

Session Plan, Reconciliation Session 3

September 24 2018

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Preparation

Session Planning

File: Rec_S3_SP.pdf

Catechist Background

Session Outcomes

Informing the Mind

- Recognize our need for a change of heart
- Realize that Jesus offers us redemption and forgiveness
- Know that our well-formed conscience helps us choose what is right and good
- Learn that the Ten Commandments and Beatitudes guide our choices

Forming the Heart

- Discover God's mercy and forgiving love
- Understand that we must take time to examine our conscience
- Recognize that our choices have consequences in all our relationships, especially our relationship with God

Church Documents

- *Rite of Penance* 5-6
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1454, 1716-1724, 1776-1785, 2052-2055, 2064-2068

We Are Called to Forgiveness

"Followers of Christ who have sinned but who, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, come to the sacrament of penance should above all be wholeheartedly converted to God. This inner conversion embraces sorrow for sin and the intent to lead a new life."

Rite of Penance, 6

Learning a language is often difficult. At first, we stare down at the page and see nothing but ink marks. Then, as we become acquainted with the rules of grammar and vocabulary particular to that language, what was once meaningless to us becomes readable. After years of practice and conversing with native speakers of the language, we can become fluent.

Formation of conscience is somewhat like learning a language. Although human beings suffer the consequences of Original Sin and are therefore fallen creatures, we are not *entirely* disordered. We can still know the will of God. We can know the difference between right and wrong. Some part of us still desires to live according to this interior law, what the Church calls our conscience. Yet, because of the fall, for us to listen to this conscience requires formation. We have to relearn the language of God's love.

Forming our conscience requires us to become familiar with the account of salvation in Scripture. It requires us to learn Church teaching about true human happiness and developing a life of virtue. It necessitates that we learn to acquire intellectual and moral virtues. Lastly, formation of conscience presumes that we engage in practices of fasting and prayer that renew our desire to know, love, and serve God above all.

We can only develop this conscience fully if we immerse ourselves into the grammar and vocabulary of the Church. Developing our conscience does not mean that we will cease sinning altogether. It does not mean that it's easy to always separate ourselves from the inclination to sin. Rather, the formation of our conscience enables us to more clearly recognize what it means to live as one made in the image and likeness of God.

Reflect Do you feel that you have learned the "language" of conscience? What are some things that have helped form your conscience?

Lord, help me to form the conscience of each child that I teach, so that they may learn to know and follow your will.

Adaptive Learning & Special Needs

Making Changes (p. 30)

Children with intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism) might need a rephrasing of the question in the bottom box in the Child Book in order to make it easier to understand. Try asking, “Who helps you do good things at home? Who helps you do good at school? Who helps you be nice to others? Who helps you pray?” **Children with writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)** might prefer to respond to this question verbally or ask for your assistance in writing their responses.

Always Waiting to Forgive (p. 33)

Children with visual difficulties and **children with writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)** may have trouble completing the maze on this page. Invite them to trace the path through the maze with their finger before drawing it with a pencil. It might even be helpful to guide each child’s hand with yours to navigate through the maze, if he or she is comfortable with this.

God’s Laws Teach Us (p. 34)

Children with writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia) might prefer to respond to these prompts verbally or ask for your assistance in writing their responses. **Children who have difficulties with attention and impulse control** often benefit from movement. They might prefer to act out ways in which they can follow the Ten Commandments this week.

Examining My Conscience (p. 36)

The use of pictures as visual cues for the examination of conscience questions in the Child Book already accommodates for various learning needs. Some children, especially **children with intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)**, might benefit from having each item read to them as you point to the pictures.

A New Heart (p. 37)

For **children with intellectual/developmental delays (such as autism)**, talk through each non-loving action and the alternative. Ask the children to practice each loving alternative. For example, you can say, “What does God help you do instead of disobeying your parents? He helps you to do what your parents say. Show me how you do what your parents ask you to do. Let’s pretend that your mom has asked you to clean up your room. Show me what you would do.” **Children who have difficulties with attention or impulse control** might also enjoy role-playing the loving actions they write on this page. **Children with reading difficulties (such as dyslexia)** might need help reading the unloving actions and spelling their written responses. **Children with writing or fine motor difficulties (such as dysgraphia)** might prefer to respond verbally and have the catechist write their responses. Alternatively, they might also enjoy acting out or role-playing loving actions.

