

WE CELEBRATE FORGIVENESS



In Jesus' Name:

We Know God Loves Us

We Choose

We Are Sorry

We Change Our Hearts

We Are Reconciled

We Celebrate God's Love



Catholic Association of Religious
and Family Life Educators of Ontario

A Sacrament Preparation Program
for Students with
Developmental Disabilities

Reconciliation

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INTRODUCTION

These Sacrament Preparation Materials are for the use of catechists who are working with students with developmental disabilities.

Canon 777.4 states “In a special way, the parish priest is to ensure, in accordance with the norms laid down by the Diocesan Bishop, that: as far as their condition allows, catechetical formation is given to the mentally and physically handicapped”

Since the seven Sacraments are so central to the life and celebration of our Catholic tradition every baptized person should be welcomed to full membership in the Catholic community. Pope John Paul II wrote in the encyclical CATECHESI TRADENDAE that...” from the theological point of view, every baptized person, precisely by reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him or her to enter on a truly Christian life.” (14)

“Children and young people who are physically or mentally handicapped come first to mind. They have a right, like others of their age, to know the “mystery of faith”. The greater difficulties that they encounter give greater merit to their efforts and to those of their teachers.” (41)

The CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH further delineates this by stating: “Just as Baptism is the source of responsibilities and duties, the baptized person also enjoys rights within the Church: to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church.” (1269)

These clear statements speaking to us as Church call us to provide the necessary materials and catechesis for these members of our Church family. In light of the dignity of every person, we have a sacred mission to welcome, support, and journey with each member so each one can participate in the sacramental life as fully as possible.

In their “Pastoral Statement on People with Disabilities” the United States Catholic Bishops clearly acknowledged the rights of persons with disabilities by stating:

“At the very least, we must undertake forms of evangelization that speak to the particular needs of individuals with disabilities, make those liturgical adaptations which promote their active participation and provide help and service that reflect our loving concern. ... Realistic provision must be made for persons with disabilities to participate fully in the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations, such as the sacraments of reconciliation, confirmation and the anointing of the sick.” (United States Catholic Bishops Pastoral Statement on Persons with Disabilities)

The Bishops of Ontario issued a Pastoral Statement about Handicapped Persons among us, "One in Christ Jesus" and throughout the document extended the invitation and welcome to every member. In conclusion, their words are a strong reminder to each of us. "What we should try to understand more deeply and live out in our day-to-day existence is the nature of Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. All, no matter what their state or condition in life may be, are precious members of Christ, united to one another in Christ. We have only to recall the Lord's memorable assertion: "Insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

"The Christ and his salvific mission embraces one and all, and in a special way those handicapped people who are the 'anawim' of the gospel". ("One in Christ Jesus")

John M. Huels, O.S.M. in chapter five of the book Developmental Disabilities and Sacramental Access gives some helpful direction regarding the celebration of Reconciliation for students with developmental disabilities. John Huels states that when Canon Law is properly understood in relation to the Church's ancient traditions and reconciled with sound principles of theology and liturgy, the conclusions for pastoral practice will become clear.

It is a fundamental, constitutional right of each baptized person to have the right to the sacraments. Regarding Reconciliation, Huels states, "Those who lack the use of reason are not capable of committing a serious sin. They do not have sufficient intellectual and consensual capacity wilfully to bring about the grave rupture in their relationship with God and the Church that serious sin implies. The Church requires the sacrament of penance only of those who are in serious sin. (Cans. 988, 960) Therefore persons who lack the use of reason are not obliged to confess."

Canon 914 says that sacramental confession must precede first Holy Communion. Regarding this Canon Huels gives the following clarification and direction. "The Requirement that a child make a sacramental confession before the reception of first Communion should be understood as a general pastoral rule, not an absolute requirement... Doctrinally, only those who have committed serious sin are normally obliged to confess before receiving Communion (Can. 916). If children or persons with developmental disabilities are not in the state of serious sin, they cannot be deprived of Holy Communion merely because they choose not to confess, nor can they be refused the Eucharist if they are incapable of confessing." (Developmental Disabilities and Sacramental Access. Edited by Edward Foley. The Liturgical Press, pg. 94, 108 – 111.)

NOTES TO THE TEACHER CATECHIST

This sacramental preparation series has been designed to assist teachers in the preparation of intellectual developmentally challenged students for first sacraments. In the case where the developmental challenge includes hearing or vision, teachers will need to seek help from the vision and speech specialists at their board. This document does not include accommodations or modifications to meet these needs. These notes are offered to give further assistance and explanation of the materials presented.

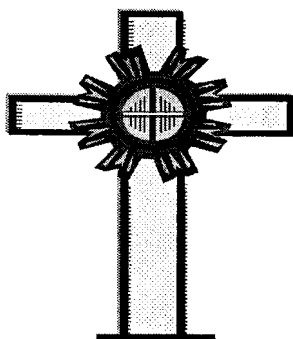
OVERALL FORMAT

The format of this program was planned to follow the Movements of the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Nature of Love	We Know God Loves Us
Nature of Sin	We Choose
Nature of Sorrow	We Are Sorry
Jesus Calls Us To Conversion	We Change Our Hearts
Healing and Reconciliation	We Are Reconciled
Reconciliation Celebration	We Celebrate God's Love

TIMELINE

There is no pre-determined timeline for each lesson. The timeline is to be determined by the needs of the students. The Teacher Catechist is encouraged to include as much repetition and detail as the students require.



