

Adult Formation Session on Reconciliation

Gathering and Prayer Experience (15 minutes)

Leader: We begin our prayer in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

ALL: Amen

Leader: Let us come with confidence before the throne of grace to receive God's mercy, and we shall find pardon and strength in our time of need.

Lord, send your Spirit among us to cleanse us in the waters of repentance. May he make of us a living sacrifice so that in every place, by his life-giving power, we may praise your glory and proclaim your loving compassion. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen

Reading: Romans 7:15-24

Prayer of Intercession

Leader: Give us the grace of true repentance

ALL: We pray you, hear us

Leader: Forgive your children who confess their sins, and restore them to full communion with your Church

ALL: We pray you, hear us.

Leader: Renew the glory of baptism in those who have lost it by sin

ALL: We pray you, hear us.

Leader: Welcome to your altar, and renew their spirit with the hope of eternal glory

ALL: We pray you, hear us.

Leader: Keep them faithful to your sacraments and loyal in your service.

ALL: We pray you, hear us

Leader: Renew your love in their hearts, and make them bear witness to it in their daily lives.

ALL: We pray you, hear us

Leader: Let now pray to God our Father in the words Christ gave us, and ask him for his forgiveness and protection from all evil...

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven . . .

Leader: Lord, draw near to your servants who in the presence of your Church confess that they are sinners. Through the ministry of the Church free them from all sin so that renewed in spirit they may give you thankful praise. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen

Opening Group Conversation (20 minutes)

(Large newsprint or a Smartboard would be helpful at this point to record significant ideas or words that are common to persons in the group. Post these conversation points somewhere in the room to refer to as the presentation proceeds.)

What can you share of your experience of participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation over the years? What do you remember?

What is your attitude to confession today?

How would you explain the Sacrament of Reconciliation to people of other faiths? To your own grown children?

Presentation of a Brief History of the Development of the Sacrament (Reference: *Doors to the Sacred*, Joseph Martos, Liguori Publications, 2001, pgs. 275-313) (20 minutes)

1. Early Centuries
 - a. Penance was received once in their lifetime
 - b. Sacrament was administered in a very public fashion
 - c. Three "sins" that must be confessed, Adultery, Apostasy, Murder – other minor sins were confessed in common on a daily basis
 - d. Penance could take years – absolution was usually granted on Holy Thursday
2. Irish Influence
 - a. The monks of Ireland initiated the practice of a repeatable confession and penance
 - b. Modeled after the monastic practice of the Evening Examin
 - c. Practice spread throughout the world
3. Middle Ages/Renaissance
 - a. Practice of Private Confessors
 - b. Individual confession became the norm
4. 20th Century to Present
 - a. Three forms of sacrament; individual, communal with individual confession, general
 - b. General Absolution form reserved for "emergency" situations

Presentation – Names of the Sacrament (30-40 minutes)

Copies of the quotes from the Catechism of the Catholic Church should be available for participants. Additionally, if possible copies of the Catholic Catechism for Adults should be made available (or have participants bring them.) This presentation can be presented in a lecture fashion. However, it would be more successful including appropriate dialogue and discussion with the participants.

1. Sacrament of Conversion – CCC, 1423
 - a. Change of Heart
 - b. Change in Action

- c. Radical change in outlook of life, i.e. St. Paul, St. Peter, etc.
- 2. Sacrament of Confession – CCC, 1424
 - a. Disclosure of Sin
 - b. Proclamation – praise of God’s mercy and forgiveness
- 3. Sacrament of Penance – CCC, 1424
 - a. Disciplines of the Christian
 - b. Penance is not a condition for forgiveness
 - c. Partnering in the Christian life
 - d. Leads to a maturing of faith and healthy growth
- 4. Sacrament of Forgiveness – CCC, 1424, 1446
- 5. Sacrament of Reconciliation – CCC, 1424, 1440

Discussion: What is the model of the sacrament that you operate from?

Presentation of the Ritual (Reference: *The Rites*, Pueblo Publishing Co., 1976, pgs. 341-446)

(30 minutes)

Important points:

- 1. Sacrament does not cause sorrow for the sins but the ritual celebrates and formalizes the experience of the penitent
- 2. Humility before God is the first step in setting the proper order in our lives between God and ourselves
 - a. Humility is different than humiliation
 - b. Humility is modeled by Christ in His acceptance of His humanity

Steps in the Celebration of the Sacrament

Role play two participants in the sacrament from what they remember of the ritual as a child. It would be preferable if you can find two persons who remember the pre-Vatican II form and experience.

- A. Greeting

The priest should welcome the penitent with fraternal charity and address him with friendly words.
- B. Reading of the Word of God (optional)

Through the word of God the Christian receives light to recognize his sins and is called to conversion and to confidence in God’s mercy
- C. Discussion of faults and articulation of sins with a discussion of remedy and acceptance of the act of penance

The priest should help the penitent to make a complete confession; he should also encourage him to have sincere sorrow for his sins against God. Finally, the priest should offer suitable counsel to help the penitent begin a new life and, where necessary, instruct him in the duties of the Christian way of life.

The priest imposes an act of penance or satisfaction on the penitent; this should serve not only to make up for the past but to help him begin a new life and provide him with an antidote to weakness.
- D. Prayer of the Penitent and Absolution

After this the penitent manifests his contrition and resolution to begin a new life by means of a prayer for God's pardon. Following this prayer, the priest extends his hands, or at least his right hand, over the head of the penitent and pronounces the formula for absolution.

E. Proclamation of Praise and Dismissal

After receiving pardon for his sins, the penitent praises the mercy of God and gives him thanks in a short invocation taken from scripture. Then the priest tells him to go in peace.

After this presentation, ask for several volunteers to do a role play acting out of the format that was presented above. Allow for the freedom and creativity of the actors. Discuss what is different between this form of the sacrament and the form demonstrated in the first role play. Allow time for persons to compare the two role plays of the rituals and discuss which is a better experience for the sacrament.

Closing Discussion (15 minutes)

It is important to have a conversation of the fact that what has been demonstrated above is the best scene. The sacrament is often abridged due to numbers and parish situations. Additionally, explain that we frequently encounter a Communal Celebration of the sacrament during various liturgical seasons. Give them a copy of a Communal Celebration and show the elements of each ritual present in both forms. (Reference: *The Rites*, Pueblo Publishing Co., 1976, pgs. 341-446)

Ask if there are any further questions.

Closing prayer

(Recite slowly and prayerfully together)

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son has reconciled the world to Himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give us pardon and peace, and an absolution for our sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son +, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Go in peace!