

Understanding Reconciliation

SIN ☐ **“missing the mark,” a choice or an act that separates us from God**

- ☐ Sometimes we fail to love. This includes doing things like hurting others, being dishonest, acting selfish or cheating. This also includes things we do not do, like not taking care of someone who needs our love.
- ☐ Our sins hurt and create barriers between ourselves, other people and God.

RECONCILE ☐ **to restore friendship**

- ☐ Reconciliation happens after there has been a break in a relationship. This break could be a big or a small way that our bond of love and care has become strained, damaged or broken.
- ☐ To reconcile is to repair the brokenness, to make the friendship strong again, united in love and care.
- ☐ To help heal the brokenness and to strengthen our faith, the priest gives us an act of penance within the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This can be a prayer, an act of service or a way to heal a broken relationship.

FORGIVE ☐ **to pardon, absolve and give up resentment**

- ☐ We experience forgiveness when we repair broken relationships.
- ☐ In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we experience forgiveness from God and the support of the community.
- ☐ We are called to ask forgiveness from those whom we hurt, *and* to forgive others as God forgives us.

SACRAMENT ☐ **a sign of God’s love made real in our lives**

- ☐ A sacrament is a gift from God that reveals God’s love and reminds us of our call to follow Jesus.

- A sacrament is a special sign that points us back to the right path - the path of following Jesus' example and living the Good News.
- The gift within the Sacrament of Reconciliation is healing. Through the sacrament we are strengthened to follow Jesus.

Exploring Life Situations

Situation A - Michael

A friend of yours named Michael was caught in a difficult situation. Michael had studied especially hard for an upcoming quiz in Math. A classmate named Sean approached Michael on the way into Math class as they were getting ready for the quiz. Sean's desk is right behind Michael's. Sean asked Michael if he could look at his quiz answers because he had not had the chance to study. Michael let him see his answers. Michael and Sean both aced the quiz. Some of the kids in the class who would have received a C or a D on their test received a D or an F because of the way that Michael and Sean's tests affected the class curve for grading. Michael was feeling uncomfortable as the teacher lectured the rest of the class about the need to study and work harder. She held up Michael and Sean as role models.

Discussion Questions

1. What was wrong with the choices that your friend made? What sin or sins were committed?
2. Who was hurt by your friend? Try to think of all of the possibilities.
3. How can your friend repair what has been broken?
4. What different, more loving choices could your friend have made? How could the story have been different?
5. If you were in the place of your friend, what would you be sorry about?

Exploring Life Situations

Situation B – Jacob

A friend of yours named Jacob was in a mess with his best friend Josh. Joshua has shared with Jacob that things at home were kind of stressed. It seems that Josh's brother Tim had not been accepted into college. Everyone had been counting on him to go. Josh was hanging out with Jacob to have some place to get away from the stress. Later Jacob shared this news with his friend Emily, who shared it with Laura, who shared it with Sergio, and so on, and so on. When Josh went to school the next day everyone was talking about how dumb his family was: "look at him; his brother can't even get into college!"

Discussion Questions

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2. Who was hurt by your friend? Try to think of all of the possibilities.
3. How can your friend repair what has been broken?
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5. If you were in the place of your friend, what would you be sorry about?

Exploring Life Situations

Situation C – Kaitlyn

A friend of yours named Kaitlyn got into trouble with her family over a sweater. The weather was getting cooler and Kaitlyn was bored with her clothes. Looking for something to wear, she wandered into her sister Candice's room and borrowed a sweater. Later that day while over at a friend's house, she took off the sweater and left it there. Her friend wore the sweater to school the next day and later when she laundered it, she put it into a hot dryer. The sweater shrank and was ruined. Candice, who was saving the sweater for a special occasion, was sad when she could not find it. She asked her mom if she had seen it. Kaitlyn's mom asked her directly if she knew what had happened to the sweater. Kaitlyn said she did not know anything about it.

Discussion Questions

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3. How can your friend repair what has been broken?
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Exploring Life Situations

Situation D - Gabriela

A friend of yours named Gabriela felt badly after a field trip that did not work out the way she thought. In Gabriela's class there are two groups of girls who hang out together. One group includes most of the cheerleaders and popular girls in school. They are always deciding what is cool and what is not. Gabriela's group is made up of girls involved in band and choir. Sometimes the cheerleader group makes fun of Gabriela's group - laughing at the uniforms they wear for band or teasing them while they are practicing. For the field trip, everyone in class was told to bring a sack lunch. Gabriela and her group got together the night before and made up special lunches for themselves - they had fun, but they went overboard by fixing so much food. Meanwhile the cheerleaders decided that it would be cooler to buy a lunch. Lunch time for the field trip ended in a nature park far from town and away from any restaurants or markets. The cheerleader group was stuck without any lunch. Gabriela and her group knew that they had enough to share, but this was a great chance for them to get the last laugh. Later after eating her big lunch, Gabriela did not feel so well.

Discussion Questions

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2. Who was hurt by your friend? Try to think of all of the possibilities.
3. How can your friend repair what has been broken?
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Exploring Life Situations

Situation E - Andrew

A friend of yours named Andrew was caught in a tough choice. A new family moved in down the street with a teenage boy named Nick. Nick is Andrew's age. Nick dresses kind of different and Andrew thinks he looks kind of weird and nerdy. Andrew's parents invited Nick's family to dinner and after spending some time with Nick, Andrew found that they had a lot in common after all and actually enjoyed their time together. The next day at school, Andrew and his friends walked past Nick and started picking on him. Andrew pretended that he did not know Nick and joined right in with the teasing. As Nick looked at Andrew, Andrew saw the hurt in his eyes and suddenly felt very uncomfortable - something was not right about what was happening.

Discussion Questions

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