

Session Plan, Reconciliation Session 5

September 24 2018

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Preparation

Session Planning

File: Rec_S5_SP.pdf

Catechist Background

Session Outcomes

Informing the Mind

- Discover that as members of the Church, God calls each of us to spread the Good News of his Kingdom by our words and actions
- Recognize that confessing our sins and taking responsibility for them opens our heart to God's mercy and forgiveness
- Learn that conversion is turning away from sin and responding to God's love and forgiveness

- Realize that performing acts of penance helps us to reconcile with God and with others

Forming the Heart

- Understand that when we confess our sins, we are following the promptings of the Holy Spirit
- Appreciate that we are drawn further into the mystery of salvation when we do acts of penance
- Accept that Christ is King of our hearts, lives, and the whole world
- Recognize that God continually calls us back to him and a life of conversion

Church Documents

- *Rite of Penance* 7-8, 22-30
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1455-1460, 1464-1467, 1482, 1484

We Confess and Do Penance

"True conversion is completed by expiation for the sins committed, by amendment of life, and also by rectifying injuries done.¹⁸ The kind and extent of the expiation must be suited to the personal condition of penitents so that they may restore the order that they have upset and through the corresponding remedy be cured of the sickness from which they suffered."

Rite of Penance, 6

Sometimes the deepest truths about our lives are recognized when we speak them aloud. We do this when we confess our sins. This revelation of truth can often challenge us, because we would rather turn away from the darkest parts of our lives. We want to avoid seeing how jealous we are, how much we have hurt others, or how reliant we have become upon material goods. Yet, to confess these sins aloud is already an act of healing in which we approach God not perfectly but in a broken state.

The priest, serving as a sacramental sign of Christ himself, hears these sins and listens to the truths about our frailty. In the Sacrament of Penance, our healing begins the moment that we acknowledge before Christ and the Church that we are sinners in need of the healing balm of God's love.

Our sins separate us from God and neighbor, and we need a concrete way to experience God's healing love and to participate in his work to make us whole again. The penance assigned by the priest functions as a medicine for our sins. Through penance, we are gradually healed of the sins that have limited our capacity to love God and neighbor. Even when the penance does not correspond directly to the sins that we confess, it serves as a sign of our desire to experience God's healing grace.

Confession and penance, like contrition, are part of the Christian life. Through these acts, we slowly learn to see ourselves truthfully before God, confessing our sins and accepting the healing medicine from the Church that we need in order to grow in holiness.

Reflect How is the act of confession valuable for your faith life? Describe how this Sacrament helps you grow closer to God.

Merciful God, you know me through and through; so when I do not love as I should, give me the desire to make things right. Amen.

Adaptive Learning & Special Needs

Using Our Hands (p. 50)

Children with writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia) might prefer to say their answers out loud. Invite these children to tell you about activities they like to do with their hands. Write their responses in the space provided in the Child Book. **Children who have difficulties with attention or impulse control** love to move, and they might enjoy acting out things they like to do with their hands. If time allows, play a charades-style game in which children act out things they enjoy doing with their hands. Have the rest of the group try to guess what each child is acting out.

The Spirit Leads Us (p. 53)

Children with visual impairments and children with writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia) may find this activity challenging. You can assist these children by guiding their finger through the maze. Then help them complete the maze a second time using a pencil.

Reconciliation Is a Journey (p. 56)

Children with reading difficulties (such as dyslexia) and children with intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism) might need assistance with spelling the names of people, or they might prefer to respond verbally to complete this activity. Invite these children to name people who have helped them on their journey to become closer to Jesus. Then write the names the children provide in the spaces on the page in the Child Book.

In God's Kingdom (p. 57)

Children with intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism) will need help understanding the directions on this page. Ask the children, "What do people do when they are following God's rules? What do people do when they are not following God's rules?" If necessary, assist any children who need help writing their responses in their books. **Children who have difficulties with attention or impulse control** might enjoy making this a more interactive activity. Use a rope or string to outline a circle on the floor that is large enough for all of the children to fit inside of. Place a piece of paper that is in the shape of a heart at the center of the circle. Read off a list of behaviors or attitudes and ask the children to step inside of the circle for each example that is an attitude or behavior that belongs in God's Kingdom. Ask the children to step outside of the circle for each example that is an attitude or behavior that does not belong in God's Kingdom. If you read two attitudes or behaviors in a row that either "do belong" or "do not belong," the children should jump in place.

Welcome and Gather

Before the session begins, print out copies of the Different Settings for Reconciliation coloring sheet from the [Games section](#) of this website (one per child). You will also need to have crayons or colored pencils ready for the children as they arrive.

