

Reconciliation

Intergenerational Program

“The Sacrament of Reconciliation in Word, Symbols, and Ritual”

Learning Objectives

“Celebrating Reconciliation” guides learners of all ages to...

- develop a deeper understanding of the theology, symbols, and ritual of the Sacrament of the Reconciliation (*know-what*)
- recognize the importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in our lives as Catholics and the regular participation in the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation (*know-why*)
- utilize their understanding of the ritual of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to participate more actively and more meaningfully in the celebration of Reconciliation and to live as a forgiving and forgiven person (*know-how*)

Catechism Connection

1422-1484

Background Readings

Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Rite of Penance. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. 1973.

Finley, Mitch. *The Ten Commandments – Timeless Challenges for Today.* Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2000.

Hughes, Kathleen. *Saying Amen – A Mystagogy of Sacrament.* Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1999.

Mick, Lawrence. *Forming the Assembly to Celebrate the Sacraments.* Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2002.

Richstatter, Thomas. *Sacraments – How Catholics Pray.* Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1995.

Richstatter, Thomas. *Forgiveness in Our Church Today.* (Catholic Update C0403) Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Richstatter, Thomas. *How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today.* (Catholic Update C0800) Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Richstatter, Thomas. *Ten Tips for Better Confessions.* (Catholic Update CU 0890) Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Shannon, William. *Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation and Anointing.* (Exploring the New Catechism J0994) Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press.

Upton, Julia. *A Time for Embracing – Reclaiming Reconciliation*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.

Potential Uses

- Sacramental preparation session for children and parents preparing for First Reconciliation
- Sacramental preparation session for adults in the RCIA
- Preparation program for the community celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Advent, Lent, or other times during the Church Year
- Preparation program on the Sacrament of Reconciliation connected to the Sunday Lectionary readings on the theme of reconciliation, such as the Prodigal Son

Session Resources

Before the Session

Environment

Set-up a “reconciliation center” with two chairs, an open Bible (to the story of the Prodigal Son), a stole, and a lighted candle. Try to get a copy of the *Rite of Penance*, as well.

Home Kit

Home Activities at Generations of Faith Online

- Learning: Exploring Reconciliation and Forgiveness
- Learning: Prodigal Son
- Meal Ritual: Reconciliation
- Ritual Moments: Reconciliation
- Ritual: Family Reconciliation Activity
- Ritual: Family Reconciliation
- Scripture Reflections on Reconciliation
- Table Prayers: Reconciliation

People of Faith—Generations Learning Together Magazines (Harcourt Religion)

Celebrating the Sacraments: Reconciliation (Volume 4, number 3)

Catholic Update (St. Anthony Messenger Press)

Forgiveness in Our Church Today: Key to Healing. Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M. Catholic Update C0403.

The Gift of Reconciliation: Ten Tips for Better Confession. Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M. Catholic Update C0890.

How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today. Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M. Catholic Update C0800.

The Sacraments of Healing: Reconciliation/Anointing. William Shannon. Exploring the New Catechism J0994.

Creative Communications for the Parish

Rite of Penance (Penitent’s Guide).

Prayer Resource

For additional prayer services, prayers, and Scripture readings consult the *Rite of Penance*, including the Appendix for complete Reconciliation Services. The following services are included in the Appendix:

- Penitential Celebrations During Lent
- Penitential Celebrations During Advent
- Sin and Conversion

- The Son Returns to the Father
- The Beatitudes
- For Children: God Comes to Look for Us
- For Young People: Renewal of our Lives according to the Christian Vocation
- For the Sick: The Time of Sickness is a Time of Grace

Materials for the Session

Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities

All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Opening Prayer Service Handout
- Bible

In-Depth Learning Experience

Supplies

- 8.5 x 11 paper for families with children
- poster board or newsprint, markers, and masking tape
- creative arts materials for families with children
- file cards for each person
- Bibles or handouts with the Scripture passages for adolescent and adult work groups

Handouts

- *Story of the Prodigal Son* (Families with Children)
- *The Ten Commandments* (Families with Children)
- *Children's Examination of Conscience*
- *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation: Individual Confession*
- *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a Parish Community*
- *Reconciliation Prayers and Examination of Conscience*
- *My Experience of Reconciliation* (Adolescents and Adults)
- *Putting Yourself in the Gospel Story* (Adolescents and Adults)
- *An Examination of Conscience for Teens*
- *Reconciliation Prayer Service*
- *Youth Update: Reconciliation – An Experience of Forgiveness*. Ellen Fanizzi. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press. (Y0199)
- *Catholic Update: How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today*. Thomas Richstatter. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press. (C0800)

Children's Books

- Children's Bible
- Donze, Mary Terese. *Jesus Forgives My Sins*. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1993.
- Shannon, Ellen and Corinne Hart. *We Ask Forgiveness – A Young Person's Book for Reconciliation*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1991.

Drama Resources

- Glavich, Mary Kathleen. *Acting Out the Miracles and Parables*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1988.
- Glavich, Mary Kathleen. *Acting Out the Gospels – 40 Five-Minute Plays for Education and Worship*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999.

Video for Children

- *The Angel's First Reconciliation Lesson*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications.

Videos for Adolescents and Adults

- *The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God*. St. Anthony Messenger Press. (Teaching Segment and Music Video Reflection Segment)
- Optional feature film for exploring Gospel stories of healing and forgiveness: *Jesus of Nazareth*
- Optional feature films with reconciliation themes. Consult *Lights, Camera... Faith!* (Cycle C) by Peter Malone MSC and Rose Pacette FPS (Boston: Pauline Books and Media) for complete descriptions and study questions.
 - *Life as a House*
 - *A River Runs Through It*
 - *The Straight Story*

Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application

Closing

- Closing Prayer Service

Session at a Glance

Part One: Gathering (5 minutes)

Part Two: All Ages Learning Experience (20-25 minutes)

Part Three: In-Depth Learning Experience (90 minutes)

Age Group Format

Families with Children Learning Experience

1. The Ten Commandments and an Examination of Conscience
2. Understanding the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Adolescent Learning Experience

1. Personal Experience of Reconciliation
2. Exploring Gospel Stories and Teachings on Forgiveness
3. Exploring the Sacrament of Reconciliation
4. Integrating My Understanding of the Sacrament

Adult Learning Experience

1. Personal Experience of Reconciliation
2. Exploring Gospel Stories and Teachings on Forgiveness
3. Exploring the Sacrament of Reconciliation
4. The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Individual and Communal
5. Integrating Learning about the Sacrament

Adult Small Group Learning Experience

Part Four: Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application (15 minutes)

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (15 minutes)

Part 1

Gathering (5 minutes)

1. Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the Home Kit for the session, including any handouts participants will need for the session. (You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.)
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

Welcome

[spoken text] Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation session presents an understanding of the theology, symbols, and ritual of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We will explore the importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for our lives as Catholics and the need for regular participation in the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The goal of the session is help us participate more actively and more meaningfully in the celebration of Reconciliation and to live our lives as forgiving and forgiven people.

2. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational – children, teens, parents, and grandparents – keep them together in one group.

3. Opening Prayer Service

The Opening Prayer Service is incorporated in the All Ages Opening Experience.

Part 2

All Ages Learning Experience (20-25 minutes)

Using the Handout: *A Story of the Prodigal Son*, guide the participants through the All Ages Learning experience. Distribute the handout to everyone.

1. Lost and Found

Read the first question and then ask the participants to share their responses to the question. Give them several minutes to share their responses. Then read the second question and ask them to share their responses.

- Have you ever lost something that was really important to you? How did you feel when you lost it? Did you eventually find what you lost? How did you feel when you found it?
- Have you ever been lost or separated from loved ones—even for a little while? (Children example: Think of being separated from your family at a zoo or the mall or...) How did you feel? What were you thinking? How did you feel when you were found?

2. Gospel Reading: Luke 15:11-31 (The Prodigal Son)

Select four readers who take the different parts of the reading: Narrator (Jesus telling the story), Father, Younger Son, and Older Son. Tell the story.

3. Family Activity: Story of Prodigal Son

Introduce the following activity by saying: *Now let's look at a story of a son (could be a daughter too!) who decides to leave home and gets lost.*

Using the Handout: *Story of the Prodigal Son*, guide the participants through the activity by reading each numbered section and then completing the questions as a group. Invite the participants to respond to the questions. Move from section to section by reading the Scripture passage and then answering the questions.

Be sure to spend time on the concluding question: *How do you think God is like the father in the story?*

Conclude by sharing (in your own words) the following thoughts:

The Story of the Prodigal Son could easily be called the Story of the Forgiving Father. God is like the Father in this story. God is always there to forgive us when we are sorry. God comes out to meet us and welcome us back.