Welcome and Gather

Before the session begins, print out the Ten Commandments coloring sheets from the [Games section](#) of this website. Print out one coloring sheet for each child in your group. You’ll need to also have crayons or colored pencils ready for the children.

Invite the children to color their sheets and to read the Ten Commandments while they work. Tell

them to underline words that they need help understanding.

Say: *We can talk about any of the words that you underlined later in the session, when we learn more about these Ten Commandments. Now let's keep these Commandments in mind as we pray the opening prayer.*

Opening Prayer Option

Read the *Leader* part of the Opening Prayer in the Child Book. Before the children say the *All* response, invite them to name people who have shown them love or helped them this week. Tell them that they can say the names out loud or keep them silent and in their hearts. Make sure that any child who wishes to share gets a turn.

Say: *Loving Father, thank you for sending us people who help us to know your love.*

Have the children end the prayer with the *All* response.

Invite

Catechist Guide Instruction

Invite

♥ Let Us Pray

Practice the response with the children, and then read aloud the leader's part. Indicate when the children should respond.

Introduce the session.

- **Say:** Today we will see how God calls us to live by his laws. He wants to help us choose what is right and good. Let's prepare ourselves to hear God's Word.

God's Word

Guide the children through the process of scripture reflection.

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

► **Opening Video 3** Have the children watch a short video at [sacraments.osv.com](https://www.sacraments.osv.com).

Note If you do not use the video, say the following to transition to the next page: Let's keep reading to find out more about making changes in our lives to focus on our relationship with God and sharing his love with others.

Adaptive Learning & Special Needs

Reading Difficulties

Children with dyslexia and other reading difficulties might need help with the page 34 activity, specifically in reading the list of Commandments and choosing an appropriate Commandment for each box. A Ten Commandments chart is available online. Print out the chart and place it next to page 34; or open another Child Book to page 76. Have the child follow along as you read the Commandments. Point out the first three Commandments and the last seven Commandments. Help the child number his or her responses. Allow time to finish the activity.

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

Making Changes

Open the lesson with a true story about a bad habit you used to have as a child. Be sure to pick something the children can relate to. (Another option is to use a hypothetical story or show an online video about someone who changed his or her life for the better.)

- Explain how you realized that it would be important to change this habit, or how someone helped you change your attitude about the habit.
- *Say:* Sometimes our habits hurt us or others. It can be hard to admit that we need to change. We may make excuses or blame someone else because we don't want to change. But changing is part of growing up. Parents, teachers, and other adults will help us to change in good ways.

★ **Disciples Sharing** Have partners discuss the prompts with each other.

- *Ask:* Why is it hard to get rid of bad habits? *Responses will vary.* How can people help you get rid of bad habits? *Possible responses: by praising you for changing, by sharing ideas for how to successfully change*
- Ask the children to think about who has helped them to change their bad habits.

★ Help the children complete the activity.

Optional Activity

Habits Play a game that teaches about habits.

- Write good and bad habits on sticky notes. Some possibilities include interrupting people, helping with cooking, doing homework early, behaving on the bus, and ignoring your parents.
- In one corner of the room, put chart paper labeled "Habits that show love and lead toward God." In another corner, put chart paper labeled "Habits that don't show love and lead away from God."
- Distribute the sticky notes to the children. Have each child read his or her note and attach it to the correct piece of chart paper.
- Discuss each habit; if it shows love or leads to God, talk about why. If it does not, discuss what needs to change.

Session Video

View Video: http://sacraments.osv.com/reconciliation/view_video/33652

Discover

Catechist Guide Instruction

Discover

Signs & Symbols

Read the first paragraph, then point out the photographs of the Reconciliation rooms.

- *Ask: Where is there a place like this in our church? Accept correct locations. How is it used? for confessions*
- Point out the chairs, the screen, and the kneeler in the photos and explain to the children the different options for confessing.
- If your parish uses confessionals, discuss how a Reconciliation room and a confessional are similar and how they are different.
- Reassure the children that there will be absolute privacy when they confess. Also point out that those waiting to confess should stay a respectful distance away.

Read the second paragraph.

- *Ask: Why should we be happy to visit a Reconciliation room or confessional? We will receive forgiveness there.*

Meet Jesus

Help the children grasp the concept of healing by asking questions.

