Press, 2008](#)

Is the focus of the Sacrament about us and what we do or about God and what God does? Even though the steps of the Sacrament haven't really changed the focus of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation has changed. It is about who God

is and what God does, Reconciliation.

To close Part III ask participants to consider:

When have I experienced God's gift of forgiveness most?

How is my understanding of the Sacrament impacting my child (rens) understanding of the Sacrament?

If we/I am preparing my child(ren) to celebrate the Sacrament for the first time, or again after a long time, how am I helping them?

Will I consider coming as a family to celebrate the Sacrament?

Part III Teens

Teens Facilitator: Be prepared to explain the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, what it is, why we celebrate it, how to celebrate it. Facilitator might reflect on the questions before the session to be prepared for suggestions, questions or inaccuracies that may come up.

Resource:

[Singer-Towns, *The Catholic Faith Handbook for Youth*, St. Mary's Press, 2004, pp184-188](#)

[YOUCAT](#)

Activity:

Divide the group of teens in half. Have half the teens develop reasons why the Sacrament is important and necessary, and the other half develop reasons why it is not important or necessary.

Have each group designate a spokesperson to present their side. Then reconvene the groups to create counter arguments.

whole family catechesis

Let group present counter arguments and debate for approximately fifteen minutes.

Don't declare a winner but gather the whole group together to discuss:

How do you feel about making a case why participating in the Sacrament of Penance Reconciliation is or is not important?

What were the best arguments raised on both sides?

What did you learn about the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation?

Which is the hardest thing to understand about the Sacrament? the easiest?

Activity adapted from [*Generation of Faith Volume 2: Sacraments, Center for Ministry Development, Naugatuck, CT, 2003*](#)

Part III Children

A walk through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

Visit the reconciliation room, explain what is in the room, walk through the steps of the Sacrament, the significance of each step

Followed by a dramatization of the Gospel of the Prodigal Son found on page three of these resources.

Part IV Closing For All participants

Gather everyone together.

Invite participants to share their favorite part of the day.

Invite participants to share one thing about God's gift of forgiveness they learned today, or might consider differently.

Invite participants to share how they might practice God's gift forgiveness in their homes. (examen, doorhanger, family prayer)

Closing prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Definition of Terms

Absolution: an essential element of the Sacrament of Penance in which the priest, by the power entrusted to the Church by Christ, pardons the sin(s) of the penitent. (CCC 1424, 1442, 1449, 1453, 1480)

Confession: An essential element of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, which consists in telling one's sins to the priestly minister. By extension, the word confession is used to refer to the Sacrament of Penance itself. (CCC1455)

Contrition: Sorrow of the soul and hatred for the sin committed together with a resolution not to sin again. Contrition is the most important act of the penitent, and is necessary for the reception of the Sacrament of Penance. (CCC 1451)

Grace: The free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our vocation to become his adopted children. As sanctifying grace, God shares his divine life and friendship with us in a habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that enables the soul to live with God, to act by his love. As actual grace, God gives us the help to conform our lives to his will. Sacramental graces and special graces (charism, the grace of one's state of life) are gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us live out our Christian vocation. (CCC 1996, 2000)

Mortal sin: A grave infraction of the law of God that destroys the divine life in the soul of the sinner (sanctifying grace), constituting a turn away from God. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be present: grave matter, full knowledge of the evil of the act, and full consent of the will. (CCC1855, 1857)

Penance: Interior penance: a conversion of heart toward God and away from sin, which implies the intention to change one's life because of hope in divine mercy (CCC 1431). External acts of penance include fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. (CCC 1434)

Reconciliation, Sacrament of: The sacramental celebration in which, through God's mercy and forgiveness, the sinner is reconciled with God and also with the Church, Christ's body, which is wounded by sin. (CCC 1422, 1442-1445, 1468)

Sacrament: An efficacious sign of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispersed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. (CCC 774, 1131)

Sacrament: The special signs the Church celebrates are the Seven Sacraments. A sacrament is a special sign given to us by Jesus. God makes us holy through the sacraments. Jesus gave us the sacraments so that we can share in God's own life. (Sadlier, We Believe Grade 2, page 48)

Sin: An offense against God as well as a fault against reason, truth, and right conscience. Sin is a deliberate thought, word, deed or omission contrary to the eternal law of God. In judging the gravity of sin, it is customary to distinguish between mortal and venial sins. (CCC 1849, 1853, 1854)

Venial sin: Sin which does not destroy the divine life in the soul, as does mortal sin, though it diminishes and wounds it. (CCC 1855) Venial Sin is the failure to observe necessary moderation, in lesser matters of the moral law, or in grave matters acting without full knowledge or complete consent.