Invite the children to color the pictures on the handout that show different settings for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Encourage them to draw how members of your parish confess during this Sacrament. You will have likely talked about this with the children as you discussed the information in Sessions 3 and 4, but the children may need a reminder.

Say: *Beautiful work, everyone! We will learn much more about the Sacrament of Penance and*

Reconciliation as we work through this session. For now, let's begin with our opening prayer, keeping in mind the wonderful gift of God's forgiveness that we receive in this Sacrament.

Opening Prayer Option

To enhance the opening prayer, pause after reading each sentence of the *Leader* portion of the prayer. During each pause, invite the children to say the *All* response (saving "Amen" for the final time the response is said). Tell the children that each time they say "Help us to grow" they should raise their arms up high, and each time they say "ever closer to you" they should wrap their arms around themselves. End the prayer with "Amen."

Invite

Catechist Guide Instruction

Invite

♡ Let Us Pray

Quiet the children and read aloud the leader's part. Prompt them to join in with the response.

Point out that this session focuses on confession of sins and the act of penance.

- Say: In today's session, we will explore two more important parts of the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation: telling our sins to God through his priest and doing acts of penance. Now let's prepare ourselves to hear God's Word.

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 5** 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: Let's learn more about how we can show that we are ready to receive God's forgiveness.

Adaptive Learning & Special Needs

Intellectual/Developmental Delays The activity on page 55 might be challenging for **children with autism or other intellectual/developmental delays**. Hang large newsprint sheets with the eight phrases written on them and assist the children by talking through each item and its matching response. For example, say, "We shouldn't fight with our brothers or sisters. What do we need to do instead? We need to cooperate and get along." Next, connect the phrases with a long strip of colored paper, reading the phrases aloud as you do so. Ask the children to do the same in their books.

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

Using Our Hands

Start the session with a “No Hands” activity. If you have some children for whom physical interaction is difficult, do an alternate activity that can be done individually.

- Remind the children that we must be respectful of each other and careful not to be rough.
- Direct the children to stand in a circle with their backs facing the inside of the circle.
- Have them all sit down and then link arms. Without using their hands, have them work together to stand up. (Hint: They’ll need to gather closely, lean on each other, and all stand at the same time.)
- *Ask: What did you learn about your hands when you tried to stand up? Possible response: They are very important.*

Read aloud the first paragraph.

- Discuss things people do with their hands, such as eat, write, wash, and shake hands.
- *Ask: How do your hands help you be a loving person? Possible response: They help to show affection, help others, and pray.*

★ Complete the activity as a group.

• *Say: Aren’t we blessed that God created us in such a wonderful way?*

★ Invite volunteers to respond to the prompt.

Optional Activity

Sign Language Point out that our hands can help us communicate. People who have hearing problems often use sign language to communicate. Their hands form words and express feelings.

- Go to **sacraments.osv.com** for visuals and links to learn sign-language gestures for words related to this lesson. Examples include words such as *God, forgiveness, and love*.
- Teach the gestures to the children.
- If time permits, show the children the website and ask which words they would like to find and learn.
- An alternative would be to have a sign-language interpreter visit during this session.

Session Video

View Video: http://sacraments.osv.com/reconciliation/view_video/33655

Discover

Catechist Guide Instruction

Discover

Signs & Symbols

Continue discussing hands by reading aloud the first paragraph.

- Have the children stand to make the gestures the text describes as you read.

- *Ask: What do your hands show during the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation? Possible response: that we willingly participate*

Remind the children that Jesus gave us the Sacraments.

Read aloud the second paragraph.

- Call attention to the photograph of the priest.
- *Say: The priest is making the gesture of absolution.*
- *Ask: Does it remind you of any gestures from the Mass? when the priest blesses the gifts or the people How is absolution a blessing? It is a blessing that offers God's forgiveness.*

Meet Jesus

Point out the image of Jesus.

- *Ask: What does the crown on Jesus' head mean? He is a king.*

Summarize the first paragraph.

- *Ask: What does a good king do? Possible responses: takes care of people, makes good laws*

Read aloud the second paragraph.

- Emphasize the definition of the term *Kingdom of God*.
- *Ask: How is Jesus different from earthly kings? Possible response: Jesus' Kingdom is in heaven and on Earth.*

Restored Order Connection

Imposition of Hands The laying on of hands, sometimes called the imposition of hands, plays an important role in the Sacraments. The imposition of hands in the context of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation signifies the healing nature of the Sacrament as well as the presence of the Holy Spirit, who works through the minister to free the penitent from the power of sin. During the Sacrament of Confirmation, the bishop extends his hands over the people being confirmed. The bishop prays that God the Father will send the Holy Spirit upon them.