LESSON COMPONENTS

- FOCUS and CONCEPT** These sections are intended to help the Teacher Catechist have a clear catechetical understanding and direction for the movement of the lesson.
- OPENING PRAYER** This section is to be used each time the activities related to the Gospel story are presented. If it takes four sessions to present the activities, each session would begin with the specific opening prayer related to the Gospel story theme.
- GET READY** This section is intended to identify the materials needed to present the movement.
- GET SET** This section is intended to set the stage and begin introducing the students to the movement of the lesson.
- GO** This section is intended to present activities and involvement for the students in order to unfold and enter the catechetical meaning of the lesson.

SCRIPTURE THEMES

Gospel stories have been chosen as the basis of each lesson. These Gospel stories were chosen to develop the movements of the celebration of Reconciliation. The movements of Reconciliation and related Gospel stories are:

We Know God Loves Us	Paul Speaks about the Nature of Love (1 Corinthians 13.4-8a)
We Choose	The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15.4-7)
We Are Sorry	Peter Denies Jesus (Luke 22.66-71)
We Change Our Hearts	Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19. 1-10)
We Are Reconciled	The Return of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15.11-24)
We Celebrate God's Love	Steps to Celebrating Reconciliation

CLASS BIBLE

Throughout the course of this program, the Teacher Catechist is encouraged to help the students grow in a love and deep respect for the Scriptures. It is intended that each class will have a special Class Bible which is also referred to as “The Book of God’s Word.”

It is important to model deep reverence and respect for the Bible. When a Gospel story is read, the gesture of raising the Bible reverently overhead before beginning to read is encouraged. Adapted versions of each Gospel story are included at the end of this booklet. If the Teacher Catechist chooses to read this adapted version of the Gospel, it is suggested that a copy of the reading be placed in the Class Bible so the students will have a consistent experience that the reading is taken from the Bible, “The Book of God’s Word,”

SONG AND GESTURE

The Teacher Catechist may wish to use the following Song and Gesture to involve the students further as they prepare to have the Gospel story read to them. The gestures are adapted to accommodate students who may be hearing impaired, non-verbal or lack muscle control. It is suggested that this simple gesture ritual would be used each time Scripture is read to the students. The following is adapted from the Year 1 Catechetical Resource, We Belong to God.



illustrated by Rebecca Greenlaw
St. Christopher Catholic School

“Good News” Song #9

Chorus:

Good News, Good News
We want to share Good News

Raise hands uplifted over the head
Move hands outward in a semi-circle direction

Good News, Good News
We want to share Good News

Raise hands uplifted over the head
Move hands outward in a semi-circle direction

Verses

With our hearts
We listen

Place hands over heart
Place hands beside ears

With our hearts
We remember

Place hands over heart
Touch the forehead

With our hearts
We want to share Good News

Place hands over heart
Place hands cupped beside the mouth

(Repeat the Chorus as shown above)

MUSIC

Music is an integral part of Liturgy. Also it can be a meaningful way to help the students participate in the theme of the Gospel stories and movement of the Liturgy. Appropriate songs and music are encouraged to be used throughout the program.

The following songs from the Year 1 Catechetical Resource We Belong to God and Year 2 Catechetical Resource We Belong to the Lord Jesus are recommended. Adapt the use of these songs according to the students’ abilities. A suggested adaptation is to use only one line from the song. Choose the line that is most meaningful to the theme.

We Know God Loves Us	Gr. 2 # 18, “Journey of Love”- pg. 365
We Choose	Gr. 1 #10, “I Will Follow the Good Shepherd”- pg. 341
We Are Sorry	Gr. 1 # 17, “Let’s Share the Peace” – pg. 352
We Change Our Hearts	Gr. 2 # 13, “Jesus Is Our Peace” – pg. 357
We Are Reconciled	Gr. 2 #13, “Jesus Is Our Peace” – pg. 357
We Celebrate God’s Love	Gr. 1 # 10, “I Will Follow the Good Shepherd” – pg. 341 Gr. 1 # 17, “Let’s Share the Peace” – pg. 352

IN CLOSING

It is hoped that these materials will be helpful to you on your faith journey with the students whom you are preparing for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God's blessings be with you on this journey.

As Teacher Catechists you are encouraged to help make this document as meaningful as possible. You are invited to send any further suggestions and ideas that you find helpful in working with your students. It is intended that this document will be living and developing over time. Please use the Feedback Form on page 38 to help enrich this document.



Paul Speaks About the Nature of Love

1 Corinthians 13.4-8a

Focus:

Paul's letter to the Corinthians describes the nature of love. It responds to the question; "What does love look and act like in relationship with others?"

Concept

1 John 4.8b tells us "God is Love." By listening to I Cor.3.4-8a students will come to recognize what it means to be a loving disciple of Christ. They are invited to examine their own relationships for traces of this God-like love and to grow in their appreciation of loving relationships in their lives.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, you were sent to teach us about God's love for us. You invite us to be loving too. Show us how to build loving relationships with our families and friends. Help us to be loving children of God.