Children Definitions:

Absolution: to receive forgiveness through the words of a priest

Confess: to admit having done something wrong

Conscience: the inner voice that guides us

Examination of Conscience: thinking about what we have done or failed to do

Forgiveness: God's gift that helps us be friends with him and with others

Grace: to receive God's gift that repairs our relationship with him

Moral choice: a choice to do what is right

Mortal sin: a serious decision to turn away from God

Original sin: sin that all people since Adam are born with

Penance: a prayer or good deed that shows we are sorry

Reconcile: to bring together again

Reconciliation: the sacrament in which we are forgiven for our sins

Savior: Jesus, the Son of God

Temptation: a thought or feeling that can lead us make a wrong choice

Venial sin: a less serious sin that weakens our relationship with God

Source: [God's Gift of Reconciliation, Loyola Press 2009](#)

How to Go to Confession

May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure, heal your sins, help you grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life. Go in peace.

(Rite of Penance, no. 93)

Preparation

Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer, and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to live Christ’s commands to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39)? As a help with this “examination of conscience,” you might review the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 5:3-10; or Lk 6:20-26).

Greeting

The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.

The Sign of the Cross

Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession.”

Confession

Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”

Penance

The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

Act of Contrition

After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more.

A suggested Act of Contrition is:

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you
whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ
suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.

(Rite of Penance, no. 45)

Absolution

The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. You respond, “Amen.”

Praise

The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures for ever” (Rite of Penance, no. 47).

Dismissal

The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”

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Examinations of Conscience

Before celebrating the Sacrament of Penance, one should prepare themselves with an examination of conscience. An examination of conscience is a “prayerful self-reflection on our words and deeds in the light of the Gospel to determine how we may have sinned against God” -Glossary, The Catechism of the Catholic Church.

There are various types of examinations of conscience but regardless of which one you use to prepare yourself for the Sacrament it should be rooted in Scripture; particularly, the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes. Below are a few examples of Examinations of Conscience that can help you prepare for the Sacrament.

[Examination of Conscience based on the Ten Commandments](#)

[Examination of Conscience in Light of Catholic Social Teaching | \[En Espanol\]\(#\)](#)

[Examination of Conscience for Children](#)

[Examination of Conscience for Young Adults](#)

[Examination of Conscience for Single People](#)

[Examination of Conscience for Married Persons](#)

Source: [USCCB Website](#)

Scripture References

Psalm 103:1-10

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

and all that is within me,

bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,

and do not forget all his benefits-

who forgives all your iniquity,

who heals all your diseases,

who redeems your life from the Pit,

who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

who satisfies you with good as long as you live

so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

The LORD works vindication

and justice for all who are oppressed.

He made known his ways to Moses,

his acts to the people of Israel.

The LORD is merciful and gracious,

slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

He will not always accuse,

nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins,

Nor repay us according to our iniquities.

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter Came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times."

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

Titus 3:4-7

But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8: 38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Scripture References

Matthew 18: 15-20

“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, let one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

Luke 23:34

Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

John 20:21

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

John 8:11

The Woman Caught in Adultery

She said, “No one, sir.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

Luke 7:48

The woman who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears.

Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus and Zacchaeus

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” Then Jesus said to him, “today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

PARABLES

Matthew 18:23-35

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed

Scripture References

him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his Lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell before him saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said: 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in his anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Luke 15:4-7

Lost Sheep

"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

Luke 15: 8-10

Lost Coin

"Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I have lost.' Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15: 11-32

Prodigal Son

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."' So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him

Scripture References

and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out a robe –the best one- and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Miracles

108. Why did Jesus manifest the Kingdom by means of signs and miracles?

Jesus accompanied his words with signs and miracles to bear witness to the fact that the Kingdom is present in him, the Messiah. Although he healed some people, he did not come to abolish all evils here below but rather to free us especially from the slavery of sin. The driving out of demons proclaimed that his cross would be victorious over “the ruler of this world” (John 12:31).

