

Ritual Moment

Contrition

Conversion to God

The Sacrament of Reconciliation begins with a “turning round,” a turning to face the living God, an acknowledgement that we have not been faithful to our relationship of love, and an expression of our heart felt intent to change.

Take a moment to imagine God sitting on a rocking chair on the front porch of your home, rocking and waiting for you to decide to come home to him so that he can embrace you with love and forgiveness.

Word of God

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.
(Psalm 139:1, 23-24)

Word to Remember: SEARCH

Search for me O God when I am lost and away from you, help me search my heart to sift out what keeps me from you.

Practice a Daily Examen of Love

At the end of each day pause in silence to remember how you have failed to love and how you have reached out in love. Offer both to God .

Activity

Write a prayer of contrition to use with your daily examen. Invite God to bless you with wisdom, and to help you to be rooted in his love of you that you may love others in the same way.

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Confession

What comes to your mind when you think “confession?” Admitting to your parents that you did something you were not supposed to do? Admitting failure to someone? Writing out a grocery list of sins and broken promises?

Confession is a true acknowledgement of one’s sinful actions and patterns before a loving, healing God. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the priest serves as the physical presence of Christ and the Christian community, hearing one’s confession and offering the support, challenge, and direction of the body of Christ.

Word of God

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
(Matthew 11:28-30)

Word to Remember: BURDEN

We often carry heavy burdens of guilt and disappointment in ourselves instead of lightening our loads by owning our actions and rooting ourselves in the power of God’s love to heal us and remove our loads.

Practice Being a Person of Confession

Owning your mistakes and failures instead of blaming others or wallowing in a sea of guilt that immobilizes.

Activity

To be aware of sin we must first be aware of God’s love. Create a heart of gratitude poster to place in a common meeting place in your home, i.e. kitchen table, refrigerator. Over the period of a week, on a daily basis, pause and remember gratitude for God’s gift of love in your life by jotting down a word, phrase, or image of how you have experienced God’s love that day.

Ritual Moment

Act of Penance

When you do something that you know is wrong, what do you wait for – punishment or guidance to move beyond your failures? What do you expect from God, loving correction or vengeful punishment?

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation the act of penance serves “not only as atonement for past sins but also an aid to new life and an antidote for weakness.” (*Rite of Penance* #18)

Word of God

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. (John 15:1-2)

Word to Remember: ATONEMENT

Atonement is an honest seeking to repair that which you have damaged and to create behavior that will prevent further damage.

Practice

Offer those that hurt or offend you loving guidance instead of angry punishment.

Activity

As a household, have a discussion about loving guidance and vengeful punishment. Examine how negative actions in your home are currently dealt with and brainstorm some options for change.

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Absolution

Imagine yourself at your worst, ugliest moment. Imagine God reaching out to you in love and holding you in that moment.

“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 you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” (Prayer of Absolution)

The words of absolution are not merely a legal formula. They are the very heart of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Word of God

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:35)

Word to Remember: LOVE

At the heart of reconciliation is love—being so loved by God as to be reconciled to Him and to one another.

Practice of Reconciliation

Be a peaceful, loving, reconciling energy wherever you need to be at school, work, home, sport activities, etc.

Activity—A Family Pledge

Loving God, you love us beyond our understanding and continually invite us to be people of reconciliation, working to unite that which is divided. As a family, we commit ourselves to:

Bring love where there is hatred
Bring pardon where there is injury
Bring faith where there is doubt
Bring hope where there is despair
Bring light where there is darkness
Bring joy where there is sadness
Grant us what we need to be your reconciling force in our home and world.
Amen.

(Based on the Prayer of St. Francis)

Ritual Moment

Proclamation of God and Dismissal

Ever lost something that was important to you? How did you feel when you lost it? If you found it again, how did that make you feel? Imagine God's joy when someone returns home to him.

"The priest/presider invites all present to offer thanks and encourages them to do good works which will proclaim the grace of repentance in the life of the entire community and each of its members. It is fitting for all to sing a psalm or hymn or to say a litany in acknowledgement of God's power and mercy, for example, the canticle of Mary or Psalm 136." (*Rite of Penance* #56)

Word of God

Just so; I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)

Word to Remember: JOY

The joy that comes from reconciling, re-connecting, re-uniting, re-entering, re-beginning ...

Practice of Good Works

In joyful celebration of the gift of God's love go forth and practice good works. Serve a neighbor in need. Surprise a person living alone with a visit. Clean your closets and find clothes for the needy.

Activity

Pray together the Magnificat, singing praise for all that God has done for you.

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

For he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

For the mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever. (Luke 1:46-55)