5 – Reconciliation

Aim: To Help your child understand the sacrament of Reconciliation as a sacrament of Healing

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| WELCOME & Opening prayer [5 minutes] 8.35 / 8.20 pm |
| * *Welcome the group with an affirming message.* * [*a parent’s prayer*](https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/prayer/family-prayers/a-parents-prayer) * *Give an outline of today’s session.* * *Name the common anxieties – not been to the sacrament ourselves for a while, and it was not a great experience.* |
| Reconciliation Festival [5 minutes] 8.40 / 8.25 pm |
| ([vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/recfest](https://vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/recfest?share=copy))   * Logistics – Come through the café, do stations in the hall, take your time, then go up to the church. * Try to take the day off. * Buy new clothes to show that this is just as special as receiving the Eucharist * Please stick to your time slot. * Are you ready? Have you been preparing your child through gentle conversation? It’s not too late. The handout provides a good framework for conversation. * Encourage them to come to the sacrament fresh. |
| SMALL GROUP – ICE-BREAKER [15 minutes] 8.45 / 8.30 pm |
| Q: How did you explore the sacraments/baptism to your child over the past couple of weeks?  Q: If you were a Catholic as a child, reminisce. What do you remember about the sacrament of Reconciliation as a child?  It does not have to be profound. It can be the room, the smell, the queue, what you were taught to confess, your preparation, or what prayers you were taught to remember. If you are not a Catholic or didn’t experience it as a child – have a listen because we want to draw out from us a little bit of our understanding from our childhood first. |
| Introduction - RECONCILIATION [5 minutes] 9.00 / 8.45 pm |
| In the last session, we discovered that the Church carries on the ministry of Jesus through the sacraments. The sacraments use things from God, the Father’s created world; Christ works in them, and the Holy Spirit pours into our lives through them. We learnt that the sacraments are seven meeting points with God. And that if we are receptive to the power of the sacraments, they will become fruitful in our lives and affect those around us.  We also explored how, through Baptism, we have become children of God and have joined God’s family.  In this session, we will be exploring the sacrament of Reconciliation. **A sacrament that offers us a healing and restoring meeting point with God.**  **Healthily loving ourselves is an underdeveloped skill and spiritual practice for most of us.** We train in loving God through worship and prayer and loving our neighbours through service and fellowship. However, when it comes to loving ourselves, it can feel like we do not have many practices on which to draw. Except we do — the Sacrament of Reconciliation.  Apart from our relationship with God, our relationship with ourselves is the most important relationship we will have in this life, and **our relationship with ourselves is not informed by society or our other halves and not even our children but by God’s love for us.**  All we want as parents is the best for our children. We want them to have good friendships to do well at school, but most of all, we want our children to be happy – to feel loved and valued throughout their lives. We can feel that we are the only ones who could ever really love our children as they deserve, but God loves them much more than we do. He wants the same things we want for our children – for them to love themselves.  Page 1a  **God’s love is not passive; his love is active today.** Jesus displays God’s love when he seeks the lost and heals the sick. The resurrection shows us that Christ still seeks us today. **Christ still heals today. That is why he gave us the sacraments of healing and restoration.** Jesus seeks us out and wants to build you, me, and our children back up again.  If you asked someone on the high street what Catholics do, they would refer to a few things: anti-gay marriage, anti-contraception, child abuse and confession.  You will put your children before a priest and get them to say the things they least like about themselves. To people on the high street, that is madness! To some on the high street, it may even be cruelty. **So why on earth does the church ask us to do this?** It is what we will try to unpack over the next 40 minutes or so - a funny testimony from a first confession. |
| Video camera outlineFirst Confession – David Wells [2 minutes] 9.05 / 8.50 pm  ([vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/first-confession](https://vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/first-confession?share=copy)) |
| The Prodigal Son [15 minutes] 9.07 / 8.52 pm |
| **We will look at one of the most famous short stories ever.** Nowhere did Jesus express more beautifully what happens in the sacrament of Reconciliation than in the Parable of the Prodigal Son.  Page 41b  On the first page of this handout, we remind your child of the story by asking them to match the descriptions with the pictures.  **We’re going to take three sentences from it, and we’re going to use them to illustrate an understanding of this sacrament.**  “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 [to his senses], 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.” (Luke 15:16-20)  So, we are going to explore three phrases:   1. “He came to himself” or “came to his senses.” 2. “I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned.’” 3. “So, he set off and went to his father.”  He came to his senses. Page 42a  Coming to our senses can be a very positive experience. Another word for it is conversion.  Coming to our senses can also be **a painful moment** when you catch yourself and know within yourself that something is wrong.  Have you ever argued with people who have not reached that stage, and there is almost no talking to them?  All sorts of experiences bring you to your senses. The thing with coming to your senses is that you did not ask for it. People do not get up in the morning and say, “Today, I’d like a conversion experience.”  It is always much easier if the argument is over there. If I can push the problem to another nation, race, child in my class or colleague, I can remain out of this place. Coming to your senses is a much more painful place. You find yourself in a place that will tell ***you*** that you are part of the problem.  Testimony of favourite “coming to my senses story.”  You might have learnt this as a child as **“examining your conscience”**. Examining 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”.  