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

Invited into the Kingdom

Link this page with the previous content.

- *Say: When someone becomes a king, there is a special ceremony. He is given a crown and often some symbol of power. Do you think Jesus was this kind of King? Let's read and find out.*

Read aloud the text.

- *Ask: What does anointing signify? that a person was chosen to be a leader How was Jesus anointed? by the Holy Spirit Why is Jesus willing to forgive our sins? because that is his nature; he loves us and wants to help us be all we were made to be; he wants us all to join him in God's Kingdom*

God's Word

Ask the children to listen as you read the story of Zacchaeus to find out how he solved his problem of not being able to see Jesus.

Read aloud the story.

- *Ask: What problem did Zacchaeus have, and how did he solve it? He was too short to see Jesus, so he climbed a tree. What did that show Jesus? that Zacchaeus really wanted to see Jesus and learn about him*

Remind the children about Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

- *Ask: How was Zacchaeus like a lost sheep? Jesus looked for him and saved him.*

Scripture Background

Luke 19:2-10 This story includes three important themes of Luke's Gospel: an outcast receives Jesus with praise and joy and then testifies to the mercy of God; Jesus challenges his listeners to evaluate their lives; and Jesus proclaims that salvation has come "today."

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus often associates with "tax collectors and sinners." (See Luke 5:30, Luke 7:34, and Luke 15:1.) These outcasts are much more ready to admit their sinfulness, while those in privileged positions do not see that they also need mercy. God's mercy is always available to those of us who know we are in need of his forgiveness.

The Spirit Leads Us

Share that in Jesus' time, tax collectors were considered sinners because they worked for the disliked Roman government and often cheated people.

Read aloud the first paragraph.

- *Ask: If people did not like Zacchaeus, why did Jesus want to be with him? Jesus loves all people and wants to help Zacchaeus to do better. What made Zacchaeus happy? Jesus accepted him.*
- Emphasize the meaning of the term *conversion*.

Call attention to the work of the Holy Spirit by reading aloud the second paragraph twice.

Expand on the story.

- *Ask: How would you feel if Jesus came to your house? What would Jesus want you to do to be a better disciple? Responses will vary.*
- Elicit thoughts on the themes of mercy and forgiveness.

★ Have the children work individually to complete the maze activity. Afterward, they can check their answers with a partner.

Entering the Mystery

Read aloud the text and discuss how the story of Zacchaeus teaches that God loves us as we are.

- *Ask: How does God's love change us for the better? It makes us want to be better people.*

Optional Activity

Songs of Scripture Music CD Help the children understand that God loves us just as we are, and that he wants us to turn away from sin.

- Explain that because we became part of the Body of Christ in Baptism, we should look at everyone through Jesus' eyes and see the best in each person.
- Give each child a pair of oversized toy sunglasses which can be worn to pretend to see as Jesus does. As the group sings the song "Zacchaeus" (track 14) from *Songs of Scripture*, Grades 1-3, have them wear the sunglasses during the chorus of the song and then remove them for the verses.

The Heart of Reconciliation

On the board or on chart paper, write *sin, contrition, confession, penance*. Refer to the words as you work through these pages.

- *Ask*: How are sin and contrition related? *We feel contrition after sinning if we are sorry.*
- Read aloud the opening text.
- Review that being reconciled means being reunited with God and others.

Confession

Help the children understand that all sins harm our relationship with God and others.

- Read aloud the first two paragraphs in this section to clarify the types of sin.
- Define and discuss the two types of sin by giving examples and emphasizing that all sins hurt our relationships, but mortal sins destroy our relationships.
- Consider having cutouts of two people and placing wedge shapes between them for various sins. Mortal sins would separate them completely.

Summarize the next two paragraphs about confession.

- *Ask*: Why might confessing sins make people uncomfortable? *Accept reasonable responses.*
- *Say*: Doing things that make us uncomfortable can sometimes help us grow. (Cite that having a new teacher or new classmates can be hard at first, but it gets easier.)

Remind the children that we trust that God loves us no matter what we do. God, through the priest, lovingly hears us.

- Assure them that the sins we tell the priest stay with him. He cannot share our confession with anyone.

Read aloud the kernel in the top right corner of page 55.