- *Ask: What does the word healer mean? someone who helps us recover from illness or injury Who helps you heal when you are sick? Possible responses: doctors, nurses, family, friends*
- *Say: Yes, those people are healers. Jesus is a healer, too.*

Read the text aloud.

- *Ask: Jesus healed sick bodies, but what else did Jesus heal? Jesus healed people's souls.*

Content Extension

Reconciliation Space Visit Have the children bring their books for a visit to your parish's confessional or Reconciliation room/area. Allow them to look around the space and ask questions.

- Discuss the items that are in the space, as well as what might be there during the Sacrament. Have the children turn to the Inside the Reconciliation Room feature at the back of their books. Invite them to place the door sign, Bible, crucifix, stole, screen, lily planter, and Act of Contrition card stickers on these pages.
- If your parish has confessionals, ask if the children can go inside. If your church does not have a Reconciliation room or confessional, discuss how the Sacrament is typically celebrated in your parish.

More Than We Can Imagine

Continue the discussion of Jesus as a healer.

- Point out that Jesus sometimes told stories to help us understand how our relationship with God and others could be healed.

God's Word

Have the children draw father and son figures on separate sheets of paper; direct them to hold them up when each is mentioned.

- As you proclaim the parable, occasionally ask questions.
- *Ask: Why does the son return home? He is sorry for the wrong choices he made and wants to ask for forgiveness. What is the father doing? watching for his son. What does that tell us about him? He misses and loves his son. What does the father do when the son returns? He embraces his son and plans a feast for him.*

Encourage the children to analyze the story's purpose.

- *Ask: Why did Jesus tell this story? Possible response: to show how his Father loves. What is the main message of the story? God loves us and will take us back if we are truly sorry. Why is that good news? because we have free will to make our own choices, but when we choose to sin, God wants us to repair our relationship with him so that we can be with him forever*

Scripture Background

Luke 15:11-24a This is the last of three “lost” parables in Luke 15. Because of complaints from the Pharisees that Jesus welcomes sinners (see Luke 15:2), Jesus tells parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. The three stories share a purpose: to celebrate with joy the *logic* of the Kingdom of heaven, in contrast to the *logic* of the world. In the Kingdom of God, the lost are sought out, welcomed back, and restored to life. The story of the lost son best dramatizes the complete reversal of the fruits of grace. While the parable is best known as the story of the Prodigal Son, it is sometimes titled “The Forgiving Father.”

Always Waiting to Forgive

Ask: How did the “lost son” feel about being welcomed back home? happy, surprised, loved. Have you ever felt that way? Accept reasonable responses.

- Clarify that Jesus was teaching about spiritual healing—the healing of our relationships and the healing of broken hearts.

Read aloud the first paragraph.

- *Ask: Do people today still do things that hurt others? yes. Do we still sin and harm our relationship with God? yes*

Read aloud the remaining text.

- Remind the children that the father was looking for his son in the story just like God will always look for us, because he loves us.
- *Ask: How can we find our way back to the Father? We need to follow Jesus who leads us to the Father through the Holy Spirit.*

★ Point out the lost son. Tell the children to trace a line to help the son find his father at the end of the maze.

Entering the Mystery

Begin with a question.

- *Ask:* How would your parents feel if you told them, “I really don’t care about you at all,” and then you took all of your things and left? *They would be sad.*

Read aloud the paragraph.

- Emphasize the last sentence.

Optional Activity

Songs of Scripture Music CD Play “The Prodigal Son” (track 14) from *Songs of Scripture, Grades 4–6*, to reinforce the ideas from this scripture story.

- Have the children listen to the song to become familiar with it.
- Assign one volunteer to play the father and another volunteer to play the son.
- As the song plays again, have the volunteers mime the parts. The rest of the group can accompany the music with gestures.
- Then teach the children the last verse and sing it together.

God’s Laws Teach Us

Tell the children that they are going to play a Stand Up/Sit Down game. Prepare in advance by making a list of choices for the children to consider.

- Point out that we make choices every day and that some are more important than others.
- Call out a few choices and have the children either stand up if they think a choice is really important or sit down if they think it is a less important choice.
- *Say:* Now let’s see how God helps us make good choices that show love for him and others.

