

CATHOLICISM UNPACKED



DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER EDUCATION SERVICE



**SACRAMENTS:
Reconciliation**

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Introduction



Pope Francis reassures us that ‘To celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation means to be wrapped in a warm embrace’.

He urges us ‘Don’t be afraid to go to the Sacrament of Confession where you will meet Jesus who loves you’.

Pope Francis also reminds us that ‘The Lord never tires of forgiveness. It is we who tire of asking for forgiveness. Let us ask for the grace not to tire of asking for forgiveness because he never tires of forgiving’.

Aims

The main purpose of this resource is to help you as an educator to appreciate more fully what the Catholic Church teaches about the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**, one of the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church (and one of the Sacraments of Healing, the second of which is the Sacrament of the Sick). It is hoped that the information and resources can help you to teach pupils about the benefits of this wonderful sacrament where they can meet Jesus and feel wrapped in his warm embrace while also developing the theology, religious literacy and spirituality of pupils.

Structure

There are two main sections in this document:

1. The Seven Sacraments (an overview)
2. Sacrament of Reconciliation

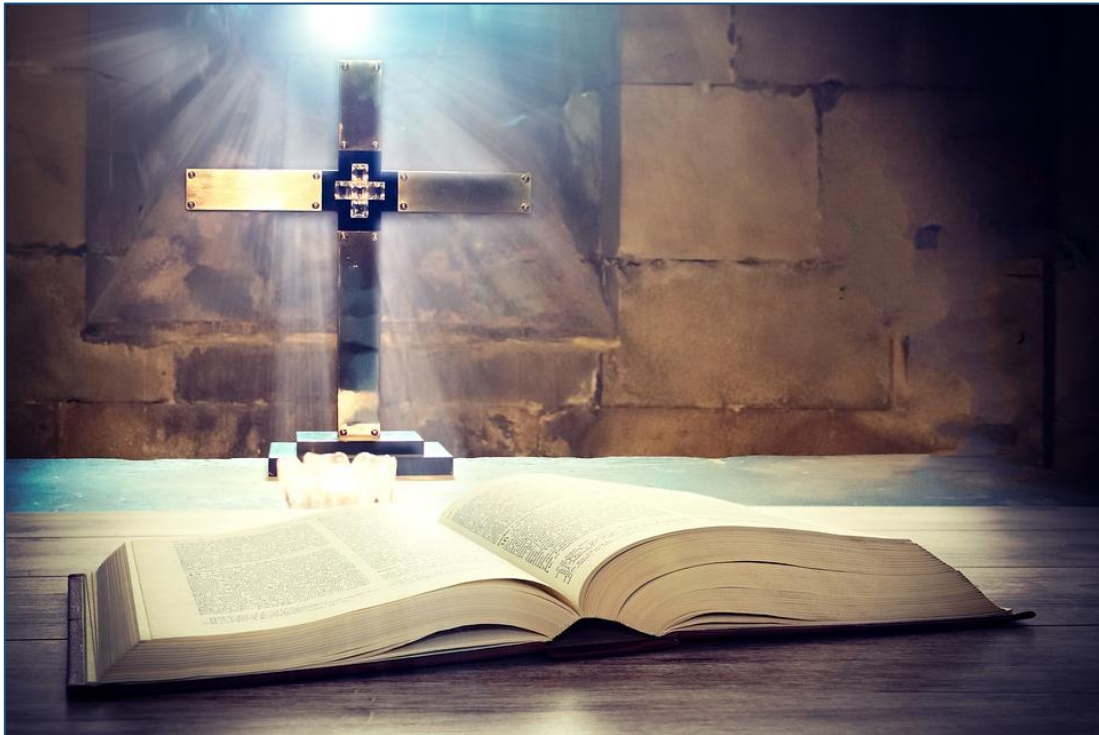
This document is primarily intended to enhance the subject knowledge of teachers in both primary and secondary Catholic schools. While there is a lot of information in the Q & A as well as the A-Z, the videos are also extremely informative and engaging. Other resources are highlighted in this document but it is not meant to be an exhaustive list of resources but support for teaching and learning.





Sacraments

The seven sacraments are meeting points where God himself is present, waits for you, blesses you and leads you into deeper communion with the Church.



A sacrament is an effective sign of something hidden which comes from God. Catholics believe that that they are outward signs of an inward grace through which we share in God's love (St Augustine). In other words, they are visible ways in which the invisible gifts of God's love and mercy are given to us through the Holy Spirit. More information about sacraments and signs can be found [HERE](#).

The sacraments were entrusted to the Church by Jesus so they are all deeply rooted in Scripture and Tradition. They are administered through prayer services known as liturgical rites which usually take place inside a church but which may be celebrated elsewhere.

The seven sacraments can be divided into three groups: Sacraments of Initiation, Sacraments of Healing and Sacraments of Service.

Sacraments of Initiation	Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist
Sacraments of Healing	Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Sick
Sacraments of Service	Marriage and Ordination

In this document, information about Reconciliation is provided in the form of videos and artwork as well as the written word which is based on the teaching from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. We hope that you find them useful for your own personal and professional development. To find out more about Baptism and other sacraments as well as the Catholic faith, it is recommended that you use other documents in the Catholicism Unpacked series which can be found on the Diocese of Westminster Education website: <https://education.rcdow.org.uk/catholicism-unpacked-new/>

Video links for Sacraments (General)

For the videos included below, simply click on the links underlined below.



[The Seven Sacraments \(OBD Films\)](#)

This short film offers a brief overview of the seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church and the purpose each serves. It uses images of sacred art and references to Scripture. Suitable for teachers and pupils in KS2.



[The Sacraments \(Sketchy Catholicism\)](#)

Using sketches, this video explains what a sacrament is and then explains each of the sacraments of initiation, healing and service and how they link together. Suitable for teachers and some pupils in KS2.



[7 Sacraments - Catechism Songs](#)

Jesus instituted the 7 Sacraments and these are explained in the Catechism which can be found [here](#). This song will help to memorise them in a fun way! Suitable for teachers and pupils in KS2.