GETTING READY

- Art paper folded in half to make a card
- Pencils / crayons
- Chart paper

GET SET

Ask the students to describe experiences of being loved by someone; a teacher, a family member, a friend. Guide the activity with the following questions:

- How do you know that person loves you?
- How do you show you family members, friends and teachers that you love them?
- What do you think it would be like to be a person who does not love anyone?
- What stops us from loving someone we should love?

GO

Provide students with a piece of art paper folded into a card. On chart paper list the following descriptions of love taken from I Corinthians 13.4-8a:

- Patient
- Kind
- Forgiving
- Truthful
- Helpful

Ask students to think about someone they would like to thank for being so loving toward them. They are to create a Thank You card for this person. Instruct them to decorate the front page of a card using crayons or pencil crayons. On the inside of the card, have them

write the persons name followed by “loves me” in the left side. On the right side, students write a phrase or word that describes the way this person shows their love for the student. (He/she is always patient with me). They can use the words from 1 Corinthians 13.4-8a that you wrote on the chart paper or choose one of their own.

GET READY

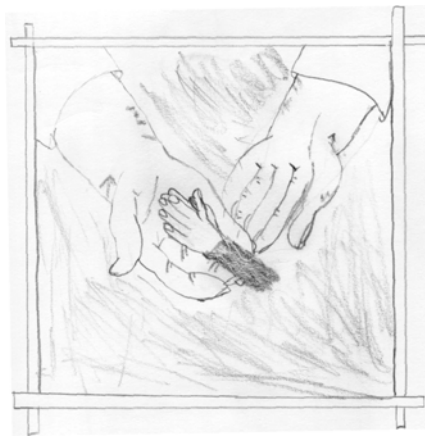
- Create a bulletin board with the title, LOVE IS....
- Have available the adapted version of 1 Corinthians 13.4-8a from the appendix.
- Collect a series of pictures showing people helping each other in a loving way – nurses with children in a hospital, students giving blankets to street people, children helping their parents with housework, one child helping another child who has fallen or is sad or needs help with his/her school work. The more “everyday” the acts of kindness are the better it is.
- Another option might be to use the school camera and presentation equipment to collect pictures of your students acting with kindness to others in the school community.
- Have available art paper, crayons, and a pencil for each student.

GET SET

Show students pictures of people acting with love toward others. Tell them that it is not difficult to know when our actions love. Ask students to share ideas about ways to be loving toward others – parents, siblings. How do we show people that we love them? What might we say to them? What might we do for them? How do we act when they ask us to help them?

GO

Proclaim the adapted version of 1Corintheans 13.4-8a. Provide student with a piece of art paper, crayons and pencils. On the art paper, each student draws and colours a picture of themselves acting in a loving way toward someone they know. Celebrate God’s love by having each child bring up his or her picture to post on the bulletin board. The teacher says, “Love is”. The student tells what the loving action is in their picture then places it on the bulletin board. Conclude the celebration by saying the opening prayer above.



*Illustration by Rebecca Greenlaw
Sr. Albert Love Catholic School*

The Parable of The Lost Sheep
Luke 15:4-7

CONCEPT

Jesus uses parables to teach us about the nature of sin and the faithfulness of God's love.

FOCUS

Our choice to sin separates us from Jesus and his loving embrace. Usually sin makes us unhappy and alone. But Jesus loves us no matter what we do and will never stop trying to bring us back to his loving friendship. He is always willing to forgive. His love is forever.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, you taught us that God never stops loving us even when we make hurting choices. By forgiving us when we sin, you show us how much you love us. You teach us how to love and forgive others. Thank you Jesus, for loving us so much.

GET READY

1. Have available a stuffed lamb
2. the dramatic reading of the Parable of the Lost Sheep, in Blackline Master 1
3. large red hearts cut out of red art paper
4. washable black markers

GET SET

Gather the children around you in a circle and invite them to share their experiences of being lost. Talk about how frightening it can be to be lost. Ask them who it is that might look for them if they got lost. Ask them to imagine what their parents or guardians might feel when they discovered that they were lost. What feeling would they experience when they found their lost child.

Tell the students that when we make hurting choices, we call that action a sin. Sinning is like being lost. We choose not to act lovingly and we hurt others. We choose to turn and walk away from Jesus and his love. The more we sin the more lost we are until finally it is very hard to find our way back home to God's loving embrace.

Tell the students that you are going to tell them a story that Jesus told to his friends to help them understand how God feels about us when we sin. Explain that in the time of Jesus, sheep were not fenced in on a farm like they are today. A man or woman called a shepherd cared for the sheep as they wandered up in the mountains and down through valleys, where ever the sheep could feed on the grass. Sometimes the shepherd would have to scare off wild animals to protect the sheep or round up sheep who wandered too

far away from the main flock. This story is about a sheep who wandered so far away from the flock that he was lost.

Using the stuffed Lamb as a prop, enact a dramatic telling of the Parable of the Lost Sheep found in the Blackline Master 1 .

Ask the students the following questions to ensure they have made the appropriate connections between the story and the concepts of the parable.

