

Background Notes for Parents

About the Theme – The Sacrament of Reconciliation

To help us understand this Sacrament we need to know a little bit about a Sacrament.

A sacrament is something that uses signs – usually a combination of words and actions, that have a message for those who are celebrating it; they give them a gift. This gift (which Catholics call grace) is given by Jesus whom they meet in the Sacrament, to deepen and develop their relationship with him. Through the Sacraments God helps Catholics grow in friendship with him.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is known by various names:

- **The Sacrament of Confession:** This emphasises the confession of sins to a priest.
- **The Sacrament of Forgiveness:** This emphasises the belief that through the priest's prayer of absolution God grants the forgiveness of sin.
- **The Sacrament of Conversion:** This emphasises the call to return to the Father from whom one has strayed through sin.
- **The Sacrament of Reconciliation:** This emphasis that through the Sacrament the penitent is reconciled to God, and to each other.
- **The Sacrament of Penance:** This is the official title given to the sacrament and emphasises the need for the penitent to do penance to repair any damage their sins may have done.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation the key signs are:

- The **words of absolution** which removes a person's sins.
- The **laying on of hands** which occurs many times during the sacraments to symbolise the giving of strength and power. When the sign is used in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it reminds us of the times when Jesus laid his hands on the sick and healed them.

Through these signs Jesus heals the person of sin and reunites them with God and God's family – the Church.

The Sacrament was given by Jesus after the resurrection when he said to his apostles 'Whose sins you forgive they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain they are retained'. It was through these words that Jesus gave his Church the power to forgive sin and to reconcile sinners.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation brings those who receive it back to God, who forgives them and absolves them from their sins. During the Sacrament of Reconciliation the Church celebrates the gentle love and mercy of God which is illustrated in parables such as The Lost Sheep and The Prodigal Son. The Sacrament calls people to confess sins, seek forgiveness and be reconciled to God and to one another. It is a celebration because while Catholics are sorry for their sins, they know that, no matter how badly their friendship with God has been damaged, God still loves and heals the sinner.

For Catholics the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a source of joy and comfort. In the Sacrament they experience time and time again the extraordinary love of God.

Overview

Key Vocabulary	<u>EARLY YEARS</u> <u>Friends</u> <u>RECONCILIATION</u>
Friend Happy Sad Love make up kind gentle loving sorry Jesus, rule understanding new start friendship forgive change	<p>Christians believe that, in Jesus Christ, the world has been reconciled to God. Through Christ we are offered the power to forgive and make peace and to receive and offer reconciliation. Relationships bring both joy and challenge.</p> <p>Children will know and understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We can make friends• Jesus had good friends; what Jesus tells us about friendship <p>See Background Notes for Parents</p> <p>This topic is all about friends. As children will be missing their friends who they haven't been able to see and play with during lockdown it's important to emphasise the positives of looking forward to seeing friends again and being with them in the future.</p> <p>Week 1: Read together stories about what it means to be a friend. Talk about what being a friend means: friends look after and do things for one another; friends do things together; friends make one another happy; things that spoil friendship; making friends again. Ask children to draw pictures of friends, make friendship bracelets or have a friends' tea party with their toys.</p> <p>Week 2: Read the story of Jesus and his friends and talk about the key questions. Ask children to draw themselves in the picture and think about how they can be good friends of Jesus. Sing friendship songs.</p> <p>Week 3: Share the story about A New Rule and talk about it. Talk about how friendships can be broken. How do we make friends again when we fall out? Introduce saying sorry and what it means to forgive each other so we can mend broken friendships. Ask children to draw a circle of friends and write the new rule in the centre.</p> <p>Week 4: Look at the key vocabulary for this topic and use it to remember all we have learnt about being friends, Jesus' friends, his special rule and how to make up if we break our friendships. Celebrate with a simple Act of Worship.</p>