Page 42a  We ask you to **help your child go through an examination of conscience** based on the Lord’s prayer. The questions help prick our conscience and recognise our sins. One sin is enough. This applies to us as parents, too. Many of us feel that if we haven’t been to the sacrament for years, we must come to it with years’ worth of sins. Come to the sacrament with the main thing that is hurting you right now. That is a great start back into the sacrament. Experience the forgiveness and love of God for that one thing first.  The church is very much aware that the number of people using the sacrament of reconciliation has dropped significantly. Here is one of the reasons why. **If you were taught to recite sins you had not committed, and then you went to confession and confessed them, you learnt unwittingly that it was not real**.  You may have found yourself as a fourteen-year-old, repeating the sins you used to say as a child, like, “I’ve been disobedient to my parents; I fought with my brother; I didn’t pay attention at Mass”. You probably did not believe they were sins anyway, and you did not come to your senses about them, and then you began not to trust the sacrament. In other words, **you were not looking for healing because you did not need healing for those things.**  **When we did not come to our senses, it undermined the rest of it unwittingly**. So let us have a look at the rest of it. He rehearses his apology. The Prodigal Son goes on in the story and says, “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.”  **He rehearses his apology.** You know, when you have *really* said sorry, you usually rehearse it. **As a parent, it is so incredibly moving when your child says sorry and means it.**  You know you cannot get away with not saying sorry at some point. **It is a painful thing, but we have to say the words.** You must **confess** aloud.  Speaking about confession, the person in the video shared this story about his son:  He said, “I was taught this [coming to our senses and confessing] by a 3-year-old. One night, I was bathing my son. You know when a child gets warm at that age and starts to relax. He suddenly looked very sad. It struck me because he was normally a happy child, always smiling, laughing and singing. So I said, “What’s the matter?” He said nothing, but I picked him up from the bath, wrapped a towel around him and asked him, “What’s the matter, darling?” He suddenly began to cry and with his whole body. He was crying from a depth within him. He said, “Poppy didn’t bite me.”  It suddenly made sense; the week before, we were around his grandparents, and he came running into the room saying, “The dog bit me.” As punishment, Grandad gave the dog a little kick, and the dog went away, said, as dogs do, and lay in his basket. He knew he was wrong, and at age 3, he was introduced to his conscience. It took him a week, but he knew, even at 3, that he had to say the words.  Who taught him that? A programme on reconciliation? No, it is deep within our children because we have taught them by example. He knew he had to get it straight; it was hurting him, and in the bath, he could let it go and say the words.” Set off to the Father. Page 43  So now and again, we must come to our senses. **What do we do with that pain? Well, somehow, somewhere, we will have to share it.** We are going to have to say the words.  The Church has been doing this for a long time, but there are places where people pay thousands of pounds to access this kind of experience.  So, we come to the last bit: What would you have done with that boy, David Wells’ son, as he wept in the bath? (IN A LOUD VOICE) “Right, get to your bedroom; wait till your dad gets home.” Of course, you wouldn’t because you recognise the boy’s sincerity. You would have said, “You big boy, it is a very big thing you did. I know some grown-ups that don’t do that.” You would have been proud of him just because it was contrite and sincere.  The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches us that God is going to do exactly that for us.  St. Teresa of Calcutta once said, “Some saints described themselves as terrible criminals because they saw God, they saw themselves – and they saw the difference.”  **After the Prodigal Son came to his senses, he started travelling back home.** Sometimes, we can make ourselves feel better after sinning by thinking about it. That feeling does not last; we can repeat the sin. The Prodigal Son did not just think about it; he got up and travelled the long journey back home to apologise to his father.  Page 43  **We, too, must move once we have come to our senses about our sins. The Church gives us that opportunity through the sacrament of Reconciliation.**  Page 44a  The son returned home to his father. After his father ran to him and embraced him, the son looked his father in the eye and said he was sorry.  How many times have we asked our children to look at us when they are saying sorry?  **The priest represents Jesus. The sacrament of Reconciliation allows us to look Jesus in the eye.** The Holy Spirit helps us to do this. |
| Video camera outlineMgr Tony – A priest’s perspective [5 minutes] 9.20 / 9.05 pm  ([vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/mgrtony](https://vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/mgrtony?share=copy)) |
| SMALL GROUPS - RECONCILIATION [15 minutes] 9.25 / 9.10 pm |
| Q: Following this session, what do you now hope your child’s experience of the sacrament of Reconciliation will be?  Q: What will you tell your child to encourage them to receive the sacrament?  SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS  Q: How does confessing to a priest make your child feel?   * Q: Why are priests the only ones who can forgive sins? YouCat #236   No man can forgive sins unless he has a commission from God to do so. In the first place, the bishop is appointed to do that, and his helpers are the ordained Priests.  Q: Have you ever done an “examination of conscience”? Look at the one we give your children. Share ideas of how you may help your child with exploring this. |
| PLENARY [5 minutes] 9.40 / 9.25 PM |
| RECONCILIATION STEP-BY-STEP [1 MINUTE] 9.45 / 9.30 pm  **On the last two pages** of the Family Handout, you find the step-by-step guide to the sacrament. The images are taken from a video we recommend watching with your child ([vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/how-to-go-to-confession](https://vimeo.com/catholicparishguildford/how-to-go-to-confession?share=copy)).  Page 47 |
| Notices & Final prayer [1 minute] 9.46 / 9.31 pm |
| Spend a moment quietly reflecting on this session and how you feel about your child receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation. You might be feeling anxious or worried on their behalf. Offer this to God now. Ask God to help you have the courage to receive the sacrament, too and be that witness to your child.  The children may be asked to pray the **Our Father**, **Hail Mary,** or **Glory Be** as a penance. Practice these at home, ensuring your child knows them by heart. **Let’s pray them now**.  \*Next session’s topic: The taught mass |