We must tell God we are sorry when we have done wrong. We must also tell the person we have hurt that we're sorry. It isn't easy to say I'm sorry. It is difficult to ask for forgiveness and admit that we have chosen to do something wrong.

Also we must make up for any harm we have caused. How can we do this? (Suggest ideas or ask the group for their ideas. For example: If we have lied, we must tell the truth. If we have stolen something, we must give it back. If we have been unkind to someone, we must be nice to them.)

Each week we ask for and receive God's forgiveness at Mass. At the beginning of the Mass, the priest leads us in asking for forgiveness and we all respond, "Lord have mercy." He concludes by praying, "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life."

In a special way we ask for and receive God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. During the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation we think about the times we have chosen to do something wrong and hurt others, and we ask God to forgive us and welcome us home.

Close with a prayer from the Rite of Penance and a song.

Check the following sources for songs:

- *Singing Our Faith – A Hymnal for Young Catholics* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001) [Hymnal, Leader's/Catechist's Manual, 11 CD set]
- *Walking by Faith – Music and Ritual Prayer for Children*. David Haas and Robert W. Piercy. (Chicago, GIA Publications, 1997.) [CD]
- *Spirit and Song – A Seeker's Guide for Liturgy and Prayer*. (Portland: OCP Publications, 1999.) [Hymnal and 10 CD set]
- *Gather – Comprehensive*. (Chicago: GIA, 1994)

Part 3

In-Depth Learning Experiences (90 minutes)

The In-Depth Learning Experience is designed for the **Age Group Format** using the lesson plans for families with children, adolescents, and adults.

Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic.

You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators and catechists to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.
- A facilitator must guide all of the families through each learning experience, while catechist move from table to table assisting.

Age Group Format Outline

The In-Depth Learning Plan can be utilized for break-out groups of families with children, adolescents, and adults.

Families with Children

The lesson plan is designed for table groups of two or more families (you can organize individual family groups). Make sure each table has the supplies, instructions, and learning materials necessary to do the activities. A facilitator guides the families through each activity. Catechists move from table to table assisting families.

There are several ways to use the Age Group Format with the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

Option 1: Two Learning Groups

- Group 1: 2nd graders preparing for First Reconciliation with their parents (Use Activities #1 and #2 in the session plan.)
- Group 2: 3rd-5th graders with their parents (Use Activities #1 and #2 in the session plan.)

Option 2: Two Learning Groups

- Group 1: children only (Use Activities #1 and #2 in session plan.)
- Group 2: parents only (Use the adult session plan.)

Option 3: Three Learning Groups

- Group 1: 2nd graders preparing for First Reconciliation with their parents (Use Activities #1 and #2 in the session plan.)
- Group 2: 3rd-5th graders with their parents (Use Activities #1 and #2 in the session plan.)
- Group 3: parents only (Use the adult session plan.)

For 2nd Graders preparing for First Reconciliation:

After showing *The Angel's First Reconciliation Lesson* help the children prepare for the Sacrament by rehearsing the Rite of Penance, step by step. The goal is to help children feel comfortable with celebrating the Rite.

Learning Plan Outline

- Activity 1. The Ten Commandments and an Examination of Conscience
- Activity 2. Understanding the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Adolescents

Learning Plan Outline

1. Personal Experience of Reconciliation
2. Exploring Gospel Stories and Teachings on Forgiveness
3. Exploring the Sacrament of Reconciliation
4. Integrating My Understanding of the Sacrament

Adults

Learning Plan Outline

1. Personal Experience of Reconciliation
2. Exploring Gospel Stories and Teachings on Forgiveness
3. Exploring the Sacrament of Reconciliation
4. The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Individual and Communal
5. Integrating Learning about the Sacrament

Adult Small Group Learning Experience

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Learning Experience

Preparation

Supplies

- 8.5 x 11 paper for families with children
- poster board or newsprint, markers, and masking tape
- creative arts materials for families with children
- file cards for each person
- Bibles or handouts with the Scripture passages for adolescent and adult work groups

Handouts

- *Story of the Prodigal Son* (Families with Children)
- *The Ten Commandments* (Families with Children)
- *Children's Examination of Conscience*
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- *Reconciliation Prayers and Examination of Conscience*
- *My Experience of Reconciliation* (Adolescents and Adults)
- *Putting Yourself in the Gospel Story* (Adolescents and Adults)
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Videos for Adolescents and Adults

- *The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God*. St. Anthony Messenger Press. (Teaching Segment and Music Video Reflection Segment)
- Optional feature film for exploring Gospel stories of healing and forgiveness: *Jesus of Nazareth*

- Optional feature films with reconciliation themes. Consult *Lights, Camera... Faith!* (Cycle C) by Peter Malone MSC and Rose Pacette FPS (Boston: Pauline Books and Media) for complete descriptions and study questions.
 - *Life as a House*
 - *A River Runs Through It*
 - *The Straight Story*

Families with Children Learning Experience

1. The Ten Commandments and an Examination of Conscience

Organize the participants into family groups or family clusters.

Creative Activity: Creating Rules

Begin the session by asking the children (with the help of their parents) to imagine they are making rules for God's people. Get responses to the first question from the children. Write the answers on newsprint. After you get a good number of responses, ask the children the second question—exploring what good things would happen if people kept the rules.

- If you were in charge of making rules for God's people, what rules would you make?
- What good things would happen if people kept your rules?

The Ten Commandments

Reviewing the Ten Commandments

Review each of the Ten Commandments (on the Handout). Read them aloud to the group or go around the group and ask one child to read each commandment or read them together as a group. (You may want to write each commandment on individual posters and hang them around the room. You can also print each commandment on a separate sheet of paper using your computer and printer.)

Ask the children (and parents) to compare their rules with God's rules (The 10 Commandments). Where do they see the similarities? What would they add to their list from God's list?

Ask the children (with parental assistance) to develop a list of things that they can do to live "God's rules": *What can we say or do to live God's commandment?* Write their responses on a sheet of newsprint paper for all to see. Use the list below to supplement the list from the children. Be sure to add your own ideas.

Examples of how we keep God's rules...

- worship every week at Mass
- pray regularly
- love, respect, and obey your parents
- tell the truth
- respect and be kind to all people
- forgive people who hurt us
- share what we have with others
- respect what belongs to others
- treat animals and the earth with care
- be thankful for all that you have

Examination of Conscience

Explain to the children there are times when we do not do what God asks us to do: times when we have broken one of God's commandments, when we have said or done things that have hurt others and hurt our relationship with God. Guide the children through an examination of conscience. (Parents should use the examination of conscience on the Handout: *Reconciliation Prayers and Examination of Conscience*.)

Say to the children (and parents): *God is always ready to forgive us, if we ask. The Sacrament of Reconciliation gives us an opportunity to ask for and receive God's forgiveness.*

Ask the children to think about one thing they want to ask God to forgive in their life (see Handout). (Ask parents to review their own list.) Consider...

- Did I talk to God today?
- Did I say God's name with respect?
- Did I go to Sunday Mass to praise God?
- Did I respect and obey my parents?
- Did I respect others as children of God.
- Did I call someone a mean name?
- Did I hurt someone's feelings?
- Did I fight with anyone?
- Did I steal?
- Did I lie?
- Did I try to bring God's love to others?
- Did I share with my brothers, sisters or friends?
- Did I help someone who needed me?
- Was I friendly to people who are different from me?

On a file card, ask the children (and parents) to write one thing they want to ask God to forgive. One file card per person. Place all of the file cards in a basket and hold them for the closing prayer service.

2. Understanding the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Preparation

Be sure to review the teacher background materials prior to the teaching this part of the session, especially the following:

- *How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today*. (Catholic Update C0800)
- *Ten Tips for Better Confessions*. (Catholic Update CU 0890)

Jesus on Forgiveness

The Sacrament of Reconciliation like all the sacraments is rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus. Explore Jesus' ministry of healing and forgiveness by using several key Gospel passages.

Key Gospel Passages

Select one or more of these Gospel passages to explore Jesus' practice of forgiveness.

- A King Who Forgives: Matthew 18:21-35
- Healing a Crippled Man: Luke 5:17-26
- The Pardon of the Sinful Woman: Luke 7:36-50
- The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-31
- Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector: Luke 19:1-10
- The Woman Caught in Sin: John 8:3-11
- The Samaritan Woman: John 4:5-42

Putting Yourself in the Gospel – Creative Imagination Activity

Review the questions with the children and parents so that they are prepared to listen attentively to the Gospel story. You might want to put the key questions on a sheet of newsprint.

Using a Children's Bible (for younger children) and/or the Contemporary English Version – Catholic Edition (American Bible Society), slowly read the story you have selected. Give the children time to imagine themselves inside the story. After you have read the story once, now re-read the story stopping frequently to invite the children to answer the questions below. For older children you may want them to write their observations on paper each time you pause in telling the story.