- *Ask*: Why would it be important to confess mortal sins? *to help us be reconciled with God and others; because we don't want to live our lives separated from God*

Catechist Background

Office of Ministries in Reconciliation of Penitents The *Rite of Penance* (8-10) explains that the Church is an instrument of conversion and that bishops and priests, by the power of the Holy Spirit, call the faithful to conversion in the name of Christ and grant forgiveness of sins. The *Rite of Penance* also acknowledges the role of the Church community in bringing sinners to repentance and

reconciliation through bearing witness, sharing the Word of God, and showing care and interest in their welfare. It places the ministry of bishops and priests in the context of a reconciling community, which is the whole Church as the Body of Christ.

Penance

Read aloud this section.

- Ensure that the children understand the meaning of penance.
- 🕒 Have the children go to page 78 for a list of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.
- *Ask:* Which Works of Mercy does your family practice?
- ★ Call attention to the non-loving actions in the left column. Have the children match each of these to an appropriate reconciliation action on the right.

Optional Activity

Providing Practice It is normal for children to be nervous about celebrating the Sacraments for the first time. To help the children feel more comfortable about celebrating the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, take time to visit the church with them.

- If they haven't seen your church's confessional(s) or the Reconciliation room, allow them into these places. If other areas of the church will be used for confession, explain where the priest(s) will be and where people will wait to receive the Sacrament.
- If there is a communal celebration at your parish, try to find a ceremony program. Explain when we may be singing or standing, and at what point we will meet privately with the priest.

Reconciliation Is a Journey

Remind the children that at certain times during the Church year (particularly Advent and Lent), your parish probably offers a communal celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. The celebration begins with everyone gathered together, usually inside of the church.

Read aloud the first paragraph.

- 🕒 Go over the information on pages 70–73 as a group.
- If you have a printed program for a communal celebration in your parish, go through each part with the children.

Return to page 56 and read aloud the last two paragraphs.

- *Ask:* Why is it a good idea to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation with others?
Possible responses: We often hurt others, but we can experience God's forgiveness with them, too. It also shows support for each other and sets a good example for younger parishioners.
- Emphasize the importance of the last sentence.
- ★ Have a volunteer read aloud the questions above the activity. Explain the directions to the children.
- Allow the children to complete the activity individually.

Optional Activity

Invite a Visitor Invite your pastor or another priest who will be part of the children's First Penance celebration to meet informally with the children. To help the visit go smoothly, do the following:

- Before the priest comes, distribute index cards and help the children write down any questions they have about the Sacrament.
- Have the children read their own questions or appoint a "reader" to share them with your visitor.
- Allow time for the priest to speak casually with the children, and permit the children to ask questions.
- Be sure to ask the priest to bless the group.
- Have the children make thank-you notes for your visitor.

Music Option: "Zacchaeus"

Play "Zacchaeus" (track 14) from [Songs of Scripture, Grades 1-3](#). Follow the instruction in the Optional Activity box on page 53 of the Catechist Guide.

ZACCHAEUS

Based on Luke 19:1-8

Chorus

**Jesus loves us whether we're short or tall.
He sees the good, the good inside us all.
His love for us helps me to see
That I'm precious 'cause God made me
Even if I choose to sin or stray.
For I'm God's child.
He helps me find my way.
For I'm God's child.
He helps me find my way.**

Verse 1

A man named Zacchaeus tried to see
The miracle worker from Galilee.
He was too short to see past the crowd,
So he climbed up a tree yelled out loud.

Verse 2

Jesus looked up and saw the man.
"Come down Zacchaeus I'll give you a hand.
Let's have lunch at your house today.
We'll walk together just show me the way."

Chorus

Verse 3

Zacchaeus looked into Jesus' eyes.
He said, "I'm beginning to realize.
If I was unfair, I will do my part.
I'll return what I took and change my heart."

Verse 4

Have you ever felt lonely or small?
Seemed no one liked you—no one at all?
Remember Zacchaeus who climbed up the tree.
Jesus called him friend and helped him see.

© 2013, John Burland

Music: John Burland

Words: John Burland and Jo Ann Paradise

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

File: Rec_S5_Discover_Music_Zacchaeus.mp3

Game Option Instruction

After you've completed the Catechist Guide instruction for page 53, play the Art Reveal Game that is related to the story of Zacchaeus with the children. This game can be found in the [Games section](#) at **sacraments.osv.com**.

You may have the children work individually or in small groups. If you only have access to one computer, divide your group into 6 small groups and have each group answer a question. For each question that is answered correctly, a piece of a picture will be revealed. Make sure to encourage the children to talk about the question in their groups before they provide you with their answer. When all of the questions are answered correctly, ask the children what they see.