1. Who do you think the shepherd is in the story Jesus is telling? (Jesus or God)
2. Who are the lost sheep that Jesus is talking about in this story? (People who do hurting things – sinners)
3. Why did the shepherd look for the lost sheep? (Because he loved him)
4. When we are lost because of the hurting things we do, who comes after us? (Jesus because he love us and wants us to be loving to each other again)
5. How did the sheep get back home? (The shepherd carried him on his shoulder.)
6. How does Jesus bring us home after we have done hurting things? (by forgiving us our sins)

Summarize the story:

At the end of this story, Jesus is telling us that when we are sorry for our sins, it makes Jesus very happy. Why? Because he thought you no longer wanted to be his friend but you asked to be friends again. You were lost but he found you. By saying you are sorry, you have told him you love him. You want to come home to his loving arms. Jesus loves us so much, that he never stops trying to find us. Jesus always invites us to come back to him no matter what we do. His love is forever.

Go"

You may wish to walk the students through this activity step by step.

- Ask the students to share words that describe how a child might feel when they have done something wrong. Then have them share words that describe how the child might feel when their parent or guardian forgives them and gives them a big hug. Write these words down on chart paper or a chalk board.
- Provide students with a heart cut out of read art paper and a black washable marker
- On one side of the heart, have students draw a face expression that shows how someone would feel after performing a hurting action. On the other side of the

heart a face expressing how someone might feel when they have just been forgiven and hugged..

- Beneath the first face, have them write one word that describes how a child might feel when they have done something wrong. Beneath the second face, a word that describes how the child might feel when their parent or guardian forgives them and gives them a big hug.
- Assemble the hearts into a mobile using coat hanger wire and string. Hang it in the room.



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Dramatic Reading of PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

Adapted From LUKE 15:3-7

This is what Jesus said to his followers:

Imagine that you are a shepherd taking care of many sheep high on a mountain top, many of them just little baby sheep. What if you lost one of them? How would you feel? What would you do?

Give the lamb to one of the children and ask them to hide it behind someone's back while you close your eyes. Once the lamb is out of sight, open your eyes and continue the story.

I think you would leave all the other sheep alone and run to find the one who is lost. You would search until you found it

Move among the children pretending to find the lamb. When you do find it, ask the children what they think the shepherd should do.

When you found the sheep, should you scold him and tell him to go home?

Put the lamb on the floor and point toward home with an angry look on your face.

Should you spank him for running away?

Pick the lamb up and spank it looking angry.

Or should you pick him up, give him a big hug and carry him all the way home because you are so happy to find him?

Smile and hold the lamb out from you then embrace the lamb in a long happy hug. Then continue the story holding the lamb in your arms as you return to your chair and while you finish the telling.

In the story Jesus told, when the shepherd found the lost sheep, he carried it on his shoulders, rejoicing. When he arrived home, he called together his friends and his neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'

Pass the lost lamb around to each of the children and invite them to hug the lost lamb as the good shepherd did.

PETER DENIES JESUS

Luke 22.66-71

CONCEPT

To celebrate Reconciliation we need to be ready to ask for forgiveness. For forgiveness to take place we need to know that we have made a choice to act in a hurtful way. We want to be ready to ask forgiveness for the sins we have committed. Sometimes we make choices that are hurtful to others because we are afraid to do the loving thing. Such hurtful actions are sins.

FOCUS

Because Peter and the other Apostles became very frightened when the soldiers came to take Jesus to the High Priest, Peter made a very hurtful choice of saying he did not know who Jesus was. When he realized how much hurt he caused he was sad and cried. He wanted to say sorry and ask for forgiveness.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, friends are special people in our lives. We are glad to have friends. Sometimes we do hurtful actions to our friends and other people. We need to say sorry when we think of the hurt we have done. Help me to be honest about my hurtful actions and to be ready to ask forgiveness.

GET READY

1. Prepare a piece of chart paper titled "Thank You God For My Friends"
2. For each student have available a piece of paper titled "Thank You Friend" Blackline Master 2 on page 17.
3. Crayons, pencils, glue, sparkle decorations

GET SET

Invite the students to have a discussion about friendship. Who is a friend? Extend the discussion to include "being a friend" as well as "having a friend". A friend makes us happy. Continue the discussion on friendship by sharing what things we enjoy doing with our friends.

- talking with our friend
- helping our friend
- playing with our friend
- being with our friend
- visiting our friend

GO

Friends are special people in our lives. Our parents, a grandparent can be our friend. A neighbour or someone at school can be our friend.

Ask the students to think of a person who is their friend .Use the chart paper to list names of their friends. The teacher may want to include one or two names as well.

Give each student a piece of paper titled "Thank You Friend". Depending on the ability of the student choose from the following options:

- Print/write the friend's name on the paper and decorate it.
- Draw a picture of your friend.
- Draw a picture of you and your friend.

GET READY

1. Have available the Gospel story Luke 22.66-71
2. Have available a newspaper/magazine picture of a person's sad expression or prepare a sheet with a sad face on it Black-line Master 3 on page 18.
3. Prepare the following signs:
 - STOP
 - THINK
 - PRAY
 - ASK

GET SET

Introduce the Gospel story of Peter by telling the students the following. When Jesus was teaching about God's great love, he had friends who helped him do this special work. One of Jesus' friends was called Peter. For three years Peter worked with Jesus and grew to be a special friend of Jesus.