Adjust the following questions to fit your Gospel story.

Observation Questions

Ask everyone to step into the story and become a part of it. Ask them to imagine themselves as disciples traveling with Jesus.

- What is happening?
- What kind of day is it?
- Who is with Jesus?
- What is Jesus doing? What does he say?
- What is the crowd or individual saying or doing?

Ask the children to imagine themselves as the person who encounters Jesus.

- Why do you approach Jesus?
- What does Jesus say or do to you?
- What happens to you? What are your feelings?
- What do you do after your encounter with Jesus? etc.

Reflection Questions

Invite the children to reflect on the meaning of the passage or story.

- What is Jesus saying to us about forgiveness and reconciliation?
- What is Jesus challenging us to do?

Video Presentation: “The Angel’s First Reconciliation Lesson”

To explore the Sacrament of Reconciliation show the video presentation, “The Angel’s First Reconciliation Lesson.” This video for children ages 7 through 10 offers children information about friendship with Jesus, forgiveness, and the four steps of the Rite of Penance.

If showing the video is not an option, move ahead to the presentation in the next section. Be sure to prepare yourself for the presentation on Reconciliation reviewing the following resources:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1422-1484
- *How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today*. (Catholic Update C0800)
- *Ten Tips for Better Confessions*. (Catholic Update CU 0890)

The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Individual and Communal

Using the video and the Handout: *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation – Individual Confession*, review with the children (and parents) the four movements (steps) in the Rite of Penance for Individual Penitents. To help the children (and parents) become comfortable with individual confession demonstrate each movement of the Sacrament with them, explaining what the penitent does and what the priest does, praying the prayers etc. (Use the *Rite of Penance – Penitents Guide* for prayers, gestures, etc.)

Use the “reconciliation center” with two chairs, an open Bible (to the story of the Prodigal Son), a stole, and a lighted candle. .

1. Welcoming the Penitent
2. Reading from Scripture
3. Confessing of Sins
4. Receiving Forgiveness (Absolution)

Also discuss with the children and parents that several times a year (e.g., Advent and Lent) the whole church community gathers to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Rite of Reconciliation: Communal Celebration). Use the Handout: *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a Parish Community* to review the four movements of the community-wide celebration. Note the similarities between the individual rite and the communal rite. (This will be the format we will use in the closing prayer service.)

1. Gathering
2. Storytelling
3. Reconciling
4. Commissioning

Adolescent Learning Experience

1. Personal Experience of Reconciliation

Select the activity that best fits the needs of your group.

Option 1: My Experience of Reconciliation

The first option for beginning this session is through storytelling. Ask participants to take several minutes to reflect personally on the questions in the Handout and then share their reflections with their group. (You can use the Handout or post the questions on newsprint for the young people to see.)

Organize the participants into small groups of 4-6 people. Ask the participants to share their reflections with their group. Remind them this is a sharing activity, not a discussion so be sure to give each person time to share his or her responses.

Conclude by asking young people to share responses to the three questions in the large group.

Option 2: Feature Films with Reconciliation Themes

A second option is to show an excerpt from a feature film that addresses forgiveness and reconciliation. Each of the following four movies have segments that portray the human experience of sin/brokenness and forgiveness/reconciliation. Use the book *Lights, Camera...Faith – Cycle C* by Peter Malone and Rose Pacette (Boston: Pauline Book and Media) for an overview of the movies and key segments to use. Then preview the movie and select one or more segments to help the participants experience the reconciliation themes.

- *Life as a House* (Gospel parallel: Luke 15—Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Prodigal Son)
- *A River Runs Through It* (Gospel parallel: The Story of the Prodigal Son)
- *The Straight Story*

After the movie invite the group to reflect on its meaning. Ask the young people:

- What did you see and hear? What did you feel and think as you watched the film?
- What touched you about this film? What was memorable?
- What did this film teach you about sin/brokenness and reconciliation/forgiveness?
- How could this film teach us about the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How does it reflect or contradict Jesus' teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation?

Option 3: "Pardon and Peace...Remembered" Video Segment in *The God Who Reconciles* (Catholic Update Video)

"Pardon and Peace...Remembered" is the story segment of *The God Who Reconciles*. Those who are familiar with the catechetical film *Pardon and Peace* produced in 1983 by Franciscan Communications will recognize this story as an updated and expanded version of that classic

program. The story echoes human stories of separation and reconciliation as old as the Prodigal Son and as contemporary as today's headlines.

- Introduce the video story.
- Show the video story.
- Invite the young people to discuss the video story.
 - What did you see and hear? What did you feel and think as you watched the film?
 - What touched you about this film? What was memorable?
 - Why is it so difficult for some people to say "I'm sorry." Why is it so difficult for many people to take the initiative in asking for forgiveness?
 - How big a part does fear play in resistance to reconciliation? What other factors get in the way?
 - What did this film teach you about forgiveness and reconciliation?
 - What does this film teach us about the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How does it reflect or contradict Jesus' teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation?
- Ask the young people to sum up the message of this story. It is a story that helps viewers reflect on several different aspects of the process of reconciliation—our need to ask for and offer forgiveness, the fact that we are forgivable, and God's generous mercy.

2. Exploring Gospel Stories and Teachings on Forgiveness

The Sacrament of Reconciliation like all the sacraments is rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus. Explore Jesus' ministry of healing and forgiveness by using several key Gospel passages. Here are four options to engage the young people in exploring the teachings and practices of Jesus on forgiveness.

Key Gospel Passages

Select one or more of these Gospel passages to explore Jesus' practice of forgiveness.

- A King Who Forgives: Matthew 18:21-35
- Healing a Crippled Man: Luke 5:17-26
- The Pardon of the Sinful Woman: Luke 7:36-50
- The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-31
- Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector: Luke 19:1-10
- The Woman Caught in Sin: John 8:3-11
- The Samaritan Woman: John 4:5-42

Option 1: Putting Yourself in the Gospel—Creative Imagination Activity

Review the questions with the young people so that they are prepared to listen attentively to the Gospel story. Use the Handout or write the key questions on a sheet of newsprint.

Select the Gospel stories you want to present.

Slowly read each story you have selected. Give the young people time to imagine themselves inside the story. After you have read the story once, now re-read the story stopping frequently to invite the young people to answer the questions below. You may want them to write their observations on paper each time you pause in telling the story.

Adjust the following questions to fit your Gospel story.

Observation Questions

Ask everyone to step into the story and become a part of it. Ask them to imagine themselves as disciples traveling with Jesus.

- What is happening?
- What kind of day is it?
- Who is with Jesus?
- What is Jesus doing? What does he say?
- What is the crowd or individual saying or doing?

Ask everyone to imagine themselves as the person who encounters Jesus.

- Why do you approach Jesus?
- What does Jesus say or do to you?
- What happens to you? What are your feelings?
- What do you do after your encounter with Jesus? etc.

Reflection Questions

After the Gospel stories, invite the young people to reflect on the meaning of the stories in the large group or in small groups.

- What is Jesus saying to us about forgiveness and reconciliation?
- How does Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
- How does Jesus' approach challenge the "conventional wisdom" about forgiveness?
- What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus' approach to forgiveness? What would change?
- What is Jesus challenging us to do?

Option 2: Dramatizing the Gospel Story

You can engage the young people in dramatizing Gospel stories. Use the resources listed below to dramatize Gospel stories of forgiveness. Use the following process:

1. Read the Gospel story aloud.
2. Present the drama in the activity you have selected. *Scripture Alive* presents the Gospel stories in a contemporary situation; *Gospel Scenes* uses a multi-part dramatic reading with a guided meditation.
3. Utilize the following questions to discuss each Gospel story you dramatized:
 - How would you characterize Jesus' teaching and practice on reconciliation based on his actions and stories?

- How does Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
- How does Jesus' approach challenge the "conventional wisdom" about forgiveness?
- What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus' approach to forgiveness? What would change?

Resources

Scripture Alive – Role-Plays for Youth. Rosemary Marmouget. Winona, MN: St. Mary's Press, 1997.

- Parable of the Prodigal Son: Forgiveness, Responsibility, Justice.
- The Adulterous Woman: Dignity, Respect, Forgiveness
- The Samaritan Woman: Risks, Faith, Self-Worth

Gospel Scenes for Teens – 23 Guided Prayer Meditations. M. Valerie Schneider. Mystic, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 2000.

- Parable of the Prodigal Son

Option 3: Video Presentations of Gospel Stories

You can use two videos to present Gospel stories of forgiveness.

To present the story of the Prodigal Son consider using *A Father and Two Sons – A Video Translation of Luke 11.11-32* from the American Bible Society. (Use the Video Discussion Guide that accompanies the video to create reflection questions.)