Say: *Great work! The story of Zacchaeus helps us understand that people can have a change of heart. They can experience conversion. Let's learn more about conversion by looking at two specific parts of the Sacrament of Penance: confession and penance.*

Additional Activity: Different Settings for Reconciliation

Prior to the Welcome and Gather option for this session, print the Different Settings for Reconciliation coloring sheet from the [Games section](#) of this website. Print one copy for each child and 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 before you move on to the Catechist Guide instruction for the "Penance" section on page 55. After the children have completed their coloring sheets, continue with the Catechist Guide instruction on page 55.

Additional Activity: Forgiveness Chain

Before the session begins, print out one copy of the Forgiveness Chain activity sheet, which includes two separate pages.

[Click here to download the Forgiveness Chain activity sheet.](#)

You will also need the following:

- a simple paper chain with at least 16 loops
- 4 separate loops (not linked together); labeled with the words *contrition*, *confession*, *penance*, and *forgiveness*
- at least one pair of safety scissors
- clear tape

Tape the paper chain onto a wall horizontally and make sure that the children will be able to reach the chain. Next, tape the picture of the person from the Forgiveness Chain activity sheet onto the wall to the left of the chain. Then tape the picture of the Body of Christ onto the wall to the right of the chain. Keep your four separate labeled loops to the side as they will be placed into the chain later.

Once you have completed the Catechist Guide instruction for page 55, explain to the children that you are going to work together as a group to help build a forgiveness chain.

Say: *The person at the beginning of this chain represents all of us. The people at the end of this chain represent the Body of Christ, and the dove above them represents the Holy Spirit. The chain is our connection to God and his Church, the Body of Christ.*

Ask for four volunteers to name some different ways we may sin. Be sure to remind them not to mention names or provide examples that would make anyone feel uncomfortable. Encourage them to provide general examples, not specific or personal experiences. As each volunteer names a sin, invite him or her to go to the forgiveness chain and cut one of the loops away from the chain.

Say: *When we sin, this breaks our relationship with God and the Church. But God is always willing to forgive us if we are sorry. Let's work on repairing this chain.*

Invite four new volunteers to bring the labeled loops to the chain. Have them tape these loops into the four places where the chain was cut. Make sure that you have the volunteers tape the labeled pieces into the chain in the correct order: *contrition*, *confession*, *penance*, *forgiveness*. After each separate piece is taped in place, talk about the step of the Sacrament that is written on it.

Say: *It looks like our chain is repaired and we are once again connected to God and his People, the Body of Christ. Always remember that no matter how many loops we break in our chain or how many times we sin, if we are truly sorry for our sins God is always willing to forgive us and make us whole again. He always wants our connection with him and with the Church to be as strong as it can be.*

Live

Catechist Guide Instruction

Live

In God's Kingdom

Say: Imagine what it would be like if we lived in a place where people always chose to do the right thing. Everyone has enough of everything they need because people share. No one hurts anyone else. It is a place where everyone loves God and each other. That is what heaven is like.

★ Read the directions. As needed, prompt the children with suggestions of attitudes or actions that

lead us to God and attitudes or actions that lead us away from a life of happiness with God forever.

* If books go home, remind the children to complete page 58 and bring their books back. Distribute copies of the Session 5 **Family + Faith Pages**.

♥ **Closing Ritual Prayer**

Gather around a prayer table with a Bible, a crown, and premade pledge cards. The “Jesus, I give my heart to you” pledge from the “All” response below should be written on the cards and placed inside the crown.

Lead the group in the Sign of the Cross.

Catechist: Jesus, you are our King. We ask you to send your Holy Spirit to give us the strength to admit our weaknesses and failings as members of your Kingdom.

Reader: Jesus said “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (*Matthew 22:37-39*).

Each child takes a pledge card from inside of the crown; then the group reads aloud the pledge together.

All: Jesus, I give my heart to you. As a member of your Kingdom, I will do good and avoid sin. I will trust in your mercy when I fail. I will resolve to do better. I will love your people because I love you. Amen.

Catechist: Strengthen us, O God, as we live as signs of your love. Amen.

Closing Ritual Option

Enhance the Closing Ritual Prayer with music. Refer to the instructions in the Catechist Guide. After the part of the Closing Ritual Prayer when the pledge is read, have the children sing the “Lord’s Prayer” (track 4 or 5) from the [Our Family Prayer Collection](#) CD. Then have the children offer each other a sign of peace before continuing on with the prayer.

If any of the children do not have this prayer memorized, direct them to page 82 in the Child Book so that they can follow along.

File: Rec_S5_Live_Closing_Lords_Prayer.mp3