[USCCB, *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, USCCB Publishing, 2006](#)

Matthew 9: 1-8

After getting into a boat he crossed the sea and came into his own town. And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” Then some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus, perceiving their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts?” For which is easier, to say, ‘Your

sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and walk’? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” -he then said to the paralytic – “Stand up, take your bed and go to your home.” When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings.

Luke 18: 35-43

As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; when he came near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

[NRSV, *The Catholic Faith and Family Bible*, Harper Catholic Bibles, 2010](#)

Pope Francis Quotes and Writings

“The church is the great family of children of God. Certainly it has human aspects from the members who comprise it, pastors and faithful. They have defects, imperfections, sins. Even the pope has them — and he has many — but what is beautiful is that when we become aware that we are sinners, we find the mercy of God. God always forgives. Don’t forget this. God always forgives.”

—Pope Francis [beginning a series of meditations on the church](#) May 29

God never tires of offering mercy

“In his mercy, he never tires of stretching out his hand to lift us up, to encourage us to continue our journey, to come back and tell him of our weakness, so that he can grant us his strength.”

“The last thing: God is our strength. I think of the ten lepers in the Gospel who were healed by Jesus. They approach him, and keeping their distance, they call out: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! (Lk 17:13). They are sick, they need love and strength, and they are looking for someone to heal them. Jesus responds by freeing them from their disease.”

October 13, 2013

Transforming hearts

In the Sacrament of Penance, “Jesus receives us with all of our limitations, He bring us the mercy of the Father who forgives us, and transforms our heart, rendering it a new heart, capable of loving Him, who

loved His own to the end (cf. John 13:1). And this love is manifested in his mercy. Jesus always forgives us.”

July 01, 2013

The Joy of the Gospel is the Joy of Forgiveness

“The joy of God is the joy of forgiveness. It is the joy of the shepherd who finds his lost sheep; the joy of the woman who finds her lost coin; the joy of the father who welcomes home his lost son.”

“This is all the Gospel, here; this is Christianity! But this is not sentimentalism or bland ‘do-goodism’; on the contrary, mercy is the true force that can save man and the world from the ‘cancer’ of sin, from moral and spiritual malaise. Only love can fill the gaps, the negative abysses that evil opens up in our hearts and in history. Only love can do this, and this is the joy of God.”

September 16, 2013

catholicnews.org.uk

Publications by Pope Francis

[*The Church of Mercy: My Vision for the Church*, Loyola Press, 2014](#)

[*Evangelii Gaudium: The Joy of the Gospel*, USCCB, 2013](#)

[*Lumen Fidei: Light of Faith*, Encyclical, 2013](#)

Prayer Resources

Prayer Before the Crucifix

Look down upon me, good and gentle Jesus, while before Your face I humbly kneel and, with burning soul, pray and beseech You to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity; true contrition for my sins, and a firm purpose of amendment. While I contemplate, with great love and tender pity, Your five most precious wounds, pondering over them within me and calling to mind the words which David, Your prophet, said of You, my Jesus: "They have pierced My hands and My feet, they have numbered all My bones." Amen.

Learning Christ

Written by Cardinal Newman

"Teach me, my Lord, to be sweet and gentle in all the events of life; In disappointments, in the thoughtlessness of others, in the insincerity of those I trusted, in the unfaithfulness of those on whom I relied.

Let me put myself aside to think of the happiness of others, to hide my little pains and heartaches, so that I may be the only one to suffer from them.

Teach me to profit by the suffering that comes across my path. Let me so use it that it may mellow me, not harden or embitter me; that it may make me patient, not irritable that it may make me broad in my forgiveness, not narrow, haughty or overbearing.

May no one be less good for having come within my influence. No one less pure, less true, less kind, less

noble for having been a fellow-traveler in our journey toward eternal life.

As I go my rounds from one distraction to another let me whisper, from time to time, a word of love to You.

May my life be lived in the supernatural, full of power for good, and strong in its purpose of sanctity.

Dear Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance everywhere. Flood my soul with Your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess my whole being so completely that my life may be only a radiance of Yours. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Your presence in my soul.

Let them look up and see no longer me, but only JESUS. Amen."

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come;

thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass

against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

Amen

Prayer Resources

The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin
Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead

and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is adored and
glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.