Present the following Gospel readings by using segments from the feature film, *Jesus of Nazareth*. There are four segments in the video, *Jesus of Nazareth*, that present Gospel stories of forgiveness:

- Matthew the tax collector and the healing of the paralytic man
- Parable of the Prodigal Son
- Mary Magdalen
- Woman caught in adultery

Find the Gospel story in the film. A partial list of Gospel stories from *Jesus of Nazareth* is included at the end of the session plan. (Using the DVD version of *Jesus of Nazareth* will make it easier to find the story.)

1. Select the Gospel stories and video segments you want to present.
2. Begin by reading the Gospel story. Then play the film version. Present the Gospel stories one-by-one.
3. After all of the Gospel stories, invite everyone to discuss Jesus' approach to forgiveness. (You can also discuss in small groups.) Use questions such as:
 - How would you characterize Jesus' teaching and practice on reconciliation based on his actions and stories?

- How does Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
- How does Jesus' approach challenge the "conventional wisdom" about forgiveness?
- What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus' approach to forgiveness? What would change?

Option 4: Read, Reflect, and Present

1. Organize the large group into work groups of 6-8 people and assign each group one Gospel story.
2. Their task will be to explain Jesus' approach to forgiveness based on the Gospel story. Ask each group to read the Gospel story and, take a few minutes to discuss as a group the characteristics of Jesus' approach, and then, work together to prepare a brief presentation summarizing the Gospel story and what they learned.
3. Ask the small groups to present their explanations to their entire group. On newsprint write down the key points the young people are presenting.
4. After all presentations, invite everyone to discuss Jesus' approach to forgiveness using the following questions:
 - How would you characterize Jesus' teaching and practice on reconciliation based on his actions and stories?
 - How does Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
 - How does Jesus' approach challenge the "conventional wisdom" about forgiveness?
 - What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus' approach to forgiveness? What would change?

3. Exploring the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Video Presentation: The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God

Show the Teaching Segment from the video: *The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God*. In this segment Fr. Thomas Richstatter reminds us that sinners were not afraid of Jesus. Jesus was a friend of sinners—forgiving them, eating with them, making friends with them and calling them to be his disciples. He also explains how the Church continues the healing ministry of Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Here is an outline of his presentation:

- Jesus is the primary sacrament of God's forgiveness.
- The Church continues the healing ministry of Jesus and has celebrated our "reconciling God" in different ways throughout history.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is similar to Eucharist in that it...
 - celebrates the Paschal Victory
 - consists of a) gathering, b) storytelling, c) sacramental action, and d) commissioning

- The revision of the *Rite of Penance* following Vatican II provides for different ways to celebrate the sacrament. The basic structure is similar whether celebrated individually in the reconciliation chapel or communally with the parish. There are four steps in a communal celebration:
 1. The community *gathers* with the help of a hymn, greeting, and prayer by the priest.
 2. We tell the scriptural *stories* of God’s love and mercy.
 - a. We examine our conscience in light of Scripture.
 - b. We express our sorrow in an act of contrition.
 3. We take part in the *sacramental action* by
 - a. processing to the priest to confess our sins (the priest responds with a word of encouragement, a proclamation of God’s forgiveness and absolution)
 - b. celebrating God’s response through a proclamation of praise and thanksgiving, praying the Lord’s Prayer, offering a kiss of peace and singing a song of thanksgiving.
 4. After the concluding rites of prayers and thanksgivings, we are *commissioned* or *dismissed* – sent forth to be ambassadors of reconciliation.
- Sacraments are something we *are*, not just something we *receive*.
 - We are to be a reconciling Church.
 - A communal celebration presupposes a reconciling parish.
 - The Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrates the dreams of our Creator; dreams made real in the Paschal Victory of Jesus.

If showing the video is not an option, move ahead to the presentation in the next section. Be sure to prepare yourself for the presentation on Reconciliation reviewing the following resources:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church 1422-1484*
- *How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today.* (Catholic Update C0800)
- *Ten Tips for Better Confessions.* (Catholic Update CU 0890)

The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Individual and Communal

Using the video and the Handout: *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation – Individual Confession*, review with the adolescents the four movements (steps) in the Rite of Penance for Individual Penitents. To help the young people become comfortable with individual confession demonstrate each movement of the Sacrament with them, explaining what the penitent does and what the priest does, praying the prayers etc. Invite questions throughout the demonstration. (Use *Rite of Penance – Penitents Guide* for prayers, gestures, etc.)

Use the “reconciliation center” with two chairs, an open Bible (to the story of the Prodigal Son), a stole, and a lighted candle.

1. Welcoming the Penitent
2. Reading from Scripture
3. Confessing of Sins
4. Receiving Forgiveness (Absolution)

Also discuss with the adolescents that several times a year (e.g., Advent and Lent) the whole church community gathers to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Rite of Reconciliation: Communal Celebration). Use the Handout: *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a Parish Community* to review the four movements of the community-wide celebration. Note the similarities between the individual rite and the communal rite. (This will be the format we will use in the closing prayer service.)

1. Gathering
2. Storytelling
3. Reconciling
4. Commissioning

Reflection

Discuss the following questions in the large group or in small groups of 4-6 young people followed by sharing reflections with everyone. Write the questions on newsprint.

- How would you characterize the Church's teaching on the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- What did you find insightful and helpful in the Church's teaching?

Reflection: Examination of Conscience

Before moving on to the final part of the session. Take time to prepare the adolescents for the closing prayer services by providing time for reflection. Ask the teens to read *An Examination of Conscience for Teens* and, on a file card, write one thing they want to ask God to forgive. Place all of the file cards in a basket and hold them for the closing prayer service.

4. Integrating My Understanding of the Sacrament

Conduct one (or more if time allows) of the following integration learning activities to deepen the young people's understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation using the learning resources from this session. Select the activity that is best for your group.

Option 1 Debate: "Why do we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?"

Organize the debate, "Why do we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?" by dividing the participants into two teams. Group #1 develops reasons why they think the Sacrament of Reconciliation is important for our lives as Catholics. Group #2 develops reasons why they think the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not important or necessary for our lives as Catholics."

Tell the groups they have ten minutes to prepare their reasons. At the end of the work time have each subgroup select 2-3 spokespeople.

After ten minutes gather the groups together, set up two facing rows of 2-3 chairs each for the spokespersons of each team. Place the remaining participants behind their spokespersons.

Begin the debate by having the spokespersons present their reasons and examples. Refer to this process as “opening arguments.” Begin with the reasons why the sacrament is not important or necessary (Group #2) and then the reasons why it is important (Group #1).

After everyone has heard the opening arguments, stop the debate and reconvene the original subgroups. Ask the subgroups to strategize how to counter the opening arguments of the opposing side. Again, have each subgroup select a spokesperson, preferably a new person. (You may want to add one or more chairs to the spokespersons’ row. Allow participants to occupy these chairs whenever they want to join the debate.) Give them five minutes to prepare for the next round.

Resume the debate. Have the spokespersons give “counter-arguments.” As the debate continues (be sure to alternate between sides), encourage other participants to pass notes to their debaters with suggested arguments or rebuttals. Also, urge them to cheer or applaud the arguments of their debate-team representatives.

After fifteen minutes end the debate. Instead of declaring a winner, reconvene the entire group in a circle. Be sure to integrate the group by having participants sit next to people who were on opposing teams. Hold a full-group discussion using questions such as:

- How did you feel about making a case why participating in the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is or is not important?
- What were the best arguments raised on both sides of the debate?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Option 2 Presentation: “Why we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?”

Invite the young people to create a contemporary presentation on the understanding and practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation that can be used to teach others. Their work can be structured around the question, “Why we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation in our lives as Catholics?”

Their presentation can use stories, drama, demonstrations, graphics (poster or ad), a song, etc. They should develop their explanation for a specific setting. You may want to assign a setting or give groups a variety of choices. Here are several options:

- a presentation at a youth meeting
- a talk on a youth retreat about the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- an RCIA program for youth and adults on the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- a Sunday homily on the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- a First Reconciliation parent education program

Organize the young people into working groups of 6 people. Give them the supplies they will need and a sheet of newsprint or poster paper to present their work. Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group.

Reflection on the Presentations

Invite the young people to share their reflections after the final presentation. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation by creating your presentation? What new insights into the Sacrament of Reconciliation did you discover?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation from the presentations by the other groups? Which presentations were the most enlightening? What affirmed your own understanding? What was new or challenging?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Option 3 Advertisement: “Why do we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?”

Invite the young people to create advertisements to invite/attract the parish community to participate in the parish-wide celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Advent or Lent. The ads should be focused on the question, “Why we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation in our lives as Catholics?”

Ads can focus on the entire parish community or can target specific groups, such as other young people, children, and families. They can use a variety of advertising methods, e.g., a 30 second TV or radio ad, a song, an ad in a magazine, poster advertisement, a billboard, a calendar, magnets, etc. You may want to choose several methods and obtain the supplies the young people will need to accomplish their work.