Read aloud the paragraph about the Ten Commandments.

- *Ask:* What do these laws help us to do? *They help us to know how to love God and others.*
- Discuss the bulleted information.

Have a volunteer read aloud the text about the Great Commandment.

- Remind the children that God gives us his grace to help us follow the Commandments.

✪ Send the children to page 76 before beginning the activity.

★ As a group, review the Ten Commandments and talk about examples of ways that we can live them.

- Let the children complete the activity individually.
- Have volunteers share their responses with the group.

Catechist Background

The Beatitudes Jesus spent much of his time teaching us how to live in God’s Kingdom, both now and forever. He gave us the Beatitudes as a guide for how to live in a way that will make us, and those around us, happy. For example, Jesus tells us, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (*Matthew 5:7*), and “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (

Matthew 5:9). We are blessed when we treat others with love and when we share our blessings with those around us. (See page 77 for full text of the Beatitudes.)

Help in Making Choices

Ask: How do people decide what to do when they need to make a choice? *Possible responses:* They think about what is best for them; they do what their parents have taught them they should do.

Say: God really cares about our choices. He sent Jesus to teach us how to make loving choices and the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us to do the right thing.

Summarize the first two paragraphs.

✪ Have the children go to page 77 to read the Beatitudes.

★ **Disciples Sharing** As a group, make a list of responses to this question.

Read aloud the third paragraph.

- *Ask:* What is our conscience? *an ability God gave us to help us make choices about right and wrong*
Why would God give us a conscience? *Possible response: to help us live in friendship with him and with others*

On the board or on chart paper, draw a circle with *conscience* written in the center of it.

- As you read aloud the remaining text, have a volunteer write inside the circle who or what helps us to form our conscience. *God, the Bible, Church teachings, prayer, family, teachers, priests, friends*
- Reiterate that the Holy Spirit and the communities we are a part of (our families, our parish, and the Church) help us to form our conscience.

Restored Order Connection

Gifts of the Holy Spirit Certain Gifts of the Holy Spirit help us face our sinfulness as we examine our conscience and confess our sins.

- *Knowledge* helps us to “grasp, through creation, the greatness and love of God and his profound relationship with every creature” (Pope Francis, General Audience, May 21, 2014).
- *Courage* or *fortitude* helps us to be strong, to do what is right, and avoid what is wrong. If we have failed to do right, we demonstrate courage when we act to rectify the wrong. We also show courage when we admit our failures and admit them to another person.

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

Examining My Conscience

Share the information in the first paragraph.

- *Ask:* How blessed are we that God gave us the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation to help us?

✪ Send the children to pages 80–81 to find an examination of conscience.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud the second paragraph.

★ Have a volunteer read aloud each question.

- As a group, discuss each question and whether it belongs in an examination of conscience.
- Explain that a daily review of our choices will help us become more aware of them and judge them in light of our relationship with Jesus.
- If time allows, have the children silently reflect on the questions on pages 80-81. You may want to play instrumental music to create a reflective atmosphere.

Remind the children that examining our conscience can help us become more aware of the ways we are showing love and where we have failed to do what God wants.

- Say: Like the father in the Parable of the Lost Son, God the Father is always ready to forgive us when we are truly sorry for our sins.

Optional Activity

The Interconnected Web A web analogy may be helpful to demonstrate interconnectedness and the Great Commandment. A movement in one part of a web affects the entire web.

- Gather the children in a group, allowing distance between them.
- Tie one end of a ball of thick yarn around one child's waist. Have that child toss the yarn ball to someone else. Then that child will wrap the yarn around his or her waist and toss the yarn ball again. Repeat this until all of the children are connected.
- Have one child step back to show what happens to everyone else.
- Discuss how relationships connect us all; point out that when one of us fails to love, we all feel the impact of that choice.

Music Option: "The Prodigal Son"

Play "The Prodigal Son" (track 14) from [Songs of Scripture, Grades 4-6](#). Follow the instruction in the Optional Activity box on page 33 of the Catechist Guide.

THE PRODIGAL SON *Based on Luke 15:11-32*

Chorus

**I watched every day for you to come home.
I hoped, and I waited for your return.
There is nothing you can do that I cannot forgive.
I love you my child,
I love you my child,
In my mercy you will live.**

Verse 1

A son came to his father one day,
He asked for some money and went far away.
He spent all the money and did some bad things.
Soon he was alone and starving.

