

Session 7

Celebrating Reconciliation

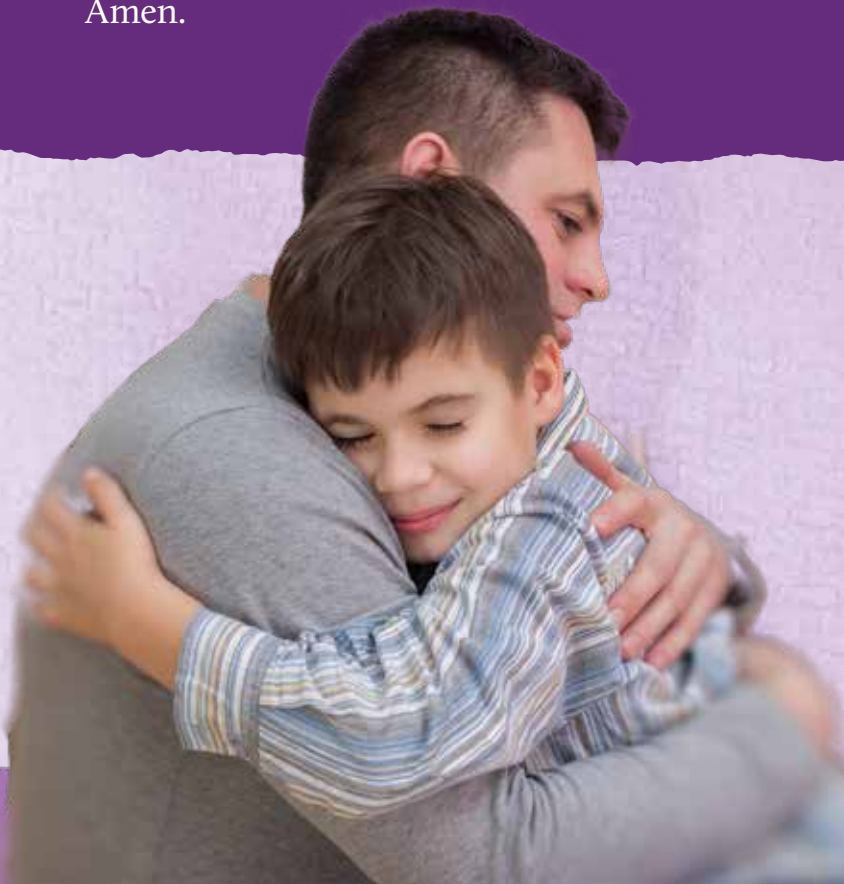


Let's Pray

Dear Holy Spirit,
Thank you for filling my heart with your love.
Thank you for calling me to return to you.
Please help me to recognize my sins,
to confess them,
and to draw closer to you.
Amen.

Introduction

Do you remember the last time you told someone “I’m sorry”? Sometimes it’s hard to apologize, but it’s always worth it. It feels so good to hear someone say “I forgive you” and know that any mistakes are in the past. We have this conversation with God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Because this conversation is so important, the Church gives us specific steps to follow when we go to Confession.



Let's Read God's Word

Lost and Found

From Luke 15:11–32

Jesus wanted the people to understand how much God loved them, so he told them this story.