This project involves writing the content for an advertisement (e.g., a script for a commercial or magazine ad), identifying or creating artwork, symbol, images, photos, etc. to accompany the content, and developing the final product. Guide the young people through the following process:

1. *Focus Your Ad:* In short phrases clearly identify what you want to communicate.
2. *Select Your Advertising Approach:* Think about all the types of advertisements in magazines and on the radio and television. Select your approach, e.g. 30 second TV or radio ad, magazine ad, poster advertisement, direct mail postcard or advertisement, magnet for the refrigerator, screensaver for a computer screen, buttons, etc. (The young people may have other good ideas to suggest.)
3. *Design Your Ad:* Combine your content or message with your advertising method to create your unique promotion. Add color or artwork or whatever else will enhance your promotion.

Organize the young people into work groups of 6 people. Give them the supplies they will need and a sheet of newsprint or poster paper to record their work. Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group.

Reflection on the Presentations

Invite the young people to share their reflections after the final ad is presented. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation by creating your ad? What new insights into the Sacrament of Reconciliation did you discover?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation from the ads by the other groups? Which presentations were the most enlightening? What affirmed your own understanding? What was new or challenging?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Option 4. "Top Ten Reasons for Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation."

Ask the young people to create a *Top Ten Reasons for Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation* using what they have learned from the session about the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Organize the young people into work groups of 6 people. Give them file cards or a sheet of newsprint to develop their Top Ten list. Each group will then present their Top Ten list to the large group.

Reflection on the Presentations

Invite the young people to share their reflections after the final presentation. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation by creating your Top Ten list? What new insights into the Sacrament of Reconciliation did you discover?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation from the Top Ten lists by the other groups? Which presentations were the most enlightening? What affirmed your own understanding? What was new or challenging?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Adult Learning Experience

There are two versions of this learning program – one for a large group session with a facilitator/presenter and one for a small group setting, such as a faith sharing group (next program). This learning program can also be used with parents whose children are preparing for First Reconciliation.

1. Personal Experience of Reconciliation

Select the activity that best fits the needs of your group.

Option 1: My Experience of Reconciliation

The first option for beginning this session is through storytelling. Ask participants to take several minutes to reflect personally on the questions in the Handout and then share their reflections with their group. (You can use the Handout or post the questions on newsprint for the participants to see.)

Ask the participants to share their reflections with their group. Remind them this is a sharing activity, not a discussion so be sure to give each person time to share his or her responses.

Conclude by asking the participants to share responses to the three questions in the large group.

Option 2: Feature Films with Reconciliation Themes

A second option is to show an excerpt from a feature film that addresses forgiveness and reconciliation. Each of the following four movies have segments that portray the human experience of sin/brokenness and forgiveness/reconciliation. Use the book *Lights, Camera...Faith – Cycle C* by Peter Malone and Rose Pacette (Boston: Pauline Book and Media) for an overview of the movies and key segments to use. Then preview the movie and select one or more segments to help the participants experience the reconciliation themes.

- *Life as a House* (Gospel parallel: Luke 15 – Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Prodigal Son)
- *A River Runs Through It* (Gospel parallel: The Story of the Prodigal Son)
- *The Straight Story*

After the movie invite the group to reflect on its meaning. Ask the participants:

- What did you see and hear? What did you feel and think as you watched the film?
- What touched you about this film? What was memorable?
- What did this film teach you about sin/brokenness and reconciliation/forgiveness?
- How could this film teach us about the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How does it reflect or contradict Jesus' teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation?

Option 3: “Pardon and Peace...Remembered” Video Segment in The God Who Reconciles (Catholic Update Video)

“Pardon and Peace...Remembered” is the story segment of *The God Who Reconciles*. Those who are familiar with the catechetical film *Pardon and Peace* produced in 1983 by Franciscan Communications will recognize this story as an updated and expanded version of that classic program. The story echoes human stories of separation and reconciliation as old as the Prodigal Son and as contemporary as today’s headlines.

- Introduce the video story.
- Show the video story.
- Invite the participants to discuss the video story.
 - What did you see and hear? What did you feel and think as you watched the film?
 - What touched you about this film? What was memorable?
 - Why is it so difficult for some people to say “I’m sorry.” Why is it so difficult for many people to take the initiative in asking for forgiveness?
 - How big a part does fear play in resistance to reconciliation? What other factors get in the way?
 - What did this film teach you about forgiveness and reconciliation?
 - What does this film teach us about the Sacrament of Reconciliation? How does it reflect or contradict Jesus’ teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation?
- Ask the participants to sum up the message of this story. It is a story that helps viewers reflect on several different aspects of the process of reconciliation – our need to ask for and offer forgiveness, the fact that we are forgivable, and God’s generous mercy.

2. Exploring Gospel Stories and Teachings on Forgiveness

The Sacrament of Reconciliation like all the sacraments is rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus. Explore Jesus’ ministry of healing and forgiveness by using several key Gospel passages. Here are three options to engage the participants in exploring the teachings and practices of Jesus on forgiveness.

Key Gospel Passages

Select one or more of these Gospel passages to explore Jesus’ practice of forgiveness.

- A King Who Forgives: Matthew 18:21-35
- Healing a Crippled Man: Luke 5:17-26
- The Pardon of the Sinful Woman: Luke 7:36-50
- The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-31
- Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector: Luke 19:1-10
- The Woman Caught in Sin: John 8:3-11
- The Samaritan Woman: John 4:5-42

Option 1: Putting Yourself in the Gospel—Creative Imagination Activity

Review the questions with the participants so that they are prepared to listen attentively to the Gospel story. Use the Handout or write the key questions on a sheet of newsprint.

Select the Gospel stories you want to present.

Slowly read each story you have selected. Give the participants time to imagine themselves inside the story. After you have read the story once, now re-read the story stopping frequently to invite the participants to answer the questions below. You may want them to write their observations on paper each time you pause in telling the story.

Adjust the following questions to fit your Gospel story.

Observation Questions

Ask everyone to step into the story and become a part of it. Ask them to imagine themselves as disciples traveling with Jesus.

- What is happening?
- What kind of day is it?
- Who is with Jesus?
- What is Jesus doing? What does he say?
- What is the crowd or individual saying or doing?

Ask everyone to imagine themselves as the person who encounters Jesus.

- Why do you approach Jesus?
- What does Jesus say or do to you?
- What happens to you? What are your feelings?
- What do you do after your encounter with Jesus? etc.

Reflection Questions

After all of the Gospel stories, invite the participants to reflect on the meaning of the stories in the large group or in small groups.

- What is Jesus saying to us about forgiveness and reconciliation?
- How does Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
- How does Jesus' approach challenge the "conventional wisdom" about forgiveness?
- What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus' approach to forgiveness? What would change?
- What is Jesus challenging us to do?

Option 2: Video Presentations of Gospel Stories

You can use two videos to present Gospel stories of forgiveness.

To present the story of the Prodigal Son consider using *A Father and Two Sons – A Video Translation of Luke 11.11-32* from the American Bible Society.

Present the following Gospel readings by using segments from the feature film, *Jesus of Nazareth*. There are four segments in the video, *Jesus of Nazareth*, that present Gospel stories of forgiveness:

- Matthew the tax collector and the healing of the paralytic man
- Parable of the Prodigal Son
- Mary Magdalen
- Woman caught in adultery

Find the Gospel story in the film. A partial list of Gospel stories from *Jesus of Nazareth* is included at the end of the session plan. (Using the DVD version of *Jesus of Nazareth* will make it easier to find the story.)

1. Select the Gospel stories and video segments you want to present.
2. Begin by reading the Gospel story. Then play the film version. Present the Gospel stories one-by-one.
3. After all of the Gospel stories, invite everyone to discuss Jesus' approach to forgiveness. (You can also discuss in small groups.) Use questions such as:
 - How would you characterize Jesus' teaching and practice on reconciliation based on his actions and stories?
 - How does Jesus' teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
 - How does Jesus' approach challenge the "conventional wisdom" about forgiveness?
 - What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus' approach to forgiveness? What would change?

Option 3: Read, Reflect, and Present

1. Organize the large group into work groups of 6-8 people and assign each group one Gospel story.
2. Their task will be to explain Jesus' approach to forgiveness based on the Gospel story. Ask each group to read the Gospel story and, take a few minutes to discuss as a group the characteristics of Jesus' approach, and then, work together to prepare a brief presentation summarizing the Gospel story and what they learned.
3. Ask the small groups to present their explanations to their entire group. On newsprint write down the key points from the presentations.
4. After all presentations, invite everyone to discuss Jesus' approach to forgiveness using the following questions:

- How would you characterize Jesus’ teaching and practice on reconciliation based on his actions and stories?
- How does Jesus’ teaching and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation compare with the world’s understanding and practice of forgiveness and reconciliation? How does it compare to our usual approach?
- How does Jesus’ approach challenge the “conventional wisdom” about forgiveness?
- What if we as individuals, as a church, and as a society adopted Jesus’ approach to forgiveness? What would change?

