

SAMPLE

BECOMING CATHOLIC RECONCILIATION

A practical guide
for families

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SAMPLE



INTRODUCTION

This book aims to support you in the religious development of your children, particularly as they prepare to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation, or Penance or Confession as it was previously called.

Along with the other sacraments, the sacrament of Reconciliation underwent significant changes after the Second Vatican Council, a special gathering in the 60s of the bishops of the world to examine renewal in the Church. In the renewal of the sacraments, Reconciliation was named as a sacrament of healing.

GOD CREATED US TO LIVE IN PEACE AND HARMONY, TO ENJOY THE WONDERS OF CREATION AND TO RELATE PERSONALLY TO A LOVING GOD.



What has been reclaimed and re-affirmed in this sacrament is the constant truth of God's love and forgiveness for the times we fail and need forgiveness. God's love for us is expressed in mercy, compassion, forgiveness and peace. For this reason, we can truly talk about celebrating Reconciliation: what we celebrate is God's love and delight in us, even when we make poor choices that result in sinfulness.

Another aspect of Reconciliation is the social or relational aspect. This means that because we are human and created in God's image and likeness, we belong to the community of God—God's family. When we are born, we are born into a family, with the possibility of developing a network of relationships. God created us to live in peace and harmony, to enjoy the wonders of creation, to relate personally to a loving God who comes close to us and wishes us to be free, to be happy and fulfilled, and to build up the community. The book of Genesis speaks of God delighting in all of creation and wanting to be in relationship with humankind.

Human beings, of all the creatures on earth, have the capacity to think and to choose. Our thoughts, words and actions have an effect not only on ourselves, but on our relationships with God, others and our environment. Poor choices, or sinfulness, damage these relationships; good choices strengthen relationships and build a strong and healthy community. This is very much like what happens in family life when someone upsets the balance by unkind actions, thoughtless words and lack of care and understanding for other members of the family. As with family life, so the community of God suffers when the poor choices we make affect the well-being and happiness of the whole community. For the Catholic community, the sacrament of Baptism signifies a new beginning: we become a new creation as members of the Church. The sacrament of Reconciliation provides us with an opportunity to restore relationships and the original state of blessing created by God. This is necessary to rebuild balance and harmony in our relationships with ourselves, with God, with others and the whole of creation.

Reconciliation is about acknowledging and naming those times when we know we have done wrong, and then making peace and restoring relationships. When we know our need for forgiveness, there is a way we can become reconciled and begin again. Reconciliation reminds us of our status of new creation in God's family and of the fact that God delights in us, just as Jesus understood at his Baptism that God was well-pleased and delighted in him.

The renewal of the sacrament of Reconciliation reflects both the personal and social nature of our need for forgiveness and restores what has been broken, lost or damaged. As human beings we stand in need of God's forgiveness, and we also need to acknowledge the times when we have sinned against others by our thoughts, words and actions.



THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION PROVIDES US WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESTORE RELATIONSHIPS AND THE ORIGINAL STATE OF BLESSING CREATED BY GOD.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

**WE CAN TRULY CLAIM
TO CELEBRATE THE
SACRAMENT OF
RECONCILIATION
BECAUSE WE ARE
ACKNOWLEDGING
GOD'S GREAT AND
COMPASSIONATE LOVE.**

The sacrament of Reconciliation is a sacrament of peace and healing because it restores us to our true selves, and enables us to restore and make peace with those who have been affected by our poor choices that result in sinfulness. At the heart of the sacrament is the constant truth of God's gracious and constant love for us, forgiving and restoring

us even before we know our need for forgiveness. For this reason, we can truly claim to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation because we are acknowledging God's great and compassionate love, and making a fresh start to live in God's community as God's new creation.



For each of the themes in the booklet, there is a brief reflection at the beginning. This sets the scene and provides you with some insights into the life and mission of Jesus by drawing on examples of how Jesus related to and treated people, how he promoted God's dream for the world and how he went out of his way to reach and comfort anyone who was lost, suffering or in need of forgiveness. Jesus' whole ministry was about restoring people to life, health, happiness and community.

Sharing the Christian Story

The reflection material in each theme contains an insight or message from the Scriptures. In his own daily life, Jesus drew on the Scriptures to provide him with direction and nourishment in his relationships with God, self, others and the whole of creation. When you gather together as a family, you might like to have someone read the story from the family Bible, or you might like to retell the story in your own words.

Family Reflection Time

This provides you with some ways of reflecting together on the theme as a family. Practical activities are provided for the family to work on together.

Prayer Time

As you support your children in their preparation to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation within the Catholic community, it is important to spend a few moments together in prayer. This will help children to understand the importance of prayer in developing a personal relationship with Jesus. This brief time together is also a good way to bring the family together.