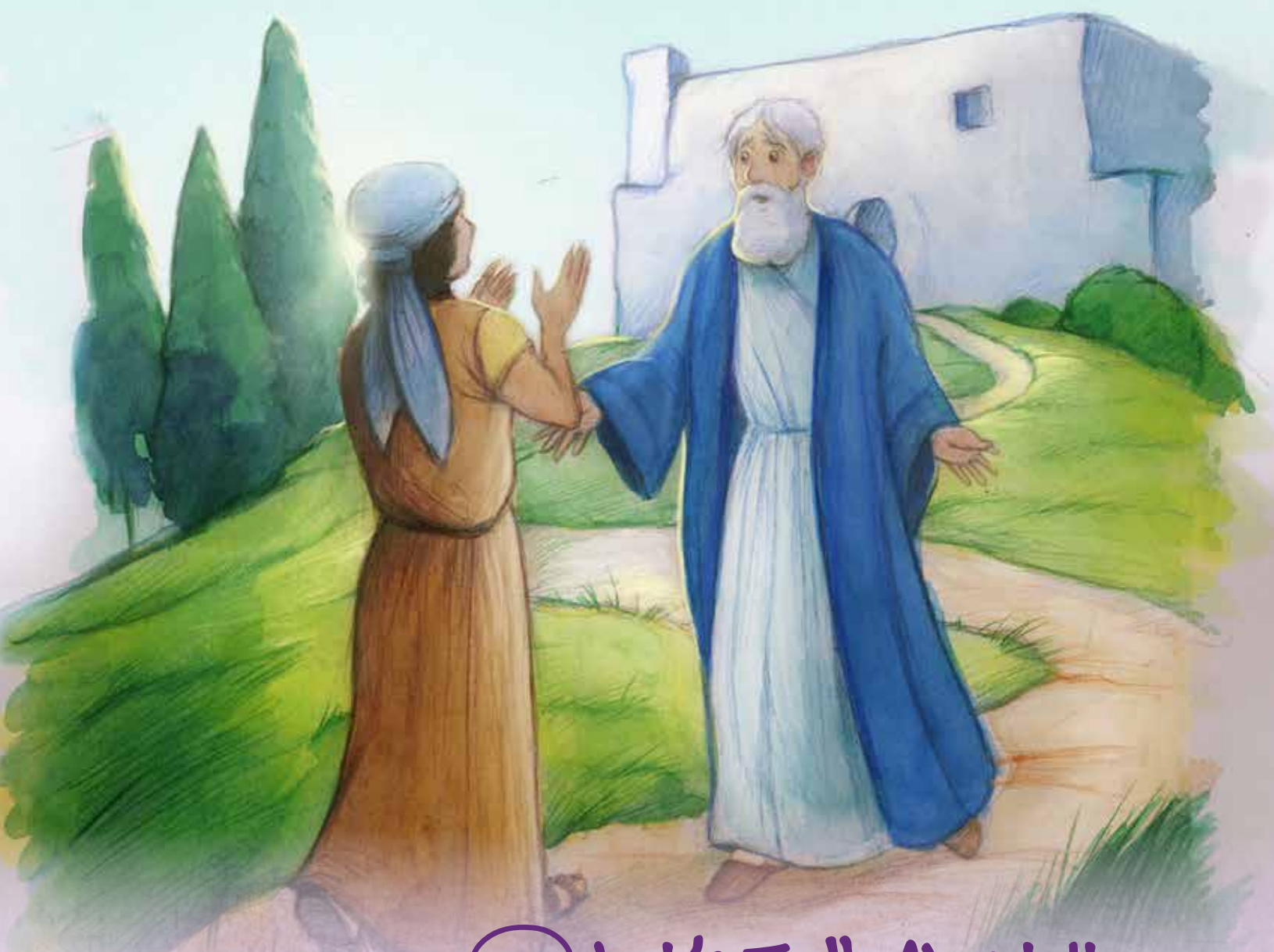
There was a man who had two sons. One day, the younger son said, “Father, give me my share of everything you own.” The father did, and the younger son took his money and went to a far-off land.

When he got there, the son wasted his money trying to have fun. Soon he had no money to buy food. A farmer gave him a job feeding pigs. He was so hungry that even the scraps the pigs were eating looked good.

The son finally realized that he had made a huge mistake by running away and wasting his father’s money. He decided to go home and apologize to his father.

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. The father ran to meet and hug him. The son said, “Father, I have sinned. I don’t deserve to be called your son anymore.” But the father forgave his son, and he told his servants to prepare a feast to celebrate his son’s return.

The older son didn't think this was fair. He had stayed home and obeyed his father, but he never got a feast! But his father explained, "It is right for us to celebrate! It was like your brother was dead, and now he is alive again! He was lost, and now he is found!"



Let's Talk About It

How does this story help us understand God and the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

Let's Learn About Our Faith

Draw Closer to God

God is like the father in the story Jesus told. God in his great mercy is watching and waiting for us to turn back to him after we sin, and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation he runs out to meet us and welcome us home.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation requires us to do three things: 1) to be sorry and repent of our sins, 2) to confess our sins to a priest, and 3) to do **penance** to repair the damage caused by our sins. We are called **penitents** when we are in this process.



Before we go to Confession we have to get ready. We do this by making an **examination of conscience**. This means looking at our thoughts, words, and actions, and recognizing where we have sinned. We ask the Holy Spirit to reveal our sins to us and to help us make a good Confession.

When we make our Confession, we tell our sins to the priest, starting with the most serious ones. Remember, there are two kinds of sin: mortal and venial. We must confess all mortal sins to a priest,

telling him what the sin was and how many times we did it, in order to receive God's forgiveness for those sins.