3. Exploring the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Video Presentation: The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God

Use the video, *The Church Celebrates the Reconciling God*, to present the history and theology of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Begin by showing the Story Segment. The Story Segment shows three movements in the history of the Sacrament of Reconciliation through interviews with characters from three very different periods in the Church: a Fourth-Century bishop, a Seventh-Century monk, and a Twentieth-Century priest. Each of these imaging representatives from key periods in the shaping of the sacrament will speak for the Church of his time.

Optional Reflection Questions for Group Discussion on the Story Segment

- What early memories do you have of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- How has this sacrament changed in your lifetime? How have you experienced this change?
- How has your view of sin changed over time? Does this reflect a change in your relationship with God?
- What are your feelings about approaching this sacrament?

In the Teaching Segment Fr. Thomas Richstatter reminds us that sinners were not afraid of Jesus. Jesus was a friend of sinners – forgiving them, eating with them, making friends with them and calling them to be his disciples. He also explains how the Church continues the healing ministry of Jesus, celebrating the reconciling God, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Here is an outline of his presentation:

- Jesus is the primary sacrament of God’s forgiveness.
- The Church continues the healing ministry of Jesus and has celebrated our “reconciling God” in different ways throughout history.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is similar to Eucharist in that it...
 - celebrates the Paschal Victory
 - consists of a) gathering, b) storytelling, c) sacramental action, and d) commissioning
- The revision of the *Rite of Penance* following Vatican II provides for different ways to celebrate the sacrament. The basic structure is similar whether celebrated

individually in the reconciliation chapel or communally with the parish. There are four steps in a communal celebration:

1. The community *gathers* with the help of a hymn, greeting, and prayer by the priest.
 2. We tell the scriptural *stories* of God's love and mercy.
 - a. We examine our conscience in light of Scripture.
 - b. We express our sorrow in an act of contrition.
 3. We take part in the *sacramental action* by
 - a. processing to the priest to confess our sins (the priest responds with a word of encouragement, a proclamation of God's forgiveness and absolution)
 - b. celebrating God's response through a proclamation of praise and thanksgiving, praying the Lord's Prayer, offering a kiss of peace and singing a song of thanksgiving.
 4. After the concluding rites of prayers and thanksgivings, we are *commissioned* or *dismissed* – sent forth to be ambassadors of reconciliation.
- Sacraments are something we *are*, not just something we *receive*.
 - We are to be a reconciling Church.
 - A communal celebration presupposes a reconciling parish.
 - The Sacrament of Reconciliation celebrates the dreams of our Creator; dreams made real in the Paschal Victory of Jesus.

If showing the video is not an option, move ahead to presentation in the next section. Be sure to prepare yourself for the presentation on Reconciliation reviewing the following resources:

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1422-1484
- *How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today*. (Catholic Update C0800)
- *Ten Tips for Better Confessions*. (Catholic Update CU 0890)

Read about the Church's teachings on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in *Sacraments of Healing* by William Shannon. Pay special attention to these key points:

- two key truths about reconciliation: (1) No matter how close we may be to God, the reality of sin is something we all experience. (2) The grace of God is always available to us. God is eager to forgive our sins.
- the various names of the sacrament: sacrament of conversion, sacrament of penance, sacrament of confession, sacrament of forgiveness, and Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- horizontal reconciliation (with others) and vertical reconciliation (with God)
- conversion as a continuing change of heart
- the three fundamental acts of the penitent: contrition, confession, and satisfaction

4. The Sacrament of Reconciliation: Individual and Communal

Using the video and the Handout: *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation – Individual Confession*, review with the participants the four movements (steps) in the Rite of Penance for Individual Penitents. Highlight each movement of the Sacrament – explaining what the penitent does and what the priest does, praying the prayers etc. Invite questions throughout the

demonstration. (Use *Rite of Penance – Penitents Guide* for prayers, gestures, etc.) Invite questions throughout your review.

1. Welcoming the Penitent
2. Reading from Scripture
3. Confessing of Sins
4. Receiving Forgiveness (Absolution)

Use the Handout: *Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a Parish Community* to review the four movements of the community-wide celebration that the parish community celebrates several times a year (e.g., Advent and Lent). Note the similarities between the individual rite and the communal rite. (This will be the format we will use in the closing prayer service.) Invite questions throughout your review.

1. Gathering
2. Storytelling
3. Reconciling
4. Commissioning

Reflection

Discuss the following questions in the large group or in small groups of 4-6 participants followed by sharing reflections with everyone. Write the questions on newsprint.

- How would you characterize the Church's teaching on the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- What did you find insightful and helpful in the Church's teaching?

Reflection: Examination of Conscience

Before moving on to the final part of the session. Take time to prepare the adults for the closing prayer services by providing time for reflection. Ask the adults to read the handout with *An Examination of Conscience* and, on a file card, write one thing they want to ask God to forgive. Place all of the file cards in a basket and hold them for the closing prayer service.

5. Integrating Learning about the Sacrament

Conduct one (or more if time allows) of the following integration learning activities to deepen the participant's understanding of the Sacrament of Reconciliation using the learning resources from this session. Select the activity that is best for your group.

Option 1 Debate: "Why do we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?"

Organize the debate, "Why do we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?" by dividing the participants into two teams. Group #1 develops reasons why they think the Sacrament of Reconciliation is important for our lives as Catholics. Group #2 develops reasons why they think the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not important or necessary for our lives as Catholics"

Tell the groups they have ten minutes to prepare their reasons. At the end of the work time have each subgroup select 2-3 spokespeople.

After ten minutes gather the groups together, set up two facing rows of 2-3 chairs each for the spokespersons of each team. Place the remaining participants behind their spokespersons.

Begin the debate by having the spokespersons present their reasons and examples. Refer to this process as “opening arguments.” Begin with the reasons why the sacrament is not important or necessary (Group #2) and then the reasons why it is important (Group #1).

After everyone has heard the opening arguments, stop the debate and reconvene the original subgroups. Ask the subgroups to strategize how to counter the opening arguments of the opposing side. Again, have each subgroup select a spokesperson, preferably a new person. (You may want to add one or more chairs to the spokespersons’ row. Allow participants to occupy these chairs whenever they want to join the debate.) Give them five minutes to prepare for the next round.

Resume the debate. Have the spokespersons give “counter-arguments.” As the debate continues (be sure to alternate between sides), encourage other participants to pass notes to their debaters with suggested arguments or rebuttals. Also, urge them to cheer or applaud the arguments of their debate-team representatives.

After fifteen minutes end the debate. Instead of declaring a winner, reconvene the entire group in a circle. Be sure to integrate the group by having participants sit next to people who were on opposing teams. Hold a full-group discussion using questions such as:

- How did you feel about making a case why participating in the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is or is not important?
- What were the best arguments raised on both sides of the debate?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Option 2 Presentation: “Why we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?”

Invite the participants to create a contemporary presentation on the understanding and practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation that can be used to teach others. Their work can be structured around the question, “Why do we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation in our lives as Catholics?”

Their presentation can use stories, drama, demonstrations, graphics (poster or ad), a song, etc. They should develop their explanation for a specific setting. You may want to assign a setting or give groups a variety of choices. Here are several options:

- a presentation at a parish meeting for young adults, adults, families, parents of children
- an RCIA session on the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- a Sunday homily on the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- a First Reconciliation parent education program

Organize the participants into working groups of 6 people. Give them the supplies they will need and a sheet of newsprint or poster paper to present their work. Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group.

Reflection on the Presentations

Invite the participants to share their reflections after the final presentation. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation by creating your presentation? What new insights into the Sacrament of Reconciliation did you discover?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation from the presentations by the other groups? Which presentations were the most enlightening? What affirmed your own understanding? What was new or challenging?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Option 3 Advertisement: "Why do we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation?"

Invite the participants to create advertisements to invite/attract the parish community to participate in the parish-wide celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in Advent or Lent. The ads should be focused on the question, "Why we need the Sacrament of Reconciliation in our lives as Catholics?"

Ads can focus on the entire parish community or can target specific groups, such as other adults, parents, and families. They can use a variety of advertising methods, e.g., a 30 second TV or radio ad, a song, an ad in a magazine, poster advertisement, a billboard, a calendar, magnets, etc. You may want to choose several methods and obtain the supplies the participants will need to accomplish their work.

