



What is the Church?

Catechist's Guide: Unit 3

We are People who Celebrate Forgiveness



You will need to gather in the children's worksheets from the previous unit (unless this has already been done or unless they are keeping them at home).

Spend a few moments seeing what the children remember from their last session with you - or from any celebration that took place.

Remind them that they are preparing to become full members of the Church family through Confirmation and Holy Communion.

The aim of this unit is to explore the ways in which we, as the People of God, celebrate God's love and forgiveness. This will be done by reflecting with the children on a number of themes:

- ♦ Jesus asking us to love God and one another
- ♦ The fact that we don't always do the right thing but that we can start again
- ♦ The way we celebrate reconciliation at Mass - through the Penitential Rite and the Sign of Peace
- ♦ The way we celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation

In preparation for this session, you will need to be clear about the arrangements for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so that you can explain to the children what will be happening in your parish.

Please note that the emphasis in this unit is on the communal celebration of this sacrament, since that is the way in which the children should be introduced to it. The opportunity to introduce them to the individual celebration of the sacrament should be provided as they get older.

INITIATION

What is the Church?

Children's Worksheet: Unit 3

**We are People who
Celebrate Forgiveness**



Jesus wants us to love God and one another

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest of all the commandments, he said that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart and love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Jesus showed us how to do this:

- He spent time in prayer
- He did what God wanted him to do
- He was kind and loving
- He made people happy who were sad
- He made friends with people
- He loved people that no one else loved

Jesus wants us to be just like he was

**Sometimes things go wrong but
we can always start again**

Mum or dad might be cross with you and shout at you when you are naughty and cause trouble but they still love you. Can you think of a time when you did something wrong at home?

Sometimes you might have been unkind and mean and nasty to a friend and you fall out but then you make up and become friends again. Can you think of a time like this?

A Recipe for Happiness

Jesus
Others
Yourself

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Talk with the children about Jesus' command that we should love God and our neighbour. This sums up all the other commandments that we hear about in the Scriptures and should be the rule for our lives as followers of Jesus.

Take them through the list of things that 'Jesus showed us how to do' and see if they can think of ways they can do those things in their own lives.

Point out the 'Recipe for Happiness' (which they can colour in if they want) and explain that we can use the word JOY to remind us about putting Jesus first, Others second, and Yourself third.

Ask them to think about the two situations described at the bottom of the page, and the opportunities that are given to us to start again when we get things wrong. Remind them that God always loves them, whatever they do wrong, and always wants to be friends with them.

When we come together at Mass...

...we celebrate forgiveness

We begin by remembering that there are things we need to say we are sorry for. This is called the Penitential Rite.

We tell God and one another (our brothers and sisters) that we have not always got things right:

- we have done things that we should not have done
- we have failed to do things we should have done

We are reminded that God still loves us and that God forgives our sins.

The priest says: 'May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life'. We say: 'Amen'.

Later in the Mass - just before Communion - we are invited to offer one another a sign of peace.

Through the Penitential Rite and the Sign of Peace we are reconciled with God and one another.



Reconciliation is about...

(Tick the ones you think are right)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Making friends again <input type="checkbox"/> | Helping other people make friends <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trying to win an argument <input type="checkbox"/> | Saying 'Sorry' <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Forgiving and being forgiven <input type="checkbox"/> | Always wanting your own way <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Not letting others join in and share <input type="checkbox"/> | Sulking and not making friends <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Showing you are sorry for spoiling a friendship <input type="checkbox"/> | Making peace <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Feeling happy and celebrating because you are forgiven <input type="checkbox"/> | |

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Ask them if they can remember what happens at the beginning of Mass, after the sign of the cross. Prompt them if necessary. The Penitential Rite is about preparing ourselves for this particular celebration of the Mass by reminding ourselves about God's love and our need for God's forgiveness.

We tend to think of sins as doing things wrong, so the children might very easily think of actions they have done that were wrong. However, we need to remember (as the 'I confess' reminds us) that we can also sin by failing to do what we should do. So, for example: Have they said their prayers regularly? Have they done anything kind for someone else?

Sometimes the Penitential Rite concentrates on reminding us of what God has done for us (i.e. God's love) rather than the things we have done wrong (cf. the Additional Material on this leaflet for some of the phrases we might hear).

The Sign of Peace is a symbolic way of showing that we are reconciled to God and one another before coming to Communion.

Give the children time to work through the exercise 'Reconciliation is about...' and then go through their answers with them. Perhaps take each phrase and ask who ticked that box? Why or why not?

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation...

...we celebrate forgiveness

Sometimes we celebrate God's love and forgiveness in a special way through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Advent and Lent are very good times for this, as we prepare for the Feasts of Christmas and Easter.

We can celebrate this sacrament together with family, friends and other members of the parish community.

The hymns, prayers and readings for our special service will remind us of God's love and forgiveness.

We reflect together on how we have loved God and one another and we express our sorrow for the times we have not got this right.

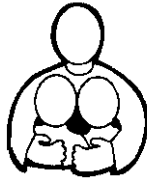


We tell the priest the things we have done wrong. There is no need to make a big list, or to worry if we forget to mention something. We are simply showing that we want God's forgiveness.

The priest gives us absolution. He tells us that God forgives our sins and that we are reconciled with God and one another.

We end our service with a prayer or hymn giving thanks to God for the love and forgiveness we have received.

"The Lord has freed you from your sins, go in peace to love and serve the Lord."



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Just as we prepare for Mass by reflecting on our need for God's forgiveness, so too we prepare in a special way for the major feasts of the Church's year - Christmas and Easter. The Church gives us the seasons of Advent and Lent to do this and these are appropriate times to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Celebrating the sacrament in a communal way reminds us that when we do things wrong, it doesn't just affect our relationship with God. It also affects our relationship with each other because we are not living as fully as we should be as part of the People of God. So, it is important for us to celebrate our forgiveness together - and be reconciled to God and one another.

Talk the children through the various aspects of the actual rite of celebration for this sacrament. Emphasise the idea of keeping it simple - concentrating on one or two things to tell the priest they are sorry for.

At home...

Spend a little bit of time preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation by thinking about how you have loved God and other people.

Draw a picture of yourself doing something to show you are sorry.

Have I said my prayers?

Have I always done what I should have done?

Have I fallen out with people and not made friends again?

Have I said sorry when I have hurt others?

Have I forgiven others when they have hurt me?

When you have celebrated the Sacrament, complete this Certificate:

On _____
in _____ Church
Father _____
and my family and friends celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation with me for the first time

This worksheet belongs to: _____

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Ask the children to complete this page of the worksheet at home but, if time allows, take them through the ideas that it contains:

The questions for preparing for the sacrament can be used on other occasions too - such as before they go to bed each night.

Drawing the picture will give them the chance to think about ways in which they show they are sorry for what they have done.

Get the children to write their name on the worksheet and remind them to bring their worksheet back to the next session. Thank them for taking part, or tell them how much you have enjoyed working with them.

Additional Suggestions and Resources

1. I Confess

I confess to almighty God,
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have sinned through my own fault
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done,
and in what I have failed to do;
and I ask the blessed Mary, ever virgin,
all the angels and saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

2. Penitential Rite

Sometimes, instead of saying the 'I confess', the priest will say some short phrases followed by 'Lord, have mercy' or 'Christ, have mercy'. These phrases remind us of what God has done for us, or what God wants for us, in terms of our being reconciled. Some examples are:

- ♦ You were sent to heal the contrite
- ♦ You came to call sinners
- ♦ You plead for us at the right hand of the Father
- ♦ You are mighty God and prince of peace
- ♦ You came to reconcile us to one another and to the Father
- ♦ You heal the wounds of sin and division
- ♦ You raise the dead to life in the spirit
- ♦ You have shown us the way to the Father
- ♦ You give us yourself to heal us and bring us strength

3. Outline of Celebration

- ♦ Introductory Rites
- ♦ Liturgy of the Word
- ♦ Homily and Examination of Conscience
- ♦ Act of Contrition and Repentance
- ♦ Individual Confession and Absolution
- ♦ Concluding Prayer of Thanksgiving

4. An Act of Contrition

O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you and, by the help of your grace, I will not sin again. Amen.