GO

We enjoy our friends and try to be kind and caring to them. Sometimes we do hurtful things to our friends. Listen to this story of Peter and the hurtful action he chose. Read the Gospel story Luke 22. 66-77.

We can see this is a sad story because in the end Peter cries very hard. Usually we cry very hard when we are sad or hurt. Because Peter was afraid he told a lie when he said he did not know who Jesus was.

Why did Peter cry? He knew he had hurt Jesus very much. Let us talk about this hurtful action.

One way friends can hurt each other is if they say "You are not my friend", or "You cannot play with us". What are other hurtful actions we sometimes do? We can break or take something that belongs to someone else. We can call a person mean names. We can fight with a person. If a friend says these things to us how do we feel? We are probably hurt and feel very sad.

Hold up the sad face picture/sign and talk about what being sad feels like. When we do a hurtful action to someone it is important that we do something to say sorry to the person..

Use the prepared signs and present the following:

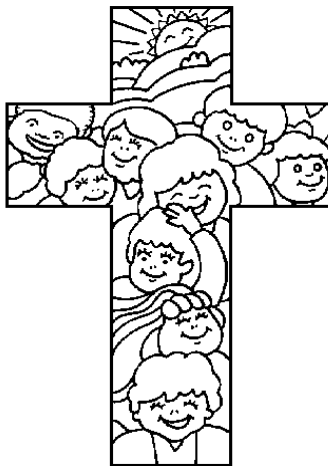
STOP - Remember the hurtful action you did. (Use some of the examples listed above)

THINK - How does the person feel? Why does the person feel this way? How do you feel when you have done this hurtful action?

PRAY - Sometimes it is hard to say sorry. We need to pray and ask God's help that we will understand the hurt we cause someone. We need to remember that the person might be sad or hurt.

ASK - We need to tell the person we are sorry and ask for forgiveness. This is one special way we can try to heal the hurt we have caused.

Use these four step frequently to review the process for forgiveness. If an incident occurs for which forgiveness needs to be asked, use these four steps to recall the process. Post the signs in the classroom as a reminder.



Thank You Friend



JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

Luke 19.1-10

CONCEPT

The teachings of Jesus about God's love and being a caring person toward others often helped people to make important choices to change things in their lives.

FOCUS

Zacchaeus wanted to meet Jesus and to learn more about his message of Good News.

OPENING PRAYER

Dear Jesus as you taught the people about God's message of Good News you often helped them make new choices to change the hurtful actions in their lives. Help me to learn to make good choices that show actions of caring for others.

GET READY

1. On chart paper or on the blackboard write the two separate headings "Good Choices" and "Hurtful Choices".
2. Prepare a large "Smile" face and a "Frown" face on art or construction paper

GET SET

Introduce a discussion about "Good Choices" and "Hurtful Choices." When our actions are helpful to us or to others they are "Good Choices." When our actions are hurtful to us or to others they are "Hurtful Choices."

GO

Point to the two separate headings about choices. Make this discussion as concrete and practical as possible using everyday examples. Invite examples from the students and offer some ideas as well. Possible "Good Choices" would include not pushing others, letting someone else have a special seat instead of dashing for it, helping with a chore at home. Talk about how we usually feel when a "Good Choice" has been made. Talk about the positive experience that occurs. Show the students the "Smile" face and place it under the heading "Good Choices."

Continue the discussion now about "Hurtful Choices." Use examples of fighting on the playground, throwing paper or a juice box on the floor, or taking someone's pencil or book. Talk about how a person usually feels when a "Hurtful Choice" has been made. Point out the hurt or sadness that usually occurs. Show the students the "Frown" face and place it under the heading "Hurtful Choices."

GET READY

1. Have available in the Class Bible the Gospel story of Jesus and Zacchaeus..
2. If the adapted version of the story is to be used, place a copy of the adaptation in the Class Bible.
3. Prepare a bulletin board title that reads GOD LOVES US VERY MUCH AND HELPS US MAKE “GOOD CHOICES”.
4. Have paper and crayons available for a drawing activity.

GET SET

Refer to the two headings of “Good Choices” and “Hurtful Choices.” Tell the students that you will be sharing a special story about a man Zacchaeus who decided to make “Good Choices” when he met Jesus.

GO

Read the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus from Luke 19. 1-10. Discuss the determination Zacchaeus showed when he really wanted to see Jesus in spite of being short. Talk about the experience of not being able to see at times, especially if there is a large crowd. Jesus always wanted to share the Good News that God loves us very much. Do you think Jesus was surprised when he saw Zacchaeus in the tree? Jesus decided this man really wanted to hear God’s message so he decided to go to Zacchaeus’ house and tell him about the message of God’s love.

Zacchaeus knew that some of the actions he was doing were “Hurtful Choices” and he wanted to change those hurtful actions. From the Gospel story talk about the changes Zacchaeus wanted to make.