This project involves writing the content for an advertisement (e.g., a script for a commercial or magazine ad), identifying or creating artwork, symbol, images, photos, etc. to accompany the content, and developing the final product. Guide the participants through the following process:

1. *Focus Your Ad:* In short phrases clearly identify what you want to communicate.
2. *Select Your Advertising Approach:* Think about all the types of advertisements in magazines and on the radio and television. Select your approach, e.g. 30 second TV or radio ad, magazine ad, poster advertisement, direct mail postcard or advertisement, magnet for the refrigerator, screensaver for a computer screen, buttons, etc. (The participants may have other good ideas to suggest.)
3. *Design Your Ad:* Combine your content or message with your advertising method to create your unique promotion. Add color or artwork or whatever else will enhance your promotion.

Organize the participants into work groups of 6 people. Give them the supplies they will need and a sheet of newsprint or poster paper to record their work. Each group will prepare a report to present to the large group.

Reflection on the Presentations

Invite the participants to share their reflections after the final ad is presented. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation by creating your ad? What new insights into the Sacrament of Reconciliation did you discover?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation from the ads by the other groups? Which presentations were the most enlightening? What affirmed your own understanding? What was new or challenging?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Option 4. "Top Ten Reasons for Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation."

Ask the participants to create a *Top Ten Reasons for Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation* using what they have learned from the session about the Sacrament Reconciliation.

Organize the participants into work groups of 6 people. Give them file cards or a sheet of newsprint to develop their Top Ten list. Each group will then present their Top Ten list to the large group.

Reflection on the Presentations

Invite the participants to share their reflections after the final presentation. Use the following questions as a guide:

- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation by creating your Top Ten list? What new insights into the Sacrament of Reconciliation did you discover?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation from the Top Ten lists by the other groups? Which presentations were the most enlightening? What affirmed your own understanding? What was new or challenging?
- What did you learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Which is the hardest thing to understand about the sacrament? the easiest?

Adult Learning Experience: Small Group Faith Sharing

Focusing

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. (Colossians 3:12-15, NAB)

Gathering

Take a few moments to connect with the members of your group.

Begin this session with storytelling about a personal experience of reconciliation. Take a moment to reflect personally and then share highlights of your experience of reconciliation with your group. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her story without interruptions or discussion. Use the Handout to record your reflections.

- Describe an experience of reconciliation in your life – an experience of giving and receiving forgiveness and peace. With whom did you reconcile? How did you go about reconciling? Did you initiate the reconciliation? What were the benefits of reconciliation?

Reflecting

This small group session focuses on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Take a moment to reflect on the questions below and then share your reflections with your group. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her story without interruptions or discussion. Use the Handout to record your reflections.

- What has been your experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Think of your experience when you were growing up – as a child and a teenager – and your experience today.
- Is the Sacrament of Reconciliation meaningful for you today? What makes (or could make) the sacrament meaningful for you?

Discovering

This session explores the Sacrament of Reconciliation by examining Jesus' ministry of healing and forgiveness and then a contemporary understanding of the Church's teaching on the sacrament. After reading each section, take a few minutes to reflect on the meaning of what you have read using the reflection questions and then move on to the next theme.

Part One: Jesus on Forgiveness

- The Sacrament of Reconciliation like all the sacraments is rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus. Explore Jesus' ministry of healing and forgiveness by reading the following key Gospel passages.
 - The Pardon of the Sinful Woman: Luke 7:36-50
 - The Woman Caught in Sin: John 8:3-11
 - Healing a Crippled Man: Luke 5:17-26
 - The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:11-31
 - A King Who Forgives: Matthew 18:21-35
 - Jesus Forgives His Executioners: Luke 23:33-34

- Take a moment to reflect on the following questions:
 - How would you characterize Jesus' teaching and practice on reconciliation based on his actions and stories?
 - How does Jesus' teaching and practice of reconciliation compare with the world's understanding and practice of reconciliation?
 - How does Jesus' approach compare to your own?

Part Two: The Theology of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- Read about the Church's teachings on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in *Sacraments of Healing* by William Shannon. Pay special attention to these key points:
 - two key truths about reconciliation: (1) No matter how close we may be to God, the reality of sin is something we all experience. (2) The grace of God is always available to us. God is eager to forgive our sins.
 - the various names of the sacrament: sacrament of conversion, sacrament of penance, sacrament of confession, sacrament of forgiveness, and Sacrament of Reconciliation.
 - horizontal reconciliation (with others) and vertical reconciliation (with God)
 - conversion as a continuing change of heart
 - the three fundamental acts of the penitent: contrition, confession, and satisfaction

- Take a moment to reflect on the following questions:
 - How would you characterize the Church's teaching on the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
 - What did you find insightful and helpful in the Church's teaching?
 - Why do you think the Church needs a Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Part Three: The Practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

- Review the four movements of the Rite of Reconciliation using *How to Celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today* by Thomas Richstatter.

Sharing

Take a moment to reflect on the meaning of the Gospel readings and essays for you using the questions below, and then discuss your responses as a small group.

- How can the Sacrament of Reconciliation become more meaningful for you today?
- Would you rather experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation in private (Rite 1: Individual Confession) or in a group (Rite 2: Community-wide Reconciliation Services)? Why?
- With the obvious need for forgiveness and reconciliation in our lives and in our society, why do you think so many Catholics do not take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Reflection: Examination of Conscience

Before moving on to the final part of the session. Take time to prepare for the closing prayer services by reviewing the *Examination of Conscience* and, on a file card, write one thing you want to ask God to forgive. Place all of the file cards in a basket and hold them for the closing prayer service.

Living

Reflect on Reconciliation in Your Life

Find a quiet place this week to pray and reflect on your need for reconciliation and the relevance of Jesus' teachings and the Sacrament of Reconciliation for your life.

- For what do I need to be forgiven today? Whom do I need to forgive?
- How can I live Jesus' teachings on reconciliation more fully in my life? What do I need to begin doing now?
- How can my celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation help me grow as a Christian and become a more forgiving, reconciling person?

Experiencing the Sacrament of Reconciliation Today

Make plans now to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Find the next best opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a private or in a group setting. Many churches celebrate the sacrament as a community during the Advent or Lenten seasons. This would be an excellent time to celebrate the sacrament, especially if it has been a long time since your last experience of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- To help prepare you for the sacrament read *Ten Tips for Better Confessions* by Thomas Richstatter, O.F.M. *Catholic Update* (C0890) (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press). This article includes a brief outline of the Rite of Reconciliation when it is celebrated as a community.
- To prepare for an individual reconciliation use the *Guide to Individual Reconciliation* at the end of this session and the Examination of Conscience which follows.

Examination of Conscience

Examination of conscience is an essential element of the Rite of Reconciliation. Find some time and a quiet place before you celebrate the sacrament to pray and reflect on your need for reconciliation using the questions in the following examination of conscience.

Focusing Scripture: Matthew 22: 36-40

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to them, “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. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:36-40, NAB)

Reflection Questions

- Is my heart set on God, so that I really love God above all things and am faithful to God’s commandments? Are the things of this world like money, prestige, or status truly secondary to my faith in God?
- Am I continuing to grow in my relationship with Jesus Christ? Do I pray regularly and read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, to learn how to be a more faithful disciple of Jesus? Am I growing in my understanding of my Catholic faith?
- Do I worship God regularly by celebrating the Eucharist with an active and conscious participation? Do I celebrate the healing and forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year?
- Have I been loving and faithful in my relationships, especially with my spouse, family members, and significant relationships?
- Do I live my life guided by Catholic values, such as respect for dignity of others, respect for creation and the environment, love, care and compassion, forgiveness, honesty, integrity? Which values have I neglected to live faithfully?
- Do I take seriously the call to serve those in need, to alleviate suffering, to share my gifts, talents, and possessions with others? Do I work for justice for victims of oppression, discrimination, and poverty?
- Do I live my Catholic faith and moral principles in the workplace and in the community? Are my decisions in the workplace guided by Catholic moral principles?
- Am I ready to forgive and work for peace in my relationships and in my world?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, open our eyes to see the evil we have done.
Touch our hearts and convert us to yourself.
Where sin has divided and scattered,
may your love make one again;
where sin has brought weakness,
may your power heal and strengthen;
where sin has brought death,
may your Spirit raise to new life.

Give us a new heart to love you,
so that our lives may reflect the image of your Son.

May the world see the glory of Christ revealed in your Church,
and come to know that he is one whom you have sent,
Jesus Christ, your son, our Lord. Amen.

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Praying

*Begin by prayerfully reading Psalm 139. Each person can take a verse or section of the Psalm.
Pause for a short, quiet reflection time. Conclude by praying together the Prayer of the Penitent
from the Rite of Reconciliation of Individual Penitents.*

Scripture Reading

Psalm 139

Closing Prayer

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 to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.

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Jesus of Nazareth Video Segments

The following outline lists all of the scenes on video cassette two and a partial listing of video cassette three in the three-video set of *Jesus of Nazareth*. This is provided so that you will be able to find segments easily. Recommended segments to use have a ★.

Video Cassette Two

1. ★ **Matthew the tax collector arrives at Peter's house and is not welcomed**
2. Jesus cures the paralytic man
3. At night, by the lake, Peter and his companions are arguing
4. Jesus and some disciples on the way to Matthew's house
5. ★ **Jesus is welcomed by Matthew and tells the parable of the prodigal son**
6. ★ **Peter and Matthew are reconciled**
7. In his palace Herod talks to John the Baptist in prison
8. Herod and Herodias talk
9. Jesus arrives on shore by boat and is greeted by the crowds
10. Matthew and Peter leave everything to follow Jesus
11. Jesus teaches the crowds
12. Jairus approaches Jesus asking for help
13. Jesus in the house of Jairus, raises his daughter from the dead
14. During the banquet that follows Jesus calls Thomas
15. At night while Jesus is sleeping Matthew and Peter converse
16. John in his dungeon shouts to the guests celebrating Herod's birthday
17. During the party Salome dances for Herod
18. Salome asks for John's head
19. John is murdered in the dungeon
20. Disciples, Judas, and some Zealots around John's tomb
21. Judas approaches Jesus to become his disciple
22. Children throw stones at Mary Magdalene's house
23. Mary Magdalene and her client talk
24. On the hillside crowds follow Jesus
25. The rich young man approaches Jesus
26. Afflicted people and Mary Magdalene follow Jesus to hear him
27. Jesus feeds five thousand with the miracle of loaves of bread and fishes
28. The Zealots and Judas discuss the work of Jesus
29. Simon the Zealot follows Jesus
30. In the house of Simon the Pharisee Jesus explains his teachings
31. Joseph of Arimathea converses with Jesus
32. Mary Magdalene rushes in
33. ★ **Mary at the feet of Jesus**
34. ★ **Jesus forgives her sins**
35. In the olive grove Jesus sends his disciples off to their mission
36. John visits Mary the mother of Jesus
37. Assault on Herod, the Zealots manage to wound him
38. The Zealots arrested and killed in front of Herod's palace

39. The disciples, returned from their mission, stand around the fire with Jesus
40. "Who do you think I am" – Peter's profession of faith
41. The Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the Our Father
42. Peter tries to stop Jesus from going to Jerusalem
43. The crowds journey to Jerusalem for the festival
44. A messenger from Martha and Mary comes to Jesus
45. Jesus arrives at Bethany and learns that Lazarus has died
46. Martha and Mary talk to Jesus who asks them to take him to the tomb
47. Jesus prays to the Father
48. Jesus raises Lazarus
49. Crowds ascend to the temple in Jerusalem
50. In the temple the pilgrims pray and bring in the lambs for sacrifice
51. Judas goes to talk to Zerah, the chief of the scribes of the temple
52. Jesus enters Jerusalem riding a donkey; the crowds are waving palms
53. The market and money changers
54. Jesus, outraged, overturns their stalls and chases them from the temple
55. Jesus is confronted by Zerah and the Pharisees
56. Judas intervenes and talks to Jesus and Zerah
57. Mary and the Rabbi are going to Jerusalem
58. Jesus is addressing the crowd in the temple, Nicodemus listens
59. While Jesus performs the rite of ablutions, he is approached by Barabbas
60. Barabbas does not understand the way of Jesus and leaves

Video Cassette Three

The following segments run continuously from the beginning of the video cassette three.

1. Jesus with the children in the temple and tells them a parable
2. Jesus addresses the conclusion of his parable to the Pharisees
3. Jesus is teaching the crowds in the temple
4. ★ **The woman caught in adultery is brought to the Pharisees in the temple**
5. ★ **Jesus disperses her accusers and forgives her sin**

Part 4

Sharing Learning Reflections and Home Application (15 minutes)

Advanced Preparation

- Determine what each group will bring back to the large group or to their small group to share as a result of their learning.
- Determine how each group will share their reports or projects so that they “teach” the other groups about the event and theme.

Home Kit

Develop a Sacrament of Reconciliation Home Kit that *extends* and *expands* the learning that has taken place through the intergenerational learning program. It should *engage* families and individuals in living their faith at home through traditions and celebrations, rituals, symbols, prayers, service projects, learning activities, and enrichment activities. Include specific activities on the event that you have selected as a focus for the session. These additional activities can include learning activities about the event, Scripture readings, table rituals, prayers, and so on.

Use a variety of design formats for your activities, such as a prayer card, stand-up card, poster, placemat, newsletter, booklet, magnet, bookmark, and artwork.

Included with this session are the following home activities:

- Learning: Exploring Reconciliation and Forgiveness
- Learning: Prodigal Son
- Meal Ritual: Reconciliation
- Ritual Moments: Reconciliation
- Ritual: Family Reconciliation Activity
- Ritual: Family Reconciliation
- Scripture Reflections on Reconciliation
- Table Prayers: Reconciliation

1. Whole Group Sharing and Reflection

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Ask people to rejoin their intergenerational groups from the All Ages Learning Experience OR ask family members to rejoin their own family and individual adolescent and adult participants to stay with their age groups from the In-Depth Learning Experience.

First, ask the participants to share what they learned in a small group setting or by inviting participants or groups, representing families, teens, and adults, to share projects or reflections with the entire.

[spoken text] Second, present the following information using the words below or your own words:

Think of everything we have done in this session to learn about the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you have learned in this session:

- What is one thing you learned about the Sacrament of Reconciliation that you did not know before?
- What are you going to watch for and listen to when you celebrate the Sacrament either individually or with the parish community?
- How can you be a more forgiving person?

Review the Home Kit for the event containing prayers, rituals, service projects, family enrichment, and learning activities. Guide everyone in developing an individual or family action plan for living at home using the Home Kit, and planning for participation in the sacrament.

2. Reflection—Application Strategies

Prepare strategies and activities to guide individuals and families in *reflecting* on the meaning of their learning and their participation in the Church event and in *applying* their learning to daily living as a Catholic. The goal is to help people apply the beliefs and practices to their daily life, and report or “publish” their learning with others in the parish community.

Reflection and application activities and strategies can be included with the Home Kit. You can also include a time for feedback in your next intergenerational learning program

There are a variety of formats for reflection – application activities. Reflection tools include unfinished sentences, reflection questions, learning journals, and a structured reflection activities. Application tools include action plans, practice plans, “to do” lists, and resolutions.

Art and media strategies can also be used to express reflection and application. Consider activities such as a bumper stickers, picture collages, “recipe for living” cards, posters, photos, and projects that create and bring back to Sunday Mass or the next intergenerational learning program.

Example: Reflection on Participating in the Community Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

What did you see at the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

- Think of the symbols and gestures you saw at the celebration. What did the symbols and gestures mean to you as you experienced the celebration of Reconciliation?

What did you hear at the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

- Think of the songs you sang. What was the message in the music?
- Think of the Scripture readings in the celebration of Reconciliation. What was their message? What is God and the Church saying to you and the community about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

How did the community pray at the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

- Think of the prayer texts in the celebration of Reconciliation. What and who are we praying for? What are the prayer texts teaching us about the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- How did you pray during the celebration of Reconciliation? What did you pray for?

What did you do at the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

- What actions did you take? How did you examine your conscience?
- What do you need to do now because of your participate in the sacrament?

Part 5

Closing Prayer Service (15-20 minutes)

Guide the group through a Reconciliation Prayer Service modeled on the Rite of Reconciliation: Communal Celebration. There are two complete Reconciliation Prayer Services developed for your use. One focuses on families with children, while the other can be used with all ages. Adapt the services to fit your audience.

Consult the *Rite of Penance* for additional prayers and Scripture readings, as well as complete Reconciliation Services in Appendix. The following services are included in the Appendix:

- Penitential Celebrations During Lent
- Penitential Celebrations During Advent
- Sin and Conversion
- The Son Returns to the Father
- The Beatitudes
- For Children: God Comes to Look for Us
- For Young People: Renewal of our Lives according to the Christian Vocation
- For the Sick: The Time of Sickness is a Time of Grace

Check the following sources for songs on reconciliation. Among the possible songs to include in the reconciliation service are “Deep Down I Know,” “Blest are They,” and “No Longer Strangers” (all by David Haas).

- *Singing Our Faith – A Hymnal for Young Catholics* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2001) [Hymnal, Leader’s/Catechist’s Manual, 11 CD set]
- *Walking by Faith – Music and Ritual Prayer for Children*. David Haas and Robert W. Piercy. (Chicago, GIA Publications, 1997.) [CD]
- *Spirit and Song – A Seeker’s Guide for Liturgy and Prayer*. (Portland: OCP Publications, 1999.) [Hymnal and 10 CD set]