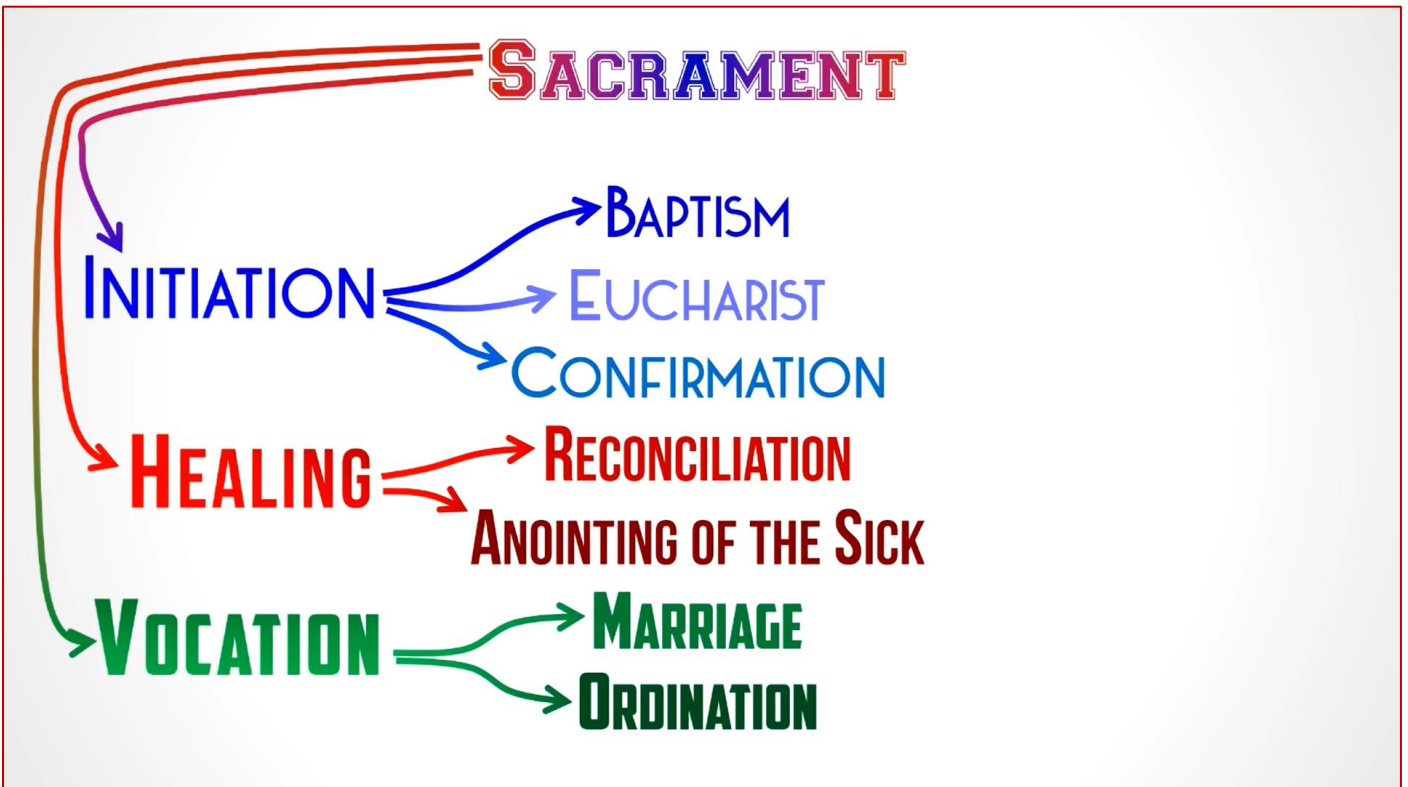
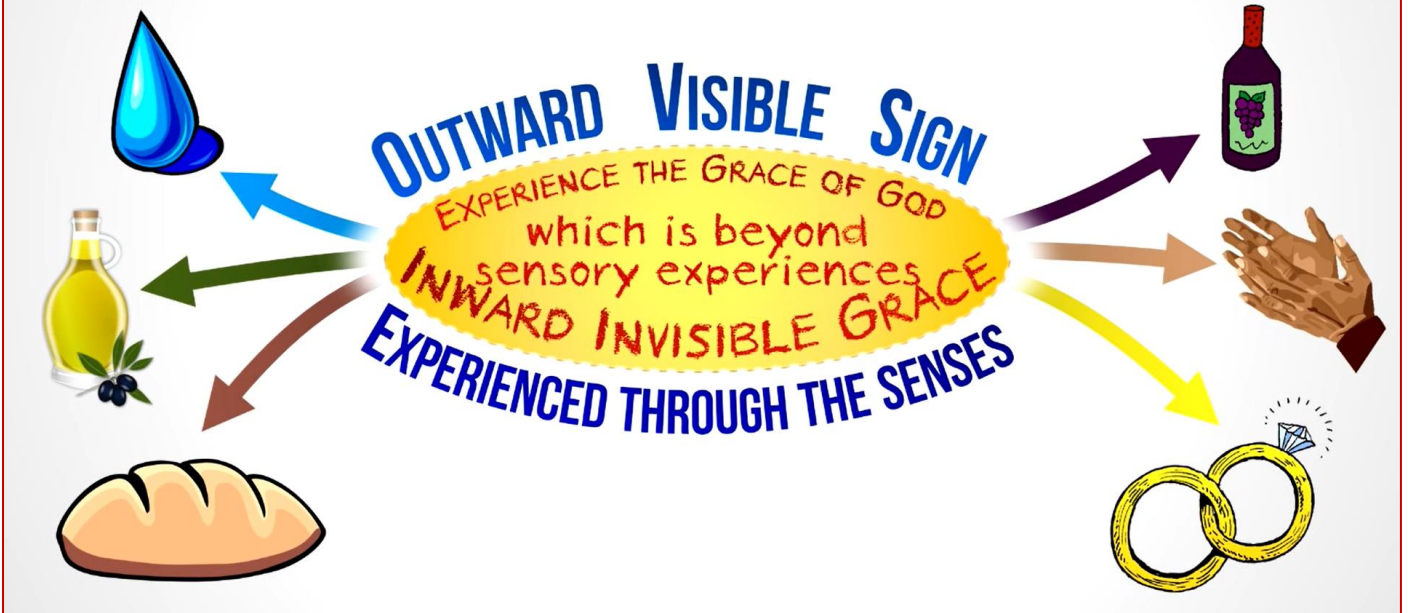


[The Sacraments \(Theo Matters\)](#)

This video explains the sacraments as a whole. It uses simple images to explain each of the sacraments using the words from the Catechism. It is suitable for teachers and may be used for some pupils in KS2.

Visual Aids

(Sacramentum = *Mystery*) **SACRAMENT** [needs to be revealed]
 instituted by Christ revealing the Grace of God through ordinary things



These images were screenshots from Mr McMillan REvises Baptism and Confirmation. Click [HERE](#) to see the YouTube video.

SECTION 2: The Sacrament of Reconciliation - Q & A

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is also known as the Sacrament of Penance, of forgiveness, and of conversion. Some also refer to it as the Sacrament of Confession, although this may cause a little confusion as the Church teaches that confession is only one of the four elements of the sacrament. [CCC 1422-1424, 1486].

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church this sacrament is properly known as the **Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**, although for efficiency and consistency in this document it will be referred to as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The concepts of penance, reconciliation and forgiveness will be explored in this section so as to offer a clear picture about this wonderful sacrament. The A-Z which follows will then shed further light on the concepts and terminology used here. The videos and resources which are also included in this document will help to explain these difficult concepts further in an engaging and simple way.

What is penance?

Penance is making restitution or satisfaction for a wrong that has been committed. Penance must not take place exclusively in my head; it must be expressed in acts of charity and in solidarity with others. A penitent (the person acknowledging their sins and expressing sorrow for them) does penance also by praying, fasting and supporting the poor spiritually and materially. [CCC 1424-1439] People often misunderstand penance. It is not about being sad and having a low self-esteem or brooding over poor choices. Penance encourages us to make amends and a fresh start, therefore making us free.

What is reconciliation?

The word 'reconciliation' comes from a Latin verb meaning 'to bring back together, to restore'. It brings spiritual healing which has a positive impact on our lives and relationships. The act of confession is important because it allows the penitent to put things right with God and others to know that they have been forgiven. It helps to build up and heal the individual as well as the community and the body of Christ. The sacrament is important because it brings us peace and unity – with God, with others and with ourselves.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation reconciles the sinner with God and the Church. [CCC 1468-1470, 1496]

Who instituted this sacrament?

Jesus himself instituted this sacrament when he showed himself to his apostles on Easter day and commanded them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:22-23). [CCC 1439-1485]

Jesus expressed what happens in this sacrament in his parable of the Prodigal Son: when we are led astray, we get lost and cannot cope. God our loving and merciful Father waits for us with infinite longing; he desires to forgive us and draw him closer to himself. His love and mercy are unconditional and given freely. Jesus himself showed us the love of the Father through the forgiveness of sins. He forgave sins in the power of the Holy Spirit and handed that power to his Apostles which was then passed down to our priests. When we go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and tell our sins to the priest, we fall into the heavenly arms of our Father who forgives us through the words of the priest. (YouCat 227)

Why did Christ give us the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick?

Christ's love is shown in the fact that he seeks the lost and heals the sick. That is why he gave us the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Sick as they bring healing and restoration. In them we are freed from sin and helped in our physical and spiritual weakness. [CCC 1420-1421]

Why should a person go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Baptism brings us into the new life of the children of God, but it does not free us from human weakness and the inclination to sin. That is why we need a place where we can be reconciled with God again and again. That place is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. [CCC 1425-1426]

It can be difficult to admit our failings and confess our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It requires some sacrifice but it has many benefits in that it renews the soul, leaving the penitent unburdened and accepted in love. It is a wonderful gift that we can receive again and again as God is merciful and always ready to forgive us. Going to Reconciliation offers a person the opportunity to turn a clean, new page in the book of their life. (YouCat 226) The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be celebrated by those who have been baptised in the Catholic Church. For more information about grace and penitence see the A-Z.

What are the steps of Reconciliation?