Talk with the students what it would be like if Jesus came to visit at their houses. What messages would Jesus say to them? What changes can they promise to make so their actions will be “Good Choices.” Have the students either working alone or with a “buddy” draw a picture of themselves making a “Good Choice.”

Post their pictures on the bulletin board titled GOD LOVES US VERY MUCH AND HELPS US MAKE “GOOD CHOICES”. At a later time have the students take their pictures home and share about making “Good Choices”.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15.11-24

FOCUS

The gospel story The Return Of The Prodigal Son reveals God's unconditional love and the importance of conversion and forgiveness in a covenantal relationship.

CONCEPT

By examining experiences of sin and forgiveness in light of the gospel story of the prodigal son's return, students will come to understand that God's love is forever. Our relationship with God can only be broken by our own actions when we choose to turn away from God and can only be mended by our own desire to return to the loving arms of God.

OPENING PRAYER

Give the children a small polished rock to hold in their hands. Have them describe the way the rock feels. You are trying to identify that it is heavy and hard; cold to the touch. Tell them that when we do hurtful things, our hearts become like this rock. We feel sad and alone, heavy hearted and cold. The more we hurt others the harder our hearts become and the more difficult it is for us to do loving things. Ask students to hold onto the rock while they say the opening prayer.

Dear Jesus, sometimes we do things that hurt others and make us feel unhappy. It feels like we are carrying a large rock in our hearts. Anger or fear can keep us from asking for forgiveness. But when we are forgiven, it feels like that rock has been lifted away. We are free again from its weight. Help us to have the courage to ask you and the ones we hurt for forgiveness. Jesus, free us from the weight of our sins. After the prayer have students place their rock in a pile on the prayer table as a symbol of forgiveness.

Keep these stones for use in the reconciliation celebration at the end of this unit.

GETTING READY

Collect or purchase one stone for each child in your class. Polished stones can be purchased at a florist or craft store.

Copies of Black-line Master 5 on page 27 for each student.

[Mary Anne, I would like a picture of the mother hugging Raymond as he returns home for the black line master.]

GET SET

Ask students to respond to the following questions:

- Sometimes we get angry with our parents and stomp out of the room, refusing to do what they have asked us to do. Have you ever done this?
- How do you think it made your parents feel?
- How did you feel after you left the room?
- By fighting, your friendship with your parents was hurt. What happened to make you friends again.
- How did it make you feel to have your loving friendship healed ?
- How do you think your parents felt?

GO

Tell them a story about a boy whose heart was hard and heavy just like this rock they held during prayer, until he found the courage to say he was sorry.

Tell students the story, *The Boy Who Ran Away From Home*, found in *blackline Master 4*

Ask the students the following questions:

- Why do you think Raymond' mother would not buy him a new red bike?
- Why did Raymond decide to leave home?
- What hurtful actions did Raymond commit?
- Who did he hurt?
- What changed Raymond's mind and help him decide to return home?
- Why do you think Raymond decided to ride his bike home instead of riding in the truck?
- How do you think Raymond's mother felt when he came home?
- How do we know that Raymond's mother forgave him for all the hurtful things he said and did?
- What did Raymond have to do to get his mother to forgive him?
- Why do you think she forgive him?
- How do you think he felt when his mother forgave him?

Tell the students that Raymond's action were sinful because they hurt his mother and father very deeply. He did not appreciate the bike his father had so lovingly chosen for him and he was disrespectful to his mother. But he hurt them the worst by showing them that he did not love them when he ran away from home. He did not want to live with them any more. It seems that sometimes God sends people to help us out. Perhaps God inspired the truck driver to help Raymond see what he had done wrong and to encourage him to remember how much his parents really loved him. But Raymond had to make the first move. The truck driver could not take him home unless Raymond wanted to go. In the same way, Jesus can not make us ask for forgiveness, he can only send others to help us understand what we have done wrong and to encourage us to ask for forgiveness. In the end, we have to make the decision to let the one we hurt know we are sorry for our hurtful actions.

Read the prayer again and when the prayer is over, have them place their stones on the prayer table next to a candle. Tell the students that the candle reminds us that Jesus is here with us now and wants us to be free of hurt and sorrow that our sins bring to us. He wants to take away the stones that make us unhappy and bring us back into a loving relationship with those we have hurt by our actions. He wants us to know that we are forgiven.

Provide students with a copy of Black-line Master X and have them colour the picture. Have them take the picture home and tell the story to their parents/guardians.

GET READY

You will need:

- A copy of the adapted version of The Return of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15: 11-24.
- Pencils, crayons, paper
- Large letters that spell WELCOME HOME for a bulletin board.

GET SET

Spend some time telling the students about what life was like in the time of Jesus. They will need to know why someone would be feeding pigs in the city and that the poor were often outcasts who relied on the charity of individuals to survive. Also it is important to discuss the meaning of the term *inheritance* and how it would be very unusual for a parent to give a child their inheritance prior to the death of the parent.