We should also confess our venial sins. It's important to confess all the sins we can remember, but it's okay if we accidentally forget a venial sin. Everything that we say in Confession is completely secret. The priest can never tell anyone else the sins that we confess.

After we confess our sins, the priest will give us our penance. This is usually a prayer or a good deed to help us draw closer to God and to repair the harm caused by our sin that may have hurt other people. It also helps us to build good habits and to be better followers of Jesus.

Then the priest will ask us to make our Act of Contrition, the special prayer that tells God we are sorry. God wants us to be sorry for our sins because we love him and want to obey him. This is called **perfect contrition**. But sometimes we're sorry for our sins because we're afraid of being punished. This is called **imperfect contrition**, and God still forgives us if this is the reason we're sorry.

Key Words

Penance

An act done to repair the damage caused by our sins, usually through prayers or good works.

Penitent

The person who goes to Confession.

Examination of Conscience

Looking at our thoughts, words, and actions and recognizing how we have sinned.

Perfect Contrition

When we are sorry for our sins because we love God and are sorry for having offended him.

Imperfect Contrition

When we are sorry for our sins because we are afraid of being punished or are horrified by the ugliness of sin.

Key Words

Absolution

The words said by the priest that forgive us of our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

After we make our Act of Contrition, the priest says the words of **Absolution** or forgiveness, and our sins are forgiven. Only a priest can forgive sins in Jesus's name, because it is really Jesus present in the priest who is forgiving our sins. When we hear the words of Absolution, we can know without a doubt that God has forgiven our sins.

We should go to Confession often. God's mercy is shown to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Not only do we receive God's mercy, but we also receive his strength to help us not to sin again!



Let's Talk About It

Why does an examination of conscience help us make a better confession?



Did You Know?

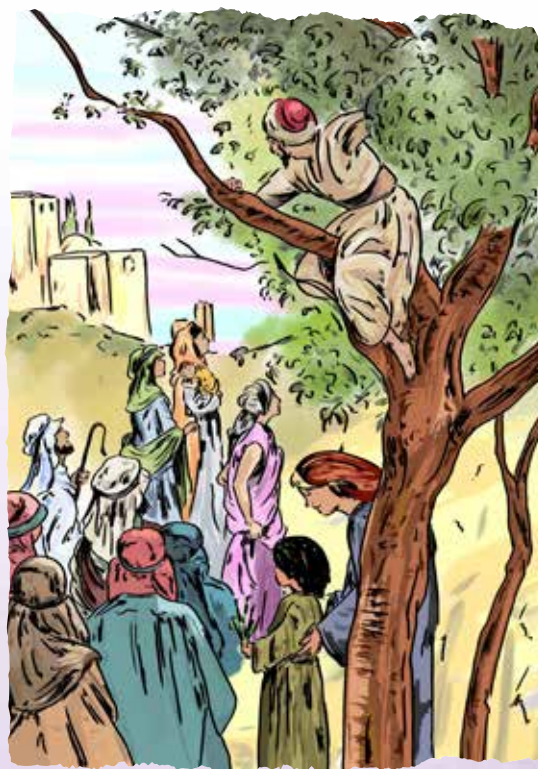
Zacchaeus's Penance

One day Jesus was passing through the city of Jericho. Everyone came to see him—even Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector. But Zacchaeus was short, and he couldn't see Jesus because there were too many people. So Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore tree to get a better view. When Jesus passed by he looked up and saw Zacchaeus. Jesus said, "Come down, Zacchaeus! I'm going to stay at your house today."

Zacchaeus climbed down and welcomed Jesus into his home. Zacchaeus had become very rich because he took more money from people than he was supposed to. But now he realized that this was wrong, and he was sorry. Zacchaeus told Jesus, "I will give half of everything I own to the poor, and if I stole money from anyone I will give them back four times as much as I took!"

Zacchaeus tried to repair the damage caused by his sins. This is called making satisfaction for our sins, and it's the same thing we do through our penance.

God's forgiveness is a free gift. There is nothing that we can do to earn it. But even after God has forgiven our sins, some of the damage caused by our sins is still there. Part of being truly sorry for our sins is wanting to repair that damage. Penance makes satisfaction for our sins by repairing the damage we have caused.





Let's Do Activities

Seven Steps

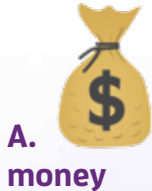
The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not hard or scary! Remember that even if you forget something, the priest will help you. And you can always bring your *7 Steps for a Good Confession* booklet from session 6 with you to help you to remember what to do any time you go to Confession.

Below are the steps to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. See if you can put them in order from 1-7!

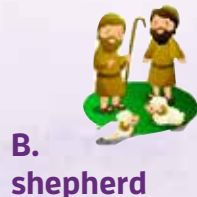
- ☐ **RECEIVE PENANCE** – After you tell your sins, the priest will talk to you and give you a penance to do after your confession.
- ☐ **EXAMINE YOUR CONSCIENCE** – Before your confession, ask God to help you to be truly sorry for all your sins. Then think about your sins. Ask yourself: *Have I broken any commandments? How have I failed to love God as I should? How have I hurt others?*
- ☐ **ABSOLUTION** – Last, the priest will pray the prayer forgiving you of your sins. He will hold his hand over your head. Together you will pray the Sign of the Cross and then you can say, “Thank you, Father.” And then you can go in peace!
- ☐ **CONFESS YOUR SINS** – Then you tell the priest your sins. Don’t be afraid to tell him all your sins, starting with the worst ones. When you are finished, say, “I am sorry for these and all of my sins.”
- ☐ **GREET THE PRIEST** – When you first go into the confessional, start with the Sign of the Cross. Then say, “Bless me, father, for I have sinned. This is my first confession.”
- ☐ **DO YOUR PENANCE** – After you leave the confessional, kneel down at a pew in the church and pray the penance that the priest gave you. Or if he gave you something to do, do it as soon as you can!
- ☐ **ACT OF CONTRITION** – After the priest gives you your penance, he will ask you to say your Act of Contrition. You can say it from memory, or read it, or even tell God you are sorry from your heart.

The Prodigal Son Story

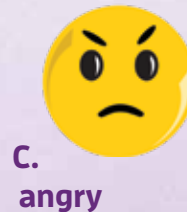
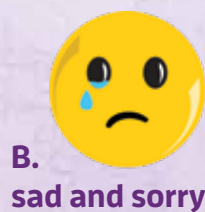
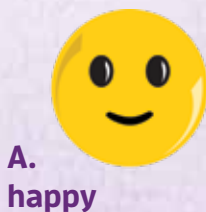
___ 1. What did the son ask his father to give him?



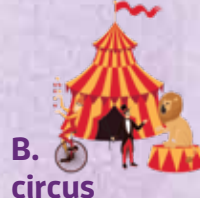
___ 2. After the son wasted his money, what job did he have?



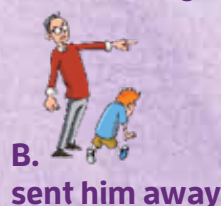
___ 3. The son was hungry and dirty. How did he feel?



___ 4. Where did the son want to go?



___ 5. When the father saw his son coming back, what did he do?



Let's Recall and Reflect

Think about the story of the father and his two sons. How do you think the younger son felt when he was living with the pigs? How do you think he felt when his father welcomed him home?

Why is it important to tell someone we are sorry when we hurt them? Why do you think we have to tell God our sins and say that we are sorry in Confession?

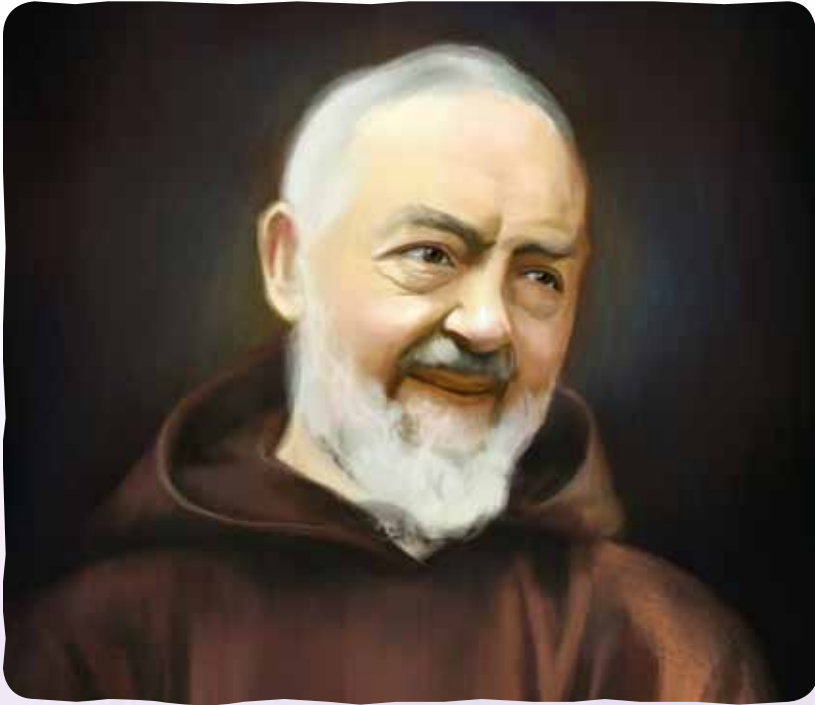
What are the three actions of the penitent in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? The three actions of the penitent are 1) to be sorry and repent of our sins, 2) to confess our sins to a priest, and 3) to do penance to repair the damage caused by our sins.

What is the difference between imperfect and perfect contrition? Perfect contrition is when we are sorry for our sins because we love God and want to obey him. Imperfect contrition is when we are sorry for our sins because we are afraid of being punished.

What does penance do? Penance makes satisfaction for our sins by repairing the damage we have caused.

What is Absolution? It is the part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation when the priest forgives our sins.

— Story of a Saint —



Saint Padre Pio (1887–1968)

As a young boy, Saint Padre Pio loved Jesus very much, and when he was fifteen years old he understood that God wanted him to become a priest. He said “yes,” and his friendship with God grew stronger every year. Padre Pio wanted to imitate Jesus so much that God gave him a special gift: the stigmata. The stigmata is when a person has the wounds of Jesus in his hands and feet. God gives this gift to only a few people so that they can share in Jesus’s suffering in a very special way. As a priest, Padre Pio wanted to share God’s forgiveness with as many people as possible, so he spent several hours every day hearing confessions and forgiving people’s sins so that they too could come closer to Jesus.

Let's Pray

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill the hearts of your
faithful and kindle in
them the fire of your
love.

Send forth your Spirit
and they shall be created.
And you shall renew the
face of the earth.

Amen.

Memory Verse

*“Draw near to God and he
will draw near to you.”*

—James 4:8



The Long Road

Nick sat on the sidewalk and looked at all the things he had bought. They were now broken or ruined. He looked in the direction of his house. He felt stupid. How could he go home now? He had disobeyed his dad and mom. He had spent all his money.

Nick had never thought about running away before. Now he thought about it. There was an old shed in the woods. Maybe he could live there.

He knew this was crazy. But he didn't know what to do. He spent his money after his mother had told him to wait. Now all he had was a lot of junk. His parents would never forgive him.

Nick put the broken toys back into the boxes. He couldn't go home. He took a path that cut past the houses to the woods. Deep into the woods he found the old shed. Someone said it was a hundred years old. No one used it now.

Nick pushed the door open with his foot. There was nothing in the shed except a spider web in the corner. He put the boxes down on the dirt floor. He sat down. He wanted to cry again. He lay down and rested his head on his arm. He fell asleep.

In his dreams he thought he heard his father and mother calling for him.

The next thing he knew, something wet was hitting his face. He sat up. It was raining outside, and the shed had a leaky roof.

Nick felt cold. It was getting dark outside. It was close to dinner time. His stomach growled. He was getting hungry. More water dropped on his head. He couldn't stay here.

He slowly gathered up the boxes. He felt sad as he thought about his mom and dad. He wondered if saying he was sorry would be good enough.

Nick came out of the woods. The rain sprinkled on him. He walked along the path to his street. He heard a car coming. He saw a large puddle and took a step to miss it. He tripped. The boxes fell out of his hands like they had before. Two of them splashed into the puddle.

Nick looked down at the soaked boxes. He began to cry.

“Son,” a voice said.

Nick spun around. The car he’d heard coming now sat at the curb. His father stood by the open door.



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“I’ve been looking for you,” his Dad said softly.

Nick looked at the junk on the ground and then back at his father.

“Do you need some help?” his Dad asked.

Nick wiped at the water on his face.

His Dad was by his side. He felt his father’s arms around him.



Let's Talk About It

Did Nick solve his problems by running away? Have you ever felt like hiding when you did something wrong?

How is Nick’s dad like the father in the parable of the prodigal son?

Should we be afraid of telling God our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Why or why not?