The Catholic Church teaches that there are four steps in this sacrament which are explained as follows. This comes from the YouCat for Kids (p134-135).

1. Reflection and Repentance

The confession starts with a reflection, an examination of conscience. You think about the bad you have done and the good you have not done. You feel sorry. We call this feeling repentance. You resolve to never do these things again. In order not to forget anything, you can also write everything down and take the piece of paper with you (and dispose of the paper afterwards).

2. Confession

You go to the priest. You greet each other. With the sign of the cross you greet God. You can start now: tell him when your last confession was! List your sins; you can also read them from the piece of paper. Tell him when you are finished. Tell him that you are sorry.

3. Absolution

After you have acknowledged your sins, ask for the absolution: 'I ask God for forgiveness'. Now it's the priest's turn. He talks to you. He gives you a penance to do afterwards and, in the power of Jesus, says 'I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. You are free! God has now forgiven you everything. Now between you and God it is as if you have never done anything wrong. You can start your new life now.

4. Penance and Amendment

Sometimes the penance is a prayer. Other times it can be an instruction to make good the damage, or to do something else good. Go home with the resolution to better yourself.

Who can forgive sins?

God alone can forgive sins. Jesus could say "Your sins are forgiven" (Mk 2:5) only because he is the Son of God. Priests can forgive in Jesus' place only because Jesus has given them that authority. [CCC 1441-1442] Some people are confused about this sacrament as they feel they can go directly to God to say sorry for their sins rather than going through a priest. Of course, going to God directly in prayer is to be encouraged, but the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a gift that Christ himself has given to complement and strengthen this direct relationship. Confession to a priest gives the absolute assurance of God's forgiveness and helps us make our penitence deeper and truer.

God wants us to have a personal encounter with him by acknowledging our sins and telling them to another. We will then also hear his words of love and forgiveness. The priest represents the community

as well as God. Sin not only impacts on a person's relationship with God but also on their relationship with others which was why it is important to not just confess to God through prayer but to partake in the sacrament. The following words from the Gospel of John are therefore true of priests as they were for the Apostles: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:23) (YouCat 228). For further information on this see Fr Mike Schmitt's video [Why Confess My Sins to a Priest?](#)

Who can celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Anyone who has been baptised into the Catholic Church can celebrate this sacrament. A person can celebrate their first Reconciliation around the age of 7-8 when they understand the difference between right and wrong. Before a person receives their First Communion, they must first go to Reconciliation.

What are the two basic elements required for the forgiveness of a Christian's sins to occur in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

What is required for the forgiveness of sins is the person who undergoes conversion and the priest who in God's name gives him absolution from his sins. (YouCat 231). For more information on absolution and conversion see the A-Z.

What must I bring to the sacrament?

Essential elements of every Sacrament of Reconciliation are: an examination of conscience, contrition, a purpose of amendment, confession and penance. [CCC 1450-1460; 1490-1492; 1494]. For further information about these elements see the terms in the A-Z and Busted Halo's video: [Confession-101 \(Busted Halo part 2\)](#)

How often can you receive this sacrament?

Unlike the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage, this sacrament can be celebrated over and over again, like the Eucharist.



The above information has been simplified and adapted from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the YouCat as well as the YouCat for Kids. To find out more about the sacraments and about this resource as well as YouCat for Kids and free bonus materials see <https://www.youcat.org/>

Reconciliation A-Z

Absolution

The term used for forgiveness in the Catholic Church. It is given by the priest during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The priest absolves the penitent from their sins after they have confessed. When the priest raises his hand over the contrite sinner he says, "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen." These are the words of absolution. Only a priest/bishop may absolve sins.

Act of Contrition (or Sorrow)

Prayer of penance/sorrow said during the Sacrament of Reconciliation after the penitent has confessed sins.

Blessing

At the end of the sacrament the priest will bless the penitent. See the Step by Step Guide to Confession on p14.

Confession

Confession lies at the heart of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and is one of the four steps (see p8).

To confess something is to admit to it, to acknowledge when I have done something wrong. In order to confess to someone else, I first have to confess (admit) it to myself, so the first step is to reflect, to think about where I have failed. So, confession requires self-reflection first, then confession to someone else – to God, through the priest.

Confessional

A small room used for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In some parishes this might be called a Reconciliation room.

Contrition

This is the feeling or expression of remorse (feeling contrite) at the recognition that one has done wrong. It is being truly sorry and ready to change.

Conversion

Conversion comes from the Latin *conversio*, which means 'to turn around.' In the New Testament, the Greek writers used the word *metanoia* which means having a change of heart.

Conversion involves both turning away from a past life and turning toward God. This results in an interior transformation of the person. Conversion can mean turning from sin to repentance, from indifference to fervour, from lack of faith to belief, from error to truth.

Examination of Conscience

A review of one's past thoughts, words, actions and omissions. Some useful Scripture passages for examining one's conscience could be: the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, Gospel Values and the teaching of the Church.

Before the sacrament, the penitent person is required to examine their conscience and be truly sorry for their sins.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.' Ephesians 4:32 tells us, 'be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.'

'Forgiveness is above all a personal choice, a decision of the heart to go against the natural instinct to pay back evil with evil.' St Pope John Paul II.

Grace

Grace is a spontaneous, free and undeserved gift from God. Salvation is the process of being saved from sin and returning to God through his grace. Jesus is our saviour who brought about salvation. For more information see [HERE](#).

Healing

The Sacraments of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick are both sacraments of healing as they offer peace and healing of spirit. Jesus taught parables such as the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin to help people understand God's infinite love and mercy. His miracles also demonstrate this love and bring healing and peace.

Holy Trinity

Like in other sacraments, the Holy Spirit is present in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit).

Jesus

The name Jesus comes from the Hebrew name Yeshua (Joshua in English) meaning 'to deliver; to rescue'. Jesus was the name given to the Son of God. Jesus came into the world to rescue all people and reconcile all people to God. He came to save sinners and he did this through his death and resurrection. Jesus taught the Good News – that God loves us and nothing can separate us from God's love and mercy.

Mercy

The disposition to be kind and forgiving. Founded on compassion, mercy differs from the feeling of sympathy in putting this feeling into practice with a readiness to assist. It is therefore the ready willingness to help anyone in need, especially those in need of pardon or reconciliation. God himself is full of compassion and mercy.

New life

Jesus conquered sin and death on the cross and rose to new life on the third day. Later that evening he appeared to the Apostles in the upper room where he breathed on them and gave them the Holy Spirit and the power to forgive sins in his name. Jesus offers his followers new life through his mercy and forgiveness.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a time to make a new start and begin again. It is a reminder of our Baptism. The Apostle Paul teaches that a believer can be a "new creation" in Christ through reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17 -21). God sent Christ into the world to provide reconciliation through His death.

Original sin

The term 'original sin' does not refer to our own sin or our own fault, but the broken condition we all inherit into which we are born before we sin by our own free decision.

Penance

An act by which you show that you are sorry for what you did wrong. During the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest will give you a 'penance' such as saying a prayer or doing an action to make amends. After this sacrament, the penitent person does their penance and tries to live a life more like Christ.

Penitent

The person acknowledging their sins and expressing sorrow for them. Penitent (adj) also means contrite or repentant.

When the penitent person goes to Reconciliation, they will confess/tell the priest their sins. The priest usually offers them a word of advice and gives them a 'penance' after which the penitent person says a prayer called an Act of Contrition. Then the priest gives them absolution which means that all their sins are forgiven. The penitent person can then go in peace.

Prodigal Son

The parable (also called the Good/Forgiving Father) told by Jesus about a son who leaves his father to lead a prodigal (reckless/wasteful) life but later makes a penitent return.

Reconciliation

One of the seven sacraments (also known as Penance) in which the penitent person asks for forgiveness for their sins and is given absolution by the priest in the name of Jesus. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (like the Eucharist) can be received many times whereas some sacraments can only be received once (such as Baptism and Confirmation). It is the sacrament of forgiveness because God grants the penitent "pardon and peace" by the priest's sacramental absolution. It is the Sacrament of Reconciliation, because it imparts to the sinner the love of God who reconciles. (CCC 1424)

Jesus gave the ministry of reconciliation and forgiveness to the Church when he breathed the Holy Spirit on the apostles after his resurrection and told them that those whose sins they forgave would be forgiven (see *John 20:22-23*).