Then, tell students that just as you told them the story of Raymond to help them understand how important it is to ask for forgiveness, Jesus told his followers a story to help them understand how much God loves us and how important it is for us to ask God and others for forgiveness

GO

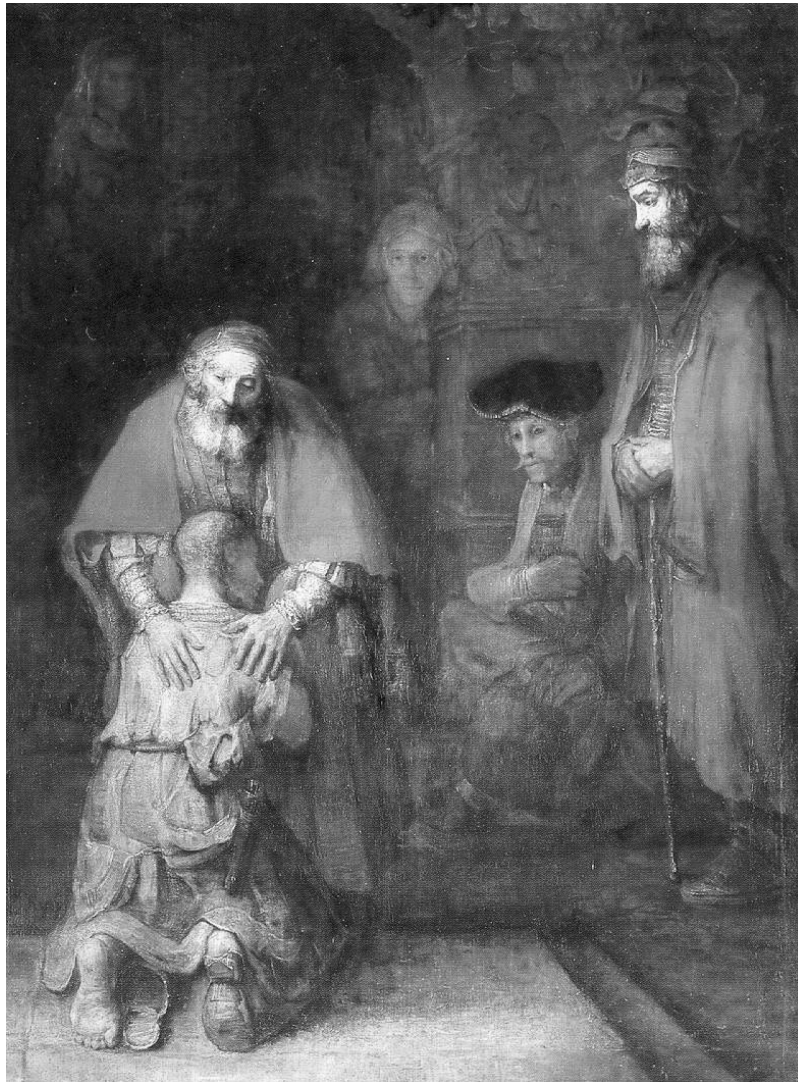
Read the adapted version of Luke 15: 11-24. Ask students the following questions:

- Who do you think the father is in Jesus' story?
- What hurtful actions did the son do that hurt his friendship with his father?
- Why do you think the father gave the son his inheritance?
- What made the son decide to come home and ask his father for forgiveness?
- Why was the father so happy to see his son again?
- How do we know the father forgave his son?

Reaffirm from the questions and answers that the father in this story represents God our heavenly father. By telling this story, Jesus is telling us that God allows us to choose either to do good things or hurtful things. He wants us to know that our sins not only hurt others but also hurt our friendship with God. But when we choose to do what is hurtful we can change our decision and become good friends with God again, if we just return to God's loving embrace and ask to be forgiven. God always loves us, no matter what we

do. He will never do anything to hurt his friendship with us. We are the only ones who can hurt our friendship with God. And only we can mend that hurt friendship by sincerely asking for forgiveness.

Invite students to draw a picture of the father welcoming his son home. Have students talk with you about their pictures and then place the pictures on a bulletin board under the words WELCOME HOME.



THE BOY WHO RAN AWAY FROM HOME

Once there was a little boy named Raymond who lived in a really big house in a small town a few miles away from the big city of Toronto. Raymond had a large bedroom of his own and lots of toys but he was never happy with what he had. He always wanted more. One day, he asked his mother for a new bicycle. The one his father had given him for Christmas was blue and he didn't like blue bikes. He wanted a fire engine red bike instead. When his mother refused and told him that he was acting ungrateful and greedy, the boy threatened to run away. He cried and screamed at his mother but she would not give in. Finally, the boy had no other way to get his way than to pack his bags and start to leave home. But his mother didn't even try to stop him. She just went about her work and said, "Be careful you don't get hurt out there, Raymond. I will be thinking about you and hoping that you change your mind. Just remember, you are always welcome here." Raymond didn't know what else to do so he just left.