Verse 2

The young man found a job taking care of pigs.
He was tired and sorry for the things he did.
He thought, "I'll go home and try to make things right."

I'll ask my father, can I work for him."

Verse 3

His father saw him coming down the road.
He ran to his son and said, "Welcome home!
I love you more than you will ever know.
You're in my heart, even if you roam."

Verse 4

God is our Father, no matter what we do.
He will forgive us and help us start anew.
When we're sorry and want to make amends,
God will welcome us, and we'll be home again.

© 2013, John Burland

Music: John Burland

Words: Jo Ann Paradise and John Burland

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

File: Rec_S3_Discover_Music_Prodigal_Son.mp3

Game Option Instruction

Before having the children work on the activity on page 34, play the Ten Commandments Sorting Game as a fun review. This game can be found in the [Games section](#) at **sacraments.osv.com**.

You may have the children work individually or in small groups. If you only have access to one computer, you can work together as a large group. Make sure that each child has a turn to match a Commandment to its number.

Say: *You all did a great job! Now let's talk about ways we can follow these Commandments.*

Follow the instruction for the activity on page 34 in the Child Book.

Additional Activity: The Ten Commandments

Print copies of the Ten Commandments coloring sheet from the [Games section](#) of this website and prepare to use them for the Welcome and Gather option for this session. Follow the Welcome and Gather instructions.

If you do not choose to use the Welcome and Gather option, this coloring sheet should be done before the children begin to work on the activity on page 34. You can have the children refer to this coloring sheet instead of having them flip back and forth between pages 34 and 76 in the Child Book.

Additional Activity: Prodigal Son Skit

After completing the Catechist Guide instruction for page 32, have the children perform a simple Prodigal Son Skit. [Click to download the Prodigal Son Skit handout.](#)

Prepare for performing the skit by asking for volunteers to play the following parts: father, older son, younger son, farmer, several pigs, and a servant. Any of the children who are not comfortable with volunteering can be party attendees at the end of the story.

Use props if possible to enhance the experience for the children. Some props you may want to use include: a bag of fake gold coins, pretend food (to be fed to the pigs and used again for the feast), a robe, a ring, sandals, and simple musical instruments (for celebrating at the feast).

Live

Catechist Guide Instruction

Live

A New Heart

Say: To have a “heart of stone” means to make unloving choices.

Read aloud the first paragraph.

- Ask: Why should we avoid sin? *because it hurts our relationship with God and other people*

Read aloud the last paragraph.

- Ask: What gifts does God give us to help us change? *the Sacrament of Penance, his forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, Church teachings*
- Say: God also gives us other faith-filled people to help us.

★ Have the children complete the activity individually. Discuss as a group.

* If books go home, remind the children to complete page 38 and bring their books back. Distribute copies of the Session 3 **Family + Faith Pages**.

♥ Closing Ritual Prayer

Gather children around a prayer table that holds a candle, Bible, red felt hearts (one for each child), and a container to place stones. Each child should begin the prayer with a stone in his or her hand.

Catechist: “God our Father waits for the return of those who are lost and welcomes them back as his children” (*Rite of Penance*, 202.4). Heavenly Father, we know that your forgiving love can change hearts of stone. We offer ourselves to you that you would change our hearts with your forgiving love. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Reader: Return to me with your whole heart, for I am gracious and merciful, slow to anger, filled with love that never ends. (*Based on Joel 2:12-13.*)

Catechist: I invite you, children, to step forward with your stone and say: “God, give me a heart for

love." Put your stone in the container and I will give you a heart of love.

Have each child come forward one at a time to drop his or her stone into the container. Then give each child a red felt heart from the table.

Catechist: Jesus, help us to trust your word that God's love is always forgiving. Amen.

Closing Ritual Option

Follow the instructions for the Closing Ritual Prayer in the Catechist Guide. You may enhance this ritual prayer using sign language. Before the prayer begins, teach the children the sign language gestures for the words [give](#), [heart](#), and [love](#). During the Closing Ritual Prayer, as the children step forward with their stones, invite them to make these sign-language gestures as they say "God, *give* me a *heart of love*."

(links re-direct to www.signingsavvy.com)