Let us Pray

When you gather together to pray, it is often useful to have a special focus for your gathering. This might be around the dinner table or in the living room. You could light a family prayer candle at the beginning of this time as a reminder that Jesus is with you and your family; you might like also to have the family Bible open on the table as a symbol of listening to the Word of God in the Scriptures.

**JESUS' WHOLE MINISTRY
WAS ABOUT RESTORING
PEOPLE TO LIFE,
HEALTH, HAPPINESS AND
COMMUNITY.**

SYMBOLS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

Activity Sheets

For each topic, there are two activity sheets provided for you and your family. The second of these is a reflective, journaling activity.

Overview of Themes

PREPARING

- Created in God's image
- The Baptism of Jesus
- Baptism: a new creation

CELEBRATING

- We make choices
- Brokenness
- Jesus brings hope and healing
- We celebrate forgiveness

LIVING

- Reviewing the day
- The shape of Reconciliation
- Building bridges: making peace

As you enter into this journey with your child, my hope is that you will grow in your understanding of the wonderful love God has for you, and that as a family you will gain a new appreciation of the wonder of family life and the joys of being in relationship. Jesus grew in family life with his parents. He learned from them the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, and he constantly looked for ways of bringing God's message of love, compassion, healing and peace to all he met who were lost, broken, alone and suffering. I pray that your family also will grow in love, mercy and forgiveness as you continue this journey with your children.

When Catholics gather together in small groups for prayer, or as part of a large congregation on a Sunday, there are some symbols that are used that have special meaning.

The cross

Jesus died on a cross. This cross is also referred to as the tree of life because, although Jesus died on it, he also rose from it to new life. Christians bless themselves with the sign of the cross and they say these words: 'In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' These words are often used to begin times of prayer, and were first used at our Baptism.

Candles

We use candles as symbols of Christ's presence among us as 'the light of the world.' Whenever Christians gather to pray, the lighting of candles is a simple way of acknowledging the presence of Christ amongst us.

Water

This is a symbol of life. When people are baptised into the Catholic community, water is poured over the head of the person and the words prayed by the priest are, 'I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.' When this happens at Baptism, it is a symbol of the new life a person is entering into as a Christian. As people go into the church, you will often see them place their hand in a font of water and then bless themselves with the sign of the cross. This reminds us of our Baptism.



AS YOU ENTER INTO THIS JOURNEY WITH YOUR CHILD, MY HOPE IS THAT YOU WILL GROW IN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WONDERFUL LOVE GOD HAS FOR YOU.

PRAYERS OF THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Oil

Oil is used as a sign of strengthening. When a person is baptised, the sign of the cross is made with oil. This signifies that the person is being strengthened to live as a Christian and follower of Jesus.

Scriptures

The Bible, or the Scriptures, presents the Word of God still speaking to us today. Jesus grew up in a family and religious community where he heard the Word of God proclaimed in the temple and the synagogue, and where he prayed the psalms and heard the words of the prophets. When the Catholic community gathers together at Mass, the Word of God is proclaimed from the Scriptures and when we think about what we hear, the Word of God nourishes our lives and gives us direction in life.

White garment

At Baptism, the person being baptised is clothed with a white garment. This signals new life as a Christian and that the person has become a new creation as a member of the Catholic community.

Bread and wine

In everyday life these are symbols of life, nourishment and enjoyment. At Mass, when the bread and wine are consecrated and received by the congregation, it is the body and blood of Christ that Catholics receive into their lives.

Purple stole

When the priest celebrates the sacrament of Reconciliation, he wears a purple stole. Purple is the colour used in the Church as a sign of forgiveness and when the priest wears it for this purpose, he is ministering God's forgiveness and peace.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and
forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from evil. Amen.

Glory be

Glory be to the Father, and to the
Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and
ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

Hail Mary

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord
is with you.
Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb,
Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for
us now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Prayer of sorrow

O my God, I am sorry that I have
sinned against you,
because you are so good,
and with your help I will not sin again.

Grace before meals

Bless us Lord, and the gifts of food and
drink that we are about to enjoy. We
give thanks for them and ask you to help
us to be mindful of those who do not
have enough to eat and drink. Amen.

Prayer for Peace

Lord, make me an instrument
of your peace.
Where there is hatred,
let me sow love,
Where there is injury, pardon,
Where there is doubt, faith,
Where there is despair, hope,
Where there is darkness, light,
Where there is sadness, joy.
Lord, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
Not so much to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
It is in dying that we are born to
eternal life.

Greetings of the Christian community

Peace be with you.
And with your spirit.

God bless you and keep you.
The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.

WHEN CATHOLICS GATHER
TOGETHER IN SMALL GROUPS
FOR PRAYER, OR AS PART
OF A LARGE CONGREGATION
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