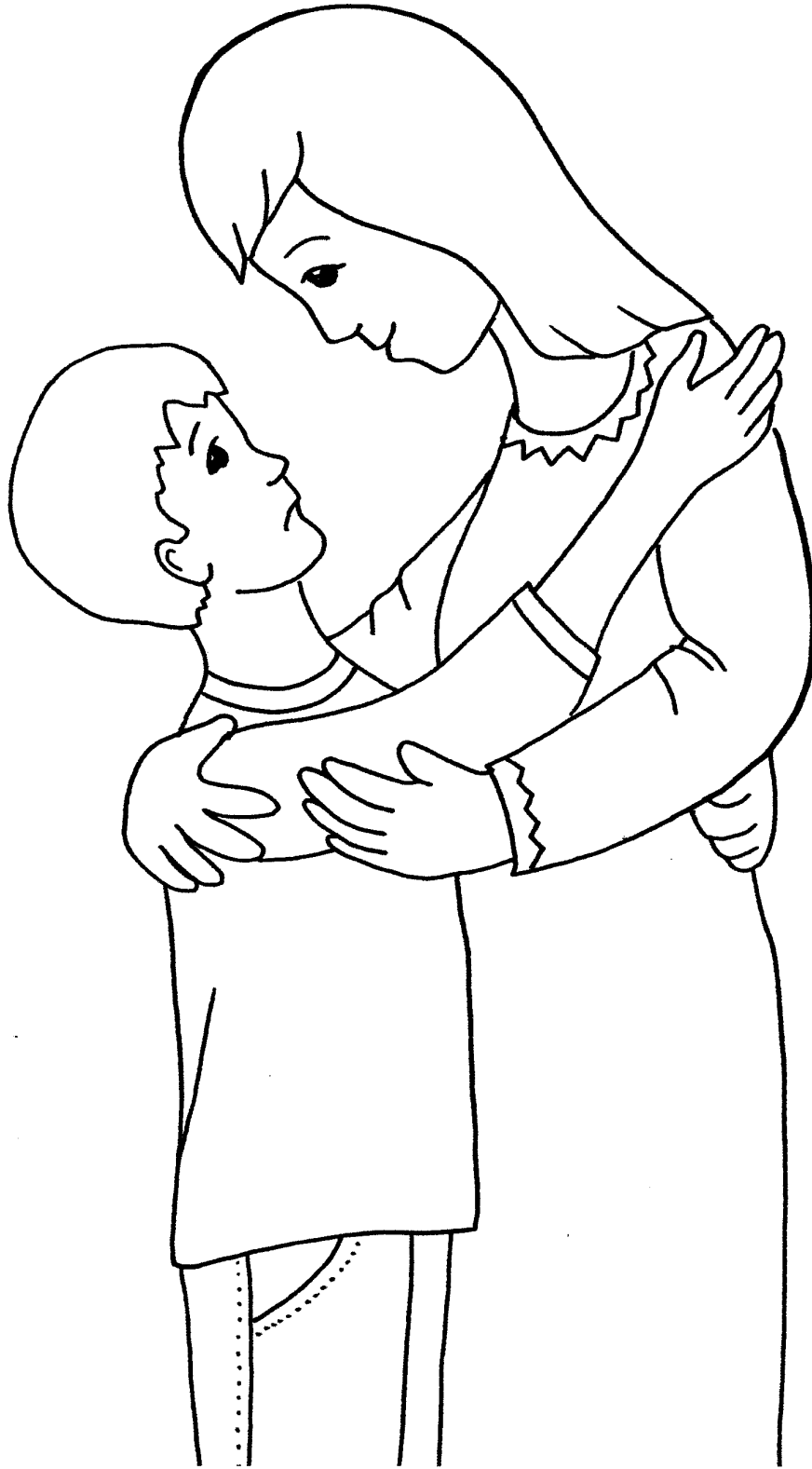
For hours, Raymond rode his blue bike along the road that led from his town to the big city. His arms and legs got very tired. He realized that he had forgotten to pack any food and he was getting very hungry. Then it began to rain and the rain was cold against his skin. His clothes got wet and uncomfortable; but still he was too proud to return home. Finally he rode under a large concrete bridge, found some old newspapers, covered himself and went to sleep. In the morning, he woke up to the sound of trucks and cars passing under the bridge. One of the truck drivers had pulled over and was walking toward him. When the man asked Raymond why he was all alone, under a bridge in the early morning, Raymond began to cry and told him the whole story.

"Well," the truck driver said, "it sounds to me like you have a very wise and loving mother. She was willing to let you have your freedom. I am sure it was very difficult for her to let you leave not knowing what might happen to you. I figure she would probably be very happy to see you home again, and it looks to me like you would be much happier there too. Why don't you let me take you and your blue bike back home again!" Raymond was silent for a minute, and then he wiped the tears from his face, stood up and reached for his bike.

“Thanks mister, but I think I will ride my neat blue bike home.” The truck driver reached into the cab of his truck and pulled out an old sweater and a packed lunch.

“Well at least let me give you these so you can be comfortable.” Raymond took the food and ate it. He put on the sweater and rode off leaving the truck driver behind. Somehow the ride home didn’t seem as long as it had the day before as he was leaving. The sun came out and warmed his chilled body and as he approached the house he looked up and saw his mother standing on the porch looking down the road in his direction. She ran from the porch, down the street toward him, embracing him in her arms and lifting him clean off his bike. “I’m sorry mom,” Raymond cried. But his mother didn’t even seem to hear him. Holding him tight in her arms, she whispered, “Welcome home, Raymond. Welcome home.”

Just then a big red truck drove by and the driver honked his horn, waved and smiled.



WE CELEBRATE GOD'S LOVE

Steps To Celebrating Reