

Session Plan, Reconciliation Session 4

September 24 2018

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Preparation

Session Planning

File: Rec_S4_SP.pdf

Catechist Background

Session Outcomes

Informing the Mind

- Realize that we come to Penance due to the prompting of the Holy Spirit
- Review that when we sin, we choose to turn away from God and his love, hurting our relationship with him
- Identify the four main parts of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation: contrition, confession, penance, and absolution

- Connect the Act of Contrition to true sorrow and conversion

Forming the Heart

- Recognize that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who searches us out, takes care of us, and guides us to his Father
- Understand that true sorrow for our sins is essential
- Develop the courage to admit and confess our sins

Church Documents

- *Rite of Penance* 8-11, 15-21
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1450-1454, 1461-1462, 1480-1484, 1491

We Come to Reconciliation

"The most important act of the penitent is contrition, which is 'heartfelt sorrow and aversion for the sin committed along with the intention of sinning no more.'¹⁷ ... The genuineness of penance depends on this heartfelt contrition. For conversion should affect a person from within toward a progressively deeper enlightenment and an ever-closer likeness to Christ."

Rite of Penance, 6

At one time or another, we've probably all experienced difficulty in acknowledging our own sins. Yet, contrition is essential to the Christian life. To be truly sorry is to be painfully aware that although we have been enlightened by Christ's love, we have grown far too accustomed to the darkness of sin. We are jealous over the accomplishments of others because the praise was not directed toward us. We lie to our loved ones to avoid conflict. We ignore those who are poor and most in need of divine love, because they make us uncomfortable. We choose not to participate in Sunday Eucharist because Mass times interfere with other plans we've made.

Contrition, then, is not simply feeling guilty because of our sins. Rather, it is both an awareness of our sins as well as a conscious decision to go and sin no more. To be contrite is to commit ourselves to rejoicing in the accomplishments of others, to tell the truth at all times to our loved ones, to spend time with those in need, and to celebrate Sunday Mass. The *Rite of Penance* always begins with contrition, a firm commitment and desire to avoid future sin.

To participate fully, consciously, and actively in the *Rite of Penance*, we must cultivate a habit of examining how we choose the darkness over the light in our own lives. Examining our conscience is not simply something we are called to do before we celebrate Reconciliation. It is a daily practice that enables us to grow increasingly aware of the subtle ways we choose discord over peace, hatred over love. The one who is contrite is aware of these sins, as well as confident that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit can heal us. To go to the *Rite of Penance*, to confess one's sins, is the result of God's healing grace unfolding already in our lives.

Reflect What makes an apology sincere? How can you strive for sincere contrition in your relationship with God and neighbor?

Holy Spirit, help me learn to respond to you without hesitation or fear so that the children I teach may learn to do the same. Amen.

Adaptive Learning & Special Needs

Lost and Found (p. 40)

Children who have difficulties with attention or impulse control might find it challenging to focus long enough to find the hidden objects. Encourage them to find one object at a time by putting their finger at the top left corner of the image and moving it from left to right and from top to bottom (like when reading words on a page). This will help them to scan the full image without missing any details.

Jesus, Our Shepherd (p. 43)

Children with reading difficulties (such as dyslexia) and children with intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism) might need help reading the words in this activity. Guide each child's finger over the letters that form words to describe what the Good Shepherd offers us. Then encourage each child to circle those words. As an additional option, have the children look closely at the words listed in the instructions on the page. Say each word and the letters used to spell each word. Then have the children look for these words in the word search puzzle. Suggest looking for just the first letter of each word to help find the words.

Celebrating Reconciliation Individually (p. 45)

Children with reading difficulties (such as dyslexia) might need help reading the words in this activity. Do this activity together with these children, so they will know which descriptions to match with each step.

The Act of Contrition (p. 46)

For **children who have difficulties with attention or impulse control** and **children with intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)**, it may be helpful to pray this prayer one line at a time. Say each line first, speaking clearly and slowly. Then have the children repeat the same words. You may also consider adding hand gestures to this prayer by showing the children what gestures you would like them to make as they pray along with "The Act of Contrition" (track 19) from the *Our Family Prayer Collection* CD.

Welcome and Gather

Before the session begins, print copies of the Act of Contrition coloring sheet (one per child). You'll also need to have crayons or colored pencils and safety scissors ready for the children.

The Act of Contrition coloring sheet can be downloaded from the [Games section](#) of this website.

As the children arrive, tell them that they are going to learn about a special prayer today. Invite them to read the prayer from the coloring sheet. Then have the children color in the page and cut out the Act of Contrition to make their own prayer card.

Ask: *What is this prayer about?* (being sorry, recognizing our sins, promising to do better, loving God and our neighbor, Jesus' sacrifice, God's mercy)

Say: *Let's keep these thoughts in mind as we begin our opening prayer.*

Opening Prayer Option

Have the boys stand on one side of the room and the girls stand on the other. Let the two groups alternate saying the lines of the *Leader* prayer. Everyone should pray the *All* response together. In order to familiarize the children with the prayer, you should read each line first.

Read line 1: *Lord Jesus, you were called the friend of sinners.*
Have the girls repeat this line of the prayer.

Read line 2: *Your forgiving love will free me from my sin.*
Have the boys repeat this line of the prayer.

Read line 3: *Help me to grow in love, holiness, and truth.*
Have the girls repeat this line of the prayer.

Read the *All* response: *May the Holy Spirit keep our hearts open to you, O Lord.*
Amen.
Have all of the children repeat the response.

After you have practiced with the children, have them say the prayer and response on their own.

Invite

Catechist Guide Instruction

Invite

♥ Let Us Pray

Quiet the children and read aloud the leader's part. Assist the children with their response.

Introduce the session.

- Say: In today's session, we will look at the importance of being truly sorry for our sins and begin to learn how we celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Now let's prepare ourselves to hear the Word of God.

God's Word

Guide the children through the process of scripture reflection.

- Invite the children to close their eyes, be still, and be ready to hear what God is saying to them.
- Maintain several moments of silence.
- Read aloud the Scripture.
- Ask: What did you hear God say to you today?
- Invite volunteers to share.

► **Opening Video 4** Have the children watch a short video at sacraments.osv.com.

Note If you do not use the video, say the following to transition to the next page: God gives us many gifts, such as our families, Scripture, and Church teaching, to keep us on the right path and help us take care of our relationship with God and others. Let's keep reading to learn more about being close with God.

Adaptive Learning & Special Needs

Intellectual/Developmental Delays Adapt the activity on page 45 for **children with autism or other intellectual/developmental delays** by using the names and descriptions of the steps of the Rite to create a storybook with pictures. If you need photos, ask your priest if he is willing to pose for some with the catechists. Read the storybook together with the child so he or she can learn the steps of the Rite being celebrated. This technique is often effectively used with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder as they prepare for a new experience.

✪ Session activity adaptations to meet various learning needs can be found at **sacraments.osv.com**.

Lost and Found

★ Open the session with the activity.

- Read aloud the directions and make sure that the children know which items they are looking for.
- Have the children work with a partner to complete the activity.

Discuss the question in the paragraph below the picture as a group.

★ Tell the children to interview each other using the discussion questions. Then invite the pairs to report to the rest of the group what they have learned.

Explain that our decisions and actions have consequences, and we are responsible for them. When we find something we've lost, we are so relieved and happy that we usually promise not to be as careless with it as we had been before. Point out that sometimes we lose things even when we are acting responsibly.

- Say: If you were ever lost, you probably hoped someone was looking for you. You trusted that the people who love you were searching for you. How happy was everybody when you were found?

Optional Activity

Finding What's Lost As an alternative opening to the session, plant your car keys, glasses, or other easily lost items in relatively obvious places.

- Say: Today, we are going to talk about what it feels like when we lose something.
- Ask the children to help you find the items. When they find each item, thank them in a sincere manner and praise their abilities.
- As you lead into the questions on page 40, remark on how awful it can be to lose things.

Session Video

View Video: http://sacraments.osv.com/reconciliation/view_video/33657

Discover

Catechist Guide Instruction

Discover

Signs & Symbols

Read aloud the first paragraph.

Point out the picture of the priest.

- *Ask:* What is the priest wearing? *the white alb; the purple stole*

Explain the function of the stole using information from the second and third paragraphs.

- *Say:* If you visit a church where you do not know the priest and deacon, you could tell them apart by the way they wear their stoles. Priests and bishops wear the stole hanging straight down on both sides, and deacons wear the stole across their chests, like a sash.
- Explain that in our liturgy, colors have special meanings. Purple is used for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation as a sign of sorrow. It symbolizes the need to change our hearts.

Meet Jesus

Read the first paragraph and show the children pictures of shepherds.

- Ask the children to look at the pictures and tell you what a shepherd does.
- Explain that if a sheep got away and was trapped or injured, the shepherd would look for it and rescue it by using his staff.

Read aloud the second paragraph.

- Point out that Jesus finds us, but we also have to do our part to keep our relationship with Jesus strong.
- *Ask:* How do you feel knowing that Jesus loves each of us so very much? *Answers will vary.*

Restored Order Connection

Miter and Crosier At Confirmation and other special sacramental celebrations, the bishop wears a special hat called a miter (my-tuhr). The miter is tall and has a pointed peak. It also has two pieces of cloth attached to it that hang down to the bishop's shoulders. The pieces of cloth represent the Old Testament and New Testament, the two main parts of the Bible. The bishop always wears a miter when he carries his staff called a crosier (crow-zhur). The crosier is shaped like a shepherd's staff. It reminds us that the bishop is our shepherd. Show the children a photo of a bishop with a miter and crosier.

Have the children place a Holy Spirit sticker next to a place where they learned about the Spirit in this session.

The Shepherd and His Sheep

Read aloud the opening paragraph.

- Use the illustration to continue the discussion about Jesus as the Good Shepherd.
- *Say:* Now let's hear what Jesus said about himself as the Good Shepherd.

God's Word

Proclaim the first paragraph of the story of the Good Shepherd.

- *Ask:* How do the sheep recognize the shepherd? *They know his voice.* What do they do when a stranger calls? *run away*

Proclaim the next paragraph.

- *Ask:* How are the shepherd and the hired man different? *The shepherd protects the sheep, but the hired man runs away from the wolf.* How do you think the shepherd feels about his sheep? *He cares about them.*
- *Say:* Jesus uses this story to tell us that he will protect us because he cares about us, like a shepherd cares about his sheep.
- *Ask:* How should the sheep feel about the shepherd? *They should be grateful that he cares about them.* What is Jesus teaching us about ourselves? *We should be thankful that he cares so much about us.*

Assign roles for the children: a shepherd, a hired man, a wolf, and the rest will be sheep. As you read aloud the story again, have the children silently act it out.

Scripture Background

John 10:3-5, 11-15 The image of the shepherd is found throughout the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament, all four Gospels contain images of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd watches over the sheep entrusted to him with the care and tenderness of a shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for them. In Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, the Acts of the Apostles, and the First Letter of Saint Peter, the term *shepherd* is applied to the leaders and elders of the Church. Today, *pastor*, the Latin word for "shepherd," is used to describe the ordained leaders of a diocese or parish.

Jesus, Our Shepherd

Reinforce the scripture story about the Good Shepherd by reading aloud the first paragraph.

- ★ Have a volunteer read aloud the directions. Allow the children time to work individually, then invite volunteers to tell the group where to find each word.

Read aloud the next paragraph. Emphasize that a sin is a deliberate action, which means we choose to sin.

- *Ask:* Why aren't mistakes and accidents sins? *They aren't done on purpose.* What happens when we sin? *We hurt our relationship with God and others.*

Entering the Mystery

Begin with a question.

- *Ask:* Can our relationship with God be healed? *yes* What do we need to do to make things right again with God? *confess our sins and really want to never sin again*

Summarize the information in the paragraph.

- Point out that when we make the Sign of the Cross at the beginning of the Sacrament of Penance, it can remind us that Jesus' love for us is so great that he chose to die on the Cross to save us.
- Remind the children that confessing our sins—even if it is uncomfortable—is the necessary first step in receiving God's forgiveness.

Catechist Background

Penitential Services These gatherings are centered on hearing God’s Word and his invitation to conversion and renewal. Penitential Services usually follow the structure of a celebration of the Word of God and are very similar to the structure given in the Rite for Reconciliation of Several Penitents. These services should not be confused with the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. However, they are important in helping participants to prepare to celebrate the Sacrament (at a different time) and to promote a spirit of healing and reconciliation in the community. Penitential Services were also created in order to guide children as they form their conscience.

The Rite of Penance

Write “penitent = person coming to the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation” on the board or on chart paper. Use the text in the first paragraph to clarify this term.

- Ask: What do penitents want to do? *show that they are truly sorry for their sins*

Call attention to the four main parts of the Sacrament. Have four volunteers each read aloud one of the parts in the correct order: contrition, confession, penance, and absolution.

- Have the children turn to the Celebrating Reconciliation feature at the back of their books.
- Invite them to place the correct label next to each part of the Sacrament.

Point out that we receive the Sacrament of Penance more than once. There is also more than one way to celebrate it.

- Read aloud the second paragraph to explain the two different forms of the Sacrament.

Read aloud the final paragraph and discuss it with the children.

- To relieve the anxiety some children may have about talking to the priest, point out that he absolutely may not reveal their sins to anyone.
- Say: Priests have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. This Sacrament gives them the authority to forgive our sins in Jesus’ name.

Optional Activity

And With Your Spirit Music CD Use the lyrics for “Through My Fault” (track 2) from *And With Your Spirit* to teach about making proper choices.

- Write “It’s my fault that I ...” on the board or on chart paper.
- Record children’s suggestions for completing the sentence.
- Place check marks by intentional actions.
- Reinforce that sin is an intentional choice to disobey God, but that God will forgive us if we are truly sorry.
- Play the song “Through My Fault.”

Contrition Before, During, and After

Read aloud the first two paragraphs.

- Ask volunteers to describe how they feel when they have done something wrong. Be sure not to get into specifics about actions.

- *Say:* We usually feel bad when we sin. This is a good thing because our conscience is helping us to know that we have hurt our relationship with God and others. This feeling is called contrition.

Bring up the issue of repeating sins as you read the third paragraph.

- *Ask:* How can we show that we are really sorry for our sins? *We can try to not sin again.*
- *Say:* The Church wants us to promise ourselves that we will really try to not repeat those same choices that lead us away from God. We do not want to sin again. Celebrating this Sacrament is the most important way of saying "I'm sorry and I want to do better."

Read aloud the last paragraph.

- *Ask:* How is celebrating this Sacrament different from just saying "I'm sorry"? *Possible response: You are asking God for his forgiveness, not just another person.*

★ Talk about how this Sacrament is celebrated with individual penitents. Have the children work with a partner to match the elements of the celebration to their descriptions. Review the correct responses.

Optional Activity

Understanding Sorrow Help the children to better understand sorrow by pairing up contrition and consequence statements.

- Blow up some colored balloons (enough for half the children) and tape a contrition statement, such as "I'm sorry I lied," to each. Then tape corresponding consequence statements, like "I know it's hard to trust me now," to balloons of another color.
- Bounce the balloons around, then say "Stop!" Each child will grab a balloon. Have children with the same color balloons stand together.
- Have the children with contrition statements read their statements one at a time. Then children with the corresponding consequence statements should read their statements to match pairs.

The Act of Contrition

Recall that prayer is our way of talking with God.

Remind the children that part of their prayer each evening should be to think about their day and tell God that they are sorry for times when they hurt him and other people.

Tell the children that there are prayers for many purposes.

- Read aloud the first paragraph to explain the purpose of the Act of Contrition.
- Invite a volunteer to read aloud the Act of Contrition.
- *Ask:* Why would this be a good prayer to say after you have thought about your sins? *It says that you are sorry for your sins and that you will do penance and try to do better.*

🕒 If time allows, turn to pages 83–84 to show the children examples of other prayers that show contrition.

★ **Disciples Sharing** As a group, discuss what each of the parts of the Act of Contrition mean. Have the children look at the pictures on the page and share why they think they are connected to that part of the prayer.

Optional Activity

Act of Contrition Review the steps of the *Rite of Penance* with the children. As an adjunct to this lesson, use echo pantomime to familiarize the children with the Act of Contrition on page 46.

- Tell them that this is the form of the prayer that is used during the *Rite of Penance*.
- Create a gesture for each phrase in the Act of Contrition.
- Lead the group by saying each line along with the gestures. Then have the children repeat the line and the gestures.
- Afterward, have the children write the prayer on paper using large letters. Instruct them to cut out each line of the prayer. Then have them work together in groups to reassemble the prayer.

Music Option: "Through My Fault"

Play "Through My Fault" (track 2) from [And With Your Spirit](#). Follow the instruction in the Optional Activity box on page 44 of the Catechist Guide.

THROUGH MY FAULT

Chorus

*Through my fault, I choose what's wrong
Through my fault, your will's not done
So Lord, have mercy be with me
Christ, have mercy forgive me*

Verse 1

God wants us to live his plan
To do what's right as he commands
Work for peace, speak the truth
Respect all life and share your goods

Verse 2

When we choose to disobey
Through our fault we turn away
We know what is your heart's desire
Yet we don't live as you require

Verse 3

Help us Lord, to follow you
And help us always to turn to you
For even when we forsake your love
You call us back with forgiveness and love

© 2011 John Burland

Music: John Burland

Words: Jo Ann Paradise

You may also want to play additional songs or prayers from the [Our Family Prayer Collection](#) CD by John Burland.

File: Rec_S4_Discover_Music_Through_My.mp3

Game Option Instruction

After you complete the Catechist Guide instruction on page 46, play the Sorting Game to reinforce the steps of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. This game can be found in the [Games section](#) at sacraments.osv.com.

Plan to play this game as one large group, and make sure everyone has a chance to participate.

Say: *Great job, everyone! One of the steps that we just learned about was contrition. Let's learn more about the prayer that we pray during this step, which is called the "Act of Contrition."*

Additional Activity: Act of Contrition

Have copies of the Act of Contrition coloring sheet ready for the Welcome and Gather option for this session. This coloring sheet can be downloaded from the [Games section](#) of this website. Follow the Welcome and Gather instructions.

If you do not choose to use the Welcome and Gather option, have the children complete this coloring sheet after you've finished the Catechist Edition instruction on page 46.

Remind the children that part of being contrite is to really make an effort to not sin in the future. Transition to page 47 by explaining that when we are contrite, we receive grace from God that helps us to change our hearts.

Live

Catechist Guide Instruction

Live

Changing How We Live

Read the text and point out that the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation changes us for the better.

- *Ask:* How does the Sacrament help our relationship with God? *It helps us grow closer to him. How can we give glory to God? by following his laws and showing love to others*

★ Explain the steps of this activity to the children. Remind them that this can be a real or made-up story.

- Invite volunteers to share their story with the group.

* If books go home, remind the children to complete page 48 and bring their books back. Distribute copies of the Session 4 **Family + Faith Pages**.

♥ Closing Ritual Prayer

Prepare for the prayer by giving each child a red heart with the word "sorry" on one side and "better" on the other. Gather in a circle around a prayer table that has a candle, crucifix, and purple stole placed on top of it.

Lead the group in the Sign of the Cross.

Catechist: God's love is merciful and forgiving. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the priest offers us the forgiveness of Jesus. Jesus teaches us how we must live.

Reader: "You are my friends if you do what I command you" (*John 15:14*).

Catechist: God, we know that we do not always do what you command us. Thank you for the gift of being able to hear your words of forgiveness and see your smile of welcome through the priest you have chosen to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation with us. May we seek this gift of forgiveness all of our lives. Amen.

Allow the children to take turns saying "I am sorry and I want to do better" before passing their heart to the person on their right.

Catechist: May the Holy Spirit, who lights every heart, help us to know our sins and trust in God's mercy. Amen.

Additional Activity: Sheep Search

Before the session begins, print one copy of the Sheep Search activity sheet.

[Click here to download the Sheep Search activity sheet.](#)

After you have downloaded and printed one copy of the Sheep Search activity sheet, cut out the individual sheep and hide them around the room where your group meets. (Be sure to not make the hiding spots too easy or too difficult, and consider noting where you put each sheep so that you can ensure that the children have found all of the sheep before you continue with the activity.)

After you complete the Catechist Guide instruction for page 47, tell the children that you have lost several sheep and that you need help finding them. Allow a few minutes for the children to find the sheep. You may want to allow the children to work together in pairs or small groups, so that each group of children has a chance to find at least one sheep.

Say: *It looks like these sheep have an important message for us.*

Let the children work together to unscramble the message. Provide them with help as needed. If there is a large group of children, be sure to invite any children who did not find a sheep to be the first ones to help unscramble the message. (Message: "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." John 13:34)

Say: *Wow—what a beautiful message! Jesus wants us to love our neighbor the same way that he loves us. Let's try to think about how we might do that as we begin our closing prayer.*

Closing Ritual Option

Refer to the instructions for Closing Ritual Prayer in the Catechist Guide. To enhance the closing ritual, have the group process to the prayer table holding the hearts that they will use for this ritual. Have a few of the children process to the table holding the candle, the crucifix, and the purple stole. These items should be placed on the prayer table. Consider having the children sing along to "Through My Fault" (track 2) from [And With Your Spirit](#) as they process.

THROUGH MY FAULT

Chorus

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Through my fault, your will's not done
So Lord, have mercy be with me
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Verse 1

God wants us to live his plan
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Verse 3

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For even when we forsake your love
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