Repentance

It is turning back to God and having a conversion of heart.

Sacrament

There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church: Baptism, Reconciliation, Eucharist, Confirmation, Marriage, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders. A sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace. We need sacraments to help us to 'outgrow our petty human life and become more like Jesus through Jesus: children of God in freedom and glory' [CCC1129].

Seal (of Confession)

Everything that is said during this sacrament is confidential and this is known as the Seal of Confession. The priest cannot share this information with anyone else and this secrecy is absolute, and cannot be disclosed to anyone.

Sin

A sin is anything that separates me from God and from people. Sin separates us from love and from good. Every sin causes damage. It destroys something in me. It damages relationships between person to person, between person and God. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, sins are forgiven and the relationship between God and the person is restored.

Ten commandments

The ten commandments written on stone tablets given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai (Ex 20:2-17; Deut 5:6-21). These can be the basis of the Examination of Conscience before Reconciliation.



A Step by Step Guide to the Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one which was instituted by Jesus Christ in his infinite love and mercy to offer all sinners forgiveness for their offences against God and against their sisters and brothers. The sacrament brings reconciliation between the penitent and God, between the penitent and others as well as healing and forgiveness to the individual penitent.



A person can celebrate this sacrament in a confessional or Reconciliation room, privately behind a screen or face-to-face with the priest. The penitent can prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation by examining their conscience. This examination, which is often guided by the Ten Commandments, helps the person to prepare for confessing their sins to the priest. To make a good confession, the penitent should be truly sorry for their sins and resolved not to sin again.

Here are the simple steps:

- (1) Make the Sign of the Cross and the penitent greeting the priest with the words,
- (2) “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been (... weeks, months, years) since my last confession. I am sorry for...”
- (3) The penitent confesses their sins to the priest, who stands in the name of Christ and the Church. The priest helps them make a good confession. If the penitent is unsure or uneasy, they can ask the priest to help. It is important to trust in God, a merciful Father who wants to forgive.
- (4) The priest will assign a penance which takes into account the penitent’s personal situation and supports their spiritual good. It may be a prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service, or sacrifice; whatever the penance, the individual is joined in some way to Christ and the cross.
- (5) The penitent will then pray an Act of Contrition/Sorrow. This prayer expresses true sorrow for the sins confessed. This prayer may be expressed in one’s own words or one may use one of the formal prayers of sorrow.
- (6) The priest, acting in the person of Christ, absolves the person from their sins by saying the prayer of Absolution.
- (7) As the prayer is ending, the penitent makes the Sign of the Cross and responds, “Amen.”
- (8) The priest expresses some words of praise and blessing.
- (9) The penitent thanks the priest and leaves, thanks God for his forgiveness and completes the assigned penance.

The above is adapted from: [Confession-step-by-step/](#)
For a child-friendly guide see: [Guide-to-Confession-Handout-color.pdf](#)

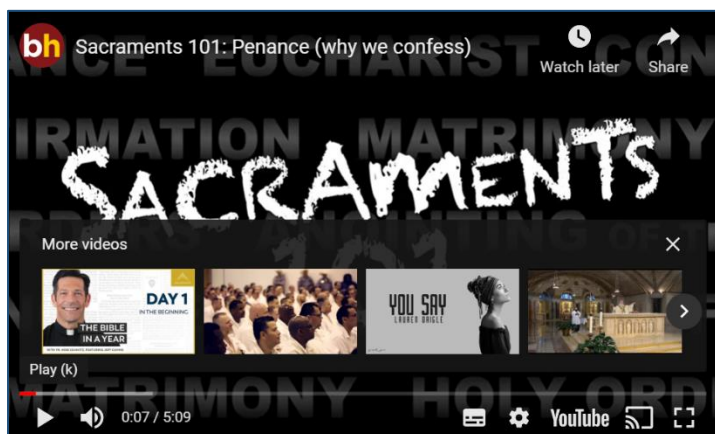
Reconciliation in Scripture

Scripture	Reference
Jesus teaches forgiveness	Mt 6:14
Paralysed man	Mt 9:1-8
Jesus gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom of God	Mt 16:19
Lost sheep	Mt 18:10-12 or Lk 15:1-7
How many times to forgive	Mt 18:21-35
Unforgiving servant	Mt 18:23-35
Jesus forgives Peter	Mt 26:26-69 or Jn 21: 15-1
Paralysed man	Mk 2:1-12
Forgiven woman	Lk 7:36-50
Barren fig tree	Lk 13:6-9
Bent over woman	Lk 13:10-13
Lost coin	Lk 15:8-10
Forgiving (or Good) Father or Prodigal son	Lk 15:11-32
Zacchaeus	Lk 19:1-9
Jesus forgives on the cross	Lk 23: 32-35
The penitent thief	Lk 23: 40-43
Jesus forgives woman who committed adultery	Jn 8: 1-11
Cast the first stone	Jn 8:7
John gives his Apostles authority to forgive sins	Jn 20:22,23)



Video links for the Sacrament of Reconciliation

For the following videos, click on the underlined titled in blue:



[Penance: why we confess \(Busted Halo part 1\)](#)

In this video, Fr Dave Dwyer explains the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the teaching of the Church using Scripture linked to communion, unity and the body of Christ. It can be used with pupils from KS2 upwards.



[Confession-101 \(Busted Halo part 2\)](#)

This is a conversation between the interviewer and the priest as they go through the steps of reconciliation in a simple and straight-forward way. It goes through the four main steps: Confession, Penance, Contrition and Absolution. It is suitable for KS2+



[Sacrament of Reconciliation Explained](#)

This video explains this Sacrament through drawings and Scripture in a straight-forward and detailed way which can be used with pupils from KS2. It also explains how this sacrament was passed down from Christ to his Apostles and then to priests.



[How to go to Confession](#)

This explains what happens at the Sacrament of Reconciliation and goes through the steps in a simple way. It is suitable for pupils in KS2+.



[How to go to Confession \(ODB Films\)](#)

This explains the sacrament using music, drawings and some words. It is useful for KS2+ pupils. It explains the terminology associated with reconciliation in a simple way and talk about the benefits of the sacrament.



[You don't know Jack about Sin](#)

While vacationing in Las Vegas, Busted Halo's own Fr. Jack Collins, CSP, decides to hit the strip and ask people what they know and think about that topic that everyone associates with Sin City...sin. This is for adults only.

For excellent videos to enhance subject knowledge of teachers see:

Why Confess My Sins to a Priest? By Fr Mike Schmitz	Why Confess My Sins to a Priest?
Making a Good Confession by Fr Mike Schmitz	Making a Good Confession
Going to Confession for the First Time in a Long Time by Fr Mike Schmitz	Going to Confession for the First Time in a Long Time
Forgiveness by Fr Mike Schmitz	Forgiveness
How Does God Restore Us? by Fr Mike Schmitz	How Does God Restore Us?
What you can do when another can't forgive by Fr Mike Schmitz	What you can do when another can't forgive

Hymns and songs

Song	Link
A variety of songs on this theme and others	https://www.cjmmusic.com/songs/
Father I have sinned (Words and music by Eugene Reilly, video CJM Music)	https://www.cjmmusic.com/songs/father-i-have-sinned-the-prodigal-son-song/
Face of your Mercy (Words and music by Joanne Boyce, video CJM Music)	https://www.cjmmusic.com/songs/face-of-your-mercy-song/
A variety of songs on this theme and others including: Refiner’s Fire Open the Eyes of my Heart Healing Waters Jesus Remember Me Prayers of St Francis	https://carfleo.com/2020/03/28/song-prayers/
You’re a good, good Father by Chris Tomlin	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-akoOoFBw3c
Lay it Down by Matt Maher	Lay it down
10 Christian Songs about forgiveness	https://www.godtube.com/news/top-10-christian-songs-about-forgiveness.html
Sample of other suggested hymns: Freely, Freely Amazing Grace Come Back to Me Oh Lord all the World Belongs to You Amazing Love (Kendrick) Turn to Me Eagles’ Wings	



Useful websites and resources

Website/Resource	Description	Audience
Catholics Come Home	Website with various useful resources including videos, Q & As, various examinations of consciences for people of different ages as well as articles and links.	Adults
Pray as you go	Examen for children from Pray as you go	KS2+
Pray as you go (adults)	Examen for adults from Pray as you go	Adults
Busted Halo	Guide to confession for pupils in one coloured sheet.	KS2+
Pauline uk	Reconciliation poster (to purchase).	KS1+
Aleteia.org	A slideshow of 5 saints who spent extremely long hours hearing confession	KS2+
Catholic Icing	Reconciliation craft. It also has links to other resources such as printable: 5 steps to a good confession.	KS1-2
Flame of faith.org	Reconciliation FAQs, videos and resources for teaching and catechising children. Makes references to Diocesan specifics (e.g. age of first Reconciliation.)	KS2+
Sacrament of Reconciliation Guide	This leaflet from SVP has an examination of conscience, some prayers and a step-by-step guide to the sacrament	Age 7+
Reconciliation Guide for Children	This resource from The Light is on For You has materials adapted from Loyola Press explains choices and sin in a child-friendly way and includes an examination of conscience.	Age 7+
The Religion Teacher	A few resources for teaching this topic	KS2



Reconciliation Art

The following links show a variety of artwork on the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep. There is a mixture of traditional and contemporary work, fine and abstract art and art from various cultures and styles. Some are accompanied by reflections while others stand alone. They can be used with pupils of any age.

The Prodigal Son

[Prodigal-son-parable-painting-by-bertram-poole-thomas](#)

[Eyekons Prodigal Son portfolio of art](#)

[Prodigal Son - modern version George Lightfoot](#)

[Return of prodigal son Rembrandt](#)

[Reflections on the parable of the prodigal son](#)

[Leaving and returning- Sieger Koeder](#)

[The Prodigal Son by He Qi](#)

[Natre spirited arts gallery](#)

[Return of the prodigal son by Brent Kastler](#)

[Prodigal Son christian art](#)

[Revjoelle Prodigal Son](#)

Lost Sheep

[Lost Sheep parable Thomas Bertram Poole](#)

[The Lost Sheep - Jorge Cocco](#)

[Lost Sheep by Daniel Bonnell](#)

[The shepherd and the lost sheep by Peter Clarke](#)



Christian Art

The following pieces of art are based on the themes of forgiveness and mercy. They are accompanied by scripture and a reflection about the piece of art and are more suitable for older pupils and adults, although the artwork can be used for discussion with younger pupils.

[How often must I forgive my brother?](#)

[Love your enemies](#)

[The tax-collector said "God, be merciful to me"](#)

[There is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner](#)

[To be forgiven you must forgive](#)

[You must forgive seventy-seven times](#)

[I have found my sheep that was lost](#)

[Jesus summoned the twelve disciples](#)

[The lost sheep, the lost coin](#)

[Go rather to the lost sheep](#)

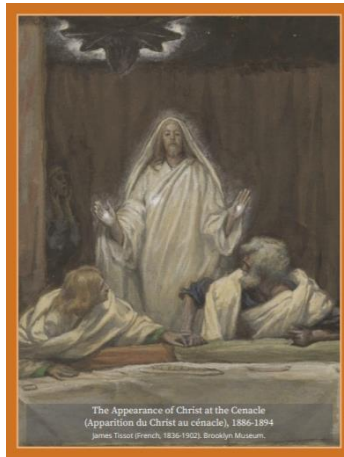
[The one lost sheep gives him more joy than the ninety-nine that did not stray](#)

[The parable of the lost coin](#)

[What I want is mercy not sacrifice](#)

[Divine Mercy Sunday \(Those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven...\)](#)

XIV- Shalom



Doors bolted shut
Last Supper dishes still not washed up
wine-drunk flies buzzing to get out
ten men frightened and numb
humbled by fear, failure and doubt
bewildered by the women's empty tomb reports
vigilant to the threat prowling outside
of their own arrest, torture and death
waiting for the coast to clear
waiting to be somewhere, anywhere but here...

Then it happens.
From nowhere, without a bolt loosened
a handle turned or roofing removed
Jesus appears
standing before them
radiant, risen, real?
Ecstasy and agony. Shock and awe.
Fresh fragrant air
flooding the fetid fractious lair
before any can speak
he raises his hand in blessing and prayer
and softly says the word they need to hear
'Shalom'.

And again 'Shalom'
the gift they most urgently desire
peace from guilt and shame
peace from never knowing hope again
once more his 'Shalom' drenches
and softens their broken, beaten hearts.
Moving closer, mercy-eyed

he shows them his hands and his side
healing miracle-making hands
now punctured and torn by hammered iron nails
and his side gashed and gouged
but now somehow glorious, victorious...

In the wounds of death they see new life
the defeated Jesus becomes the Risen Christ
who now holds them with his eyes and says
“As the Father sent me so am I sending you.
No more locked doors, no more hiding in fear
your mission is to the world spreading out from here
and not in your own power
but in my Spirit’s way
to bring to all the mercy
I have shown to you this Resurrection day.
Break through the doors of sin and shame
and forgive others in my name.”

With this he breathes on them
igniting the Spirit’s fire
sparking to life in each an apostle’s desire.
Filled now with their Lord’s peace, purpose and power
the ten men run towards the bolted door
and with one pull burst out into the street
no longer afraid, no longer in retreat
but bold and hungry for souls
themselves risen from the dead, a radical rebirth
sent out, empowered
to renew the face of the earth.

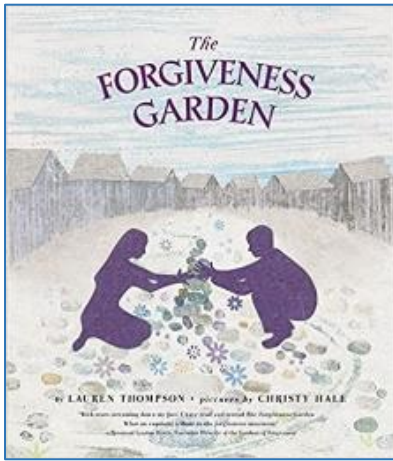
Reflection

John 20: 19-23

How often does it happen in life that a physical place where we can experience pure spiritual grace can on another day be a place of defeat and failure. This was so true of the Upper Room. We need to remember that between its celebration of the Last Supper and the appearance of the Risen Christ to the shattered disciples, that special Jerusalem upper floor room, so carefully chosen and prepared by Jesus, also saw the days of the disciples’ deepest depression. Everything they had believed in and worked for lay in ruins around them. They were holed up in this one room totally lost and vulnerable in the heart of this seething city which had just brutally put their Lord to death. Into this paralysis and trauma the risen Christ brings, in a matter of moments, new life, restored hope and renewed mission for life. Can you think of any “Upper Room experiences” which you have had in your own life?

*Poem by Fr Richard Nesbitt, parish priest of White City in Hammersmith.
From Holy Week Voices of the Holy Land*

For other Lenten poetry linked to Reconciliation see: [HERE](#)



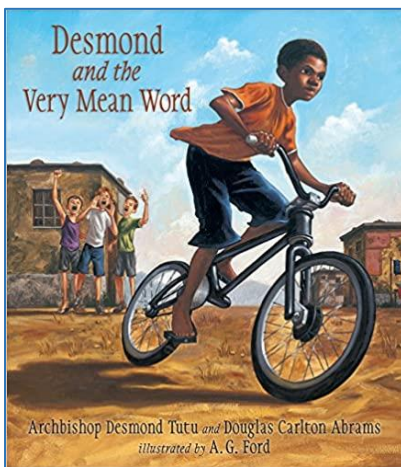
The Forgiveness Garden Lauren Thompson

A long time ago and far away--although it could be here, and it could be now--a boy threw a stone and injured a girl. For as long as anyone could remember, their families had been enemies, and their towns as well, so it was no surprise that something bad had happened. Hate had happened. Revenge had happened. And that inspired more hate and more calls for revenge. But this time, a young girl decided to try something different...



Draw the Line by Kathryn Otoshi

When two boys draw their own lines and realize they can connect them—*magic happens!* A misstep causes their lines to get crossed, and soon their line unravels into an angry tug-of-war. With a growing rift between them, will the boys find a way to come together again? Kathryn Otoshi's book is a multi-layered statement about friendship, boundaries, and healing after conflict.



Desmond and the very mean word by Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams

Based on a true story from Archbishop Desmond Tutu's childhood in South Africa, *Desmond and the Very Mean Word* reveals the power of words and the secret of forgiveness.

Top 10 books about forgiveness for children

<https://bookroo.com/explore/books/topics/forgiveness>

Prayers for Reconciliation

Acts of Contrition (Sorrow)

There are many versions of this, a few of which are included below. However, the most important thing is that you say a prayer of sorrow that is genuine; it can be a known one or a spontaneous one.

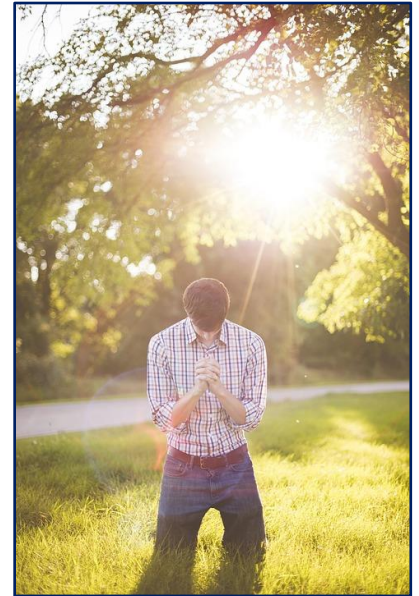
O my God
Because you are so good
I am very sorry that I have sinned against you
And with the help of your grace I will not sin again.
Amen.

O my God
I thank you for loving me
I am sorry for all my sins
For not loving others and not loving you
Help me to live like Jesus
And not sin again.
Amen.

For some other Acts of Contrition see [Vatican news](#)

Other prayers about forgiveness include:

- The Our Father
- Make me a channel of your peace (Prayer of St Francis)



Saints

Saints

- St Oliver Plunkett – Patron saint of peace and reconciliation
- St Maria Goretti – Patron saint of forgiveness
- St Francis of Assisi – A man of peace and forgiveness
- St Josephine Bakhita – An excellent example of forgiveness

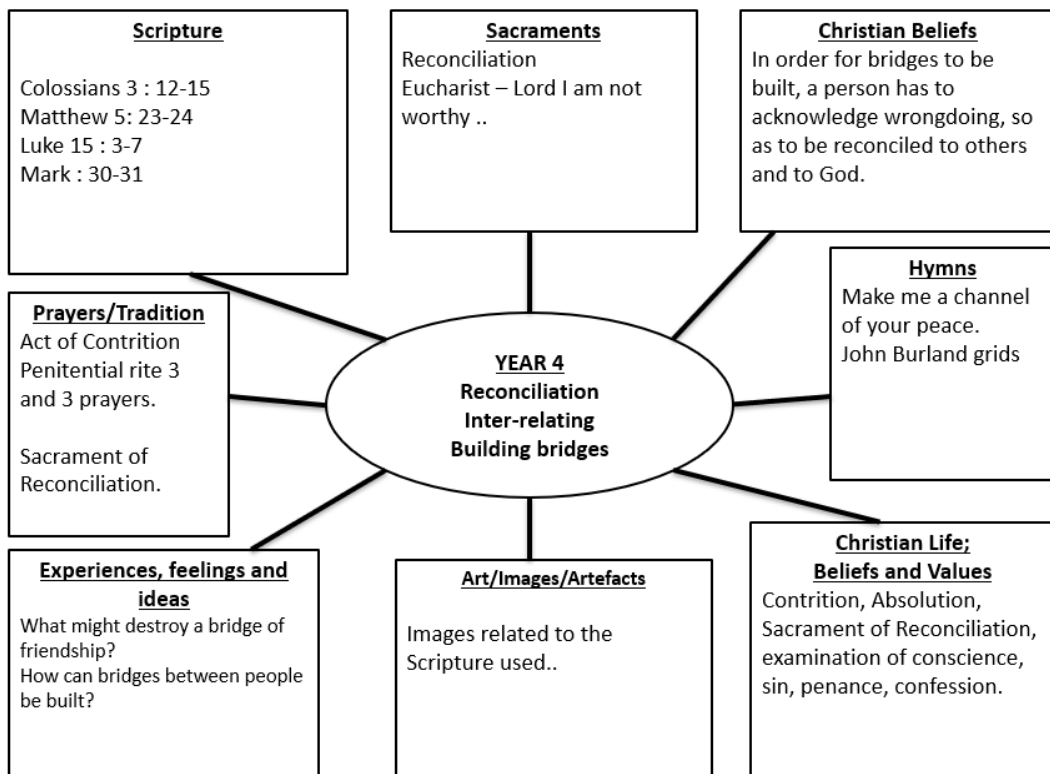
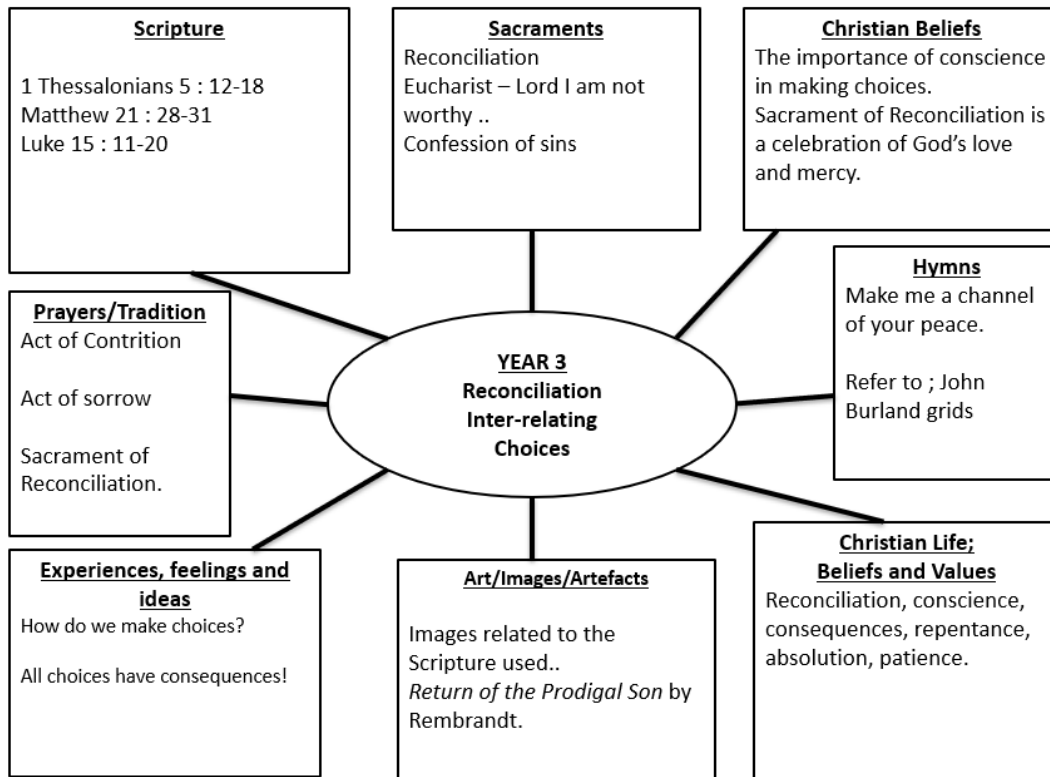
Saints who spent a long time hearing confession:

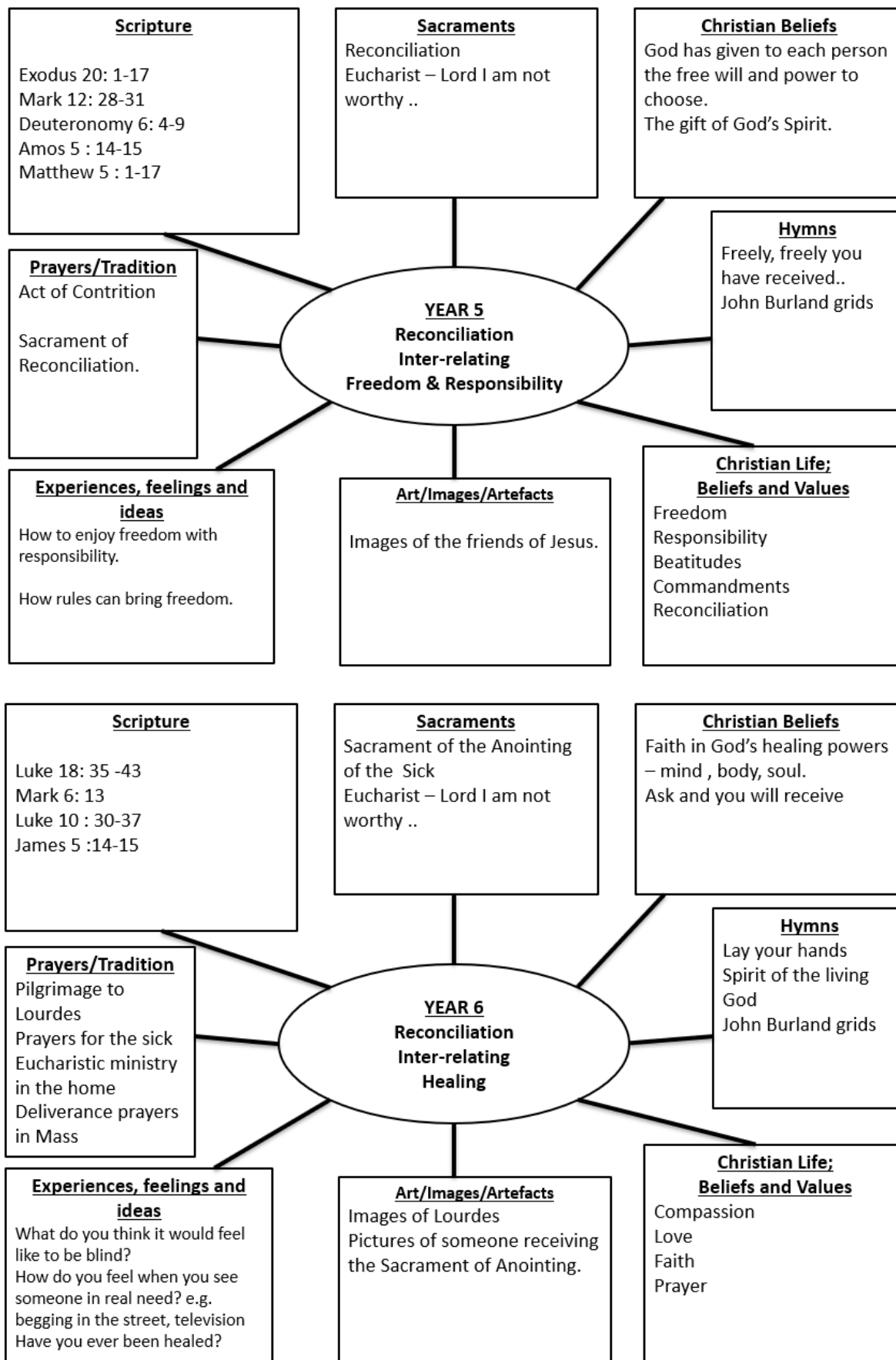
- Saint John Vianney, le Curé d'Ars
- St Padre Pio
- St Leopald Mandic
- St Philip Neri
- St Joseph Cafasso

For a slideshow of 5 saints who spent extremely long hours hearing confession see [Aleteia.org](#)

Topic Grids

The following Come and See topic grids are used for Summer Term Reconciliation Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 and all resources can be taken from the Nottingham Diocese website which can be found [HERE](#). However, they may be of use to anyone teaching and learning about this topic.





AID TO THE CHURCH IN NEED

Click on presentations below. If you would like a PowerPoint version, please contact marie.fahy@acnuk.org



Please click on the images below get the full-size versions for print. If you would rather black and white versions for any of these resources for pupils to colour, please contact marie.fahy@acnuk.org

REFLECTION

SIN AND SALVATION IN MY LIFE

1 SALVATION

We believe that through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we can be reconciled to God even though we have sinned. We are offered salvation and the promise of eternal life in heaven.

3 DRAW

Take a piece of paper and fold it in half. Draw half a heart along the fold and cut out.

2 REFLECT

Think: Who are the people who have helped me in my life? Who has shown me love? Who do I want to give thanks to God for?

4 WRITE

When you have cut out your heart: Write the names of the people who have helped you, loved you and saved you.

5 CONSIDER

You may want to write what they have done for you and how they helped you.

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REFLECTION

SIN AND SALVATION IN MY LIFE

1 THINK

What are the ways in which I have been hurt by other people? How have their sins affected me?

3 WRITE

On a separate piece of paper, write down the names or the situations where other peoples' sin has caused you to be upset. (in code if you wish, but nobody will see this.)

2 MAKE

Make an envelope using a piece of A4 of paper.

Fold each of the four edges of the paper in by 2cm and stick down. Fold the bottom up by one third and stick the edges down. Fold the top third into the triangular envelope shape and stick. Fold down over the lower third.

4 SEAL

Put the paper with the names and situations into your envelope. Seal it shut with glue or selotape.

5 PRAY

During prayer-time, bring your envelope forward to offer the people and situations to God.

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EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE



Please use as little or as much of this as is appropriate for your class



PREPARE FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION BY ASKING YOURSELF:

1. Have I only thought about myself and what I want?
2. Do I make a fuss if things don't go my way?
3. Am I generous with my possessions?
4. Have I forgotten to say my prayers?
5. Have I gone to Mass every Sunday and on every Holy Day of Obligation?
6. Have I tried to put God in the centre of my life?
7. Have I used God's name in a disrespectful way?
8. Do I try to pay attention and be respectful during Mass and prayers?
9. Do I put my trust in superstitions, horoscopes or good luck charms?
10. Do I try to make Sunday a day of rest?



11. Do I think I know better than God?
12. Have I treated people in the way that I would like to be treated?
13. Have I laughed at others?
14. Have I gossiped about others?
15. Have I deliberately left someone out?
16. Have I encouraged someone else to do something that I know is wrong?
17. Have I been ungrateful?
18. Have I been difficult to live with?
19. Have I made my parents' or carers' lives more difficult?
20. Have I been moody or argumentative even when I could see it was upsetting another person?
21. Am I judgemental?
22. Do I get jealous if I have to share my friends?
23. Do I cause arguments within my friendship groups?
24. Do I try to make people do what I want even if I know they don't want to?
25. Have I been respectful?
26. Have I been kind to my brothers and sisters, friends, cousins, relatives and people in my class?

27. Do I set a good example to younger siblings and pupils in lower year groups?
28. Have I said things to hurt others?
29. Do I expect everything to revolve around me?
30. Am I careful about what I watch on TV?
31. Do I watch films that are too grown up for me?
32. If I have a mobile phone, laptop or tablet, do I only look at things that I would be happy to show my Mum or a teacher?
33. If a friend sends me something which I know I shouldn't be looking at, do I have the courage to ask them to stop, delete it or tell someone?
34. Do I listen to others or do I just want to talk about myself?
35. Have I held grudges or not forgiven others?
36. Have I stopped speaking to someone?
37. Have I made someone feel bad out of revenge?
38. If I have had a disagreement, have I tried to resolve it fairly and peacefully?



EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE



Please use as little or as much of this as is appropriate for your class



PREPARE FOR THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION BY ASKING YOURSELF:

- 39. Do I show off in a way that is intended to make someone else feel not good enough?
- 40. Is there anything that I place too much emphasis on? Do I miss Mass because of sport? Do I refuse to take part in family activities because of video-games, TV or something else?
- 41. Am I kind to my grandparents?
- 42. Have I been respectful of other people's property?
- 43. Have I vandalised anything?
- 44. Have I been wasteful and disregarded the planet?
- 45. Have I been unkind to animals?
- 46. Am I preoccupied with 'things', possessions, expensive clothes, labels or money?
- 47. Am I thoughtful around members of the public, especially the elderly, or when on public transport?



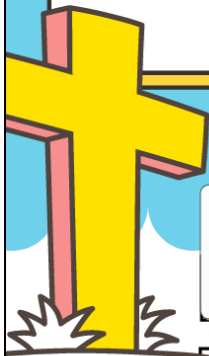
- 48. Have I used demeaning or disrespectful language?
- 49. Have I put someone else down to make myself feel better?
- 50. Do I play fairly or do I cheat in games?
- 51. Do I lie to make people like me?
- 52. Am I horrible to people who seem to have things that I want?
- 53. Am I nasty to people who are not as well off as me?
- 54. Do I make fun of people who seem different to me?
- 55. Am I respectful to all people?
- 56. Have I been honest at school? Have I cheated in any way?
- 57. Did I copy homework or cheat in a test?
- 58. Have I bullied anyone?
- 59. Have I fought with anyone?
- 60. Do I accept it well if somebody else wins, does better than me or is more successful in some way?
- 61. Have I always been honest?
- 62. Have I stolen anything?
- 63. Have I returned what I borrowed or found?
- 64. Have I owned up of I have done something wrong?

- 65. Have I let somebody else take the blame for something I have done?
- 66. Am I reliable? Am I true to my word?
- 67. Do I consider the poor, those who are sick and people who are suffering?
- 68. Do I do what I can to make the lives of other people better, or do I choose to ignore the suffering of others?
- 69. Have I deliberately left someone out?
- 70. Have I moaned and made a fuss when asked to help my parents?
- 71. Have I tried to make others feel welcome and accepted?
- 72. Have I failed to use my gifts, my abilities and my talents?
- 73. Do I remember to pray for others?
- 74. Do I waste all my time and not make the most of every day?
- 75. Did I fail to speak up about something when I should have?
- 76. Am I neglectful about my responsibilities?
- 77. Do I forget to pray every day?
- 78. Do I remember to give thanks for what I have?
- 79. Do I do what I can to help, to be charitable and to make a sacrifice of my time or money for the benefit of someone else?



THE LOST SON - LUKE 15:11-32

ROLE PLAY



EMOTIONS/FEELINGS CHARACTERISTICS

PROPS/SYMBOLS & PLACES

STAGE DIRECTIONS

THE FATHER

Father: loving, merciful and doesn't hold grudges. Think about the strength of the father's love, He respects his son's wishes, but does everything he can to help him. Think about the forgiveness he shows everything in he does.

Sandals, robe and ring. In other versions of this Bible passage, when the son comes home, the father puts sandals on his feet. This shows that he wasn't being treated as a servant - servants didn't wear sandals. A rope around him shows that he was royal and a ring tells us that he had authority as part of the family. The feast is like Easter; not a Resurrection but a return from the dead.

Always waiting, watching hoping, loving and ready to forgive. Notice that the father doesn't change - he is always facing his son, but respecting his son's decisions. He comes out to meet both sons. He goes to them.

THE YOUNGER SON

Think about the different emotions and feelings the son experiences from leaving home to coming back. Try to show these in your performance, and why it is that the things he think will make him happy don't.

Pigs were considered unclean by Jews, so this would bring about shame. Distant land - what might this mean?

Show him turning away and then turning back. This is what we do when we go the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To repent means to turn back.

THE OLDER SON

Older son: Why doesn't he want his father to forgive his brother? Does he understand his father's love?

Where is he positioned throughout the parable? Do we ever see him in the father's house? What might Jesus be trying to tell us? Why doesn't he call his brother 'my brother', but refers to him only as 'your son'?

On the outside. Notice that he doesn't want a celebration with his father; he only wants one with his friends.

THIS RESOURCE IS PART OF ACN'S CHILD'S BIBLE PROJECT.
FOR MORE RESOURCES CONTACT: SCHOOLS@ACNUK.ORG

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THE LOST SON - LUKE 15:11-32

ROLE PLAY SCRIPT



Look at the chart and plan your role play.

Work out how you will show the differences between the characters using the information about each one to help you.

Use the script provided below or devise your own script to tell the story.

You may want to 'freeze frame' some of the scenes and explain to the audience what the meaning is for us.



A Father and His Sons— SCRIPT

YS: Father, I would like my share of the inheritance. I want to go away; I want to look after myself now and do what I want.

F: I will give you your share, half of everything I own.

OS: Father, why are you letting him have this now? It's as if he is wishing you dead – like you are more use to him dead than alive.

YS: (Walking away). Now I am free! I don't have to do what my Father wants any more. I can enjoy my life and please myself. That's what life is about.

F: (Standing looking). I hope my son is safe. I hope he comes back one day.

YS: (Having a good time). This is great! I can drink, spend all my money on my new friends, have lots of girlfriends, go to parties, get up when I want, go to bed when I like and buy whatever takes my fancy.

F to OS: I hope my son is looking after himself. I hope he comes back one day. But now it is as if he is dead. He is so far away from me, from the family and from my protection. I will never give up hope and I will always love him.

OS: But Father, he is off spending all your money and bringing shame on this house. How can you still love him?

F: He is my son and I love you both more than you can imagine.

YS: (Talking to the farmer) Please let me work on your farm. I am starving now because I have no money left. I used to be rich but I have spent it all and I have nothing to show for it. All my so-called friends have left me - they only wanted my money. I am starving. Please!





THE LOST SON - LUKE 15:11-32

SCRIPT

OS: (In field working and thinking out loud). I work so hard. Day in, day out. I always do what's asked of me. I keep the rules. I would never do what my Father's younger son did. He is no brother of mine.

F: (Standing looking). I wonder when I will see my son again. I had such great plans for us together.

YS: (Feeding pigs). I can't even eat your food. I never imagined this is what would happen – that I, a Jew, would have to feed pigs! I am the lowest of the low. I have betrayed everyone who cared about me. The shame I have brought to my family - I never realised how much I was loved in my Father's house...

(PAUSE to show the younger son coming to his senses.)

YS: (Thinking out loud) My Father treats his servants better than this. I'm going to die if I stay here. I will go back to my Father. I will ask him to employ me. I don't deserve his love or his mercy. Oh, I'm so nervous – what if he turns me away?

(YS turns and starts walking back.)

(F sees YS and runs out to meet him - full of joy.)

YS: Father, I have sinned against God and against you. So I no longer deserve to be called your son. Can I at least be a servant?

F: Let's have a feast! You will not be a servant – you are my beloved son.

OS: (To servant) What's happening here? I didn't know we were having a party today. (Show his expression when he realises what has happened).

OS: I'm not going in there! After everything he has done—he has a party thrown in his honour!

(F comes out to OS.)

OS: I have worked for you all these years and you never gave me even a kid to celebrate with my friends. And now.... He's back... everyone is rejoicing.

F: You are my son. You are with me always and all I have is yours. But today we must celebrate. Your brother was dead and has come to life. He was lost and now he is found. He has returned home at last. Let's all be happy and celebrate!



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CAFOD

CAFOD has a variety of resources on this theme, some of which are included below:

[Reconciliation Service for Young People: This service has a global justice theme, so works well after a session or retreat on justice](#)

[A reflection on Reconciliation and healing: a gift from God](#)

[Secondary and youth resources - Peace and conflict](#)



Images

All images from Pixabay

Books

All Bible references are from the New Revised Standard Version

Catechism of the Catholic Church

YouCat: Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church

YouCat for Kids

Catholic Foundation Stones by Archbishop John Wilson and Fr Andrew Allman

Websites

<https://catholiccourier.com/articles/a-glossary-of-penance-terms/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zh4f3k7/revision/5>

<http://www.beginningcatholic.com/sacrament-of-reconciliation>

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-reconciliation/>

<https://www.scripturecatholic.com/sacrament-confession-forgiveness-sins/>

<https://holyspiritchurch.org/sacrament-reconciliation-living-lit/>

<https://www.archspm.org/faith-and-discipleship/catholic-faith/what-did-jesus-teach-about-forgiveness/>

<https://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/education/primary-re/come-and-see/topic-webs-key-stage-2>

Other websites and videos used are included in the text.

With thanks to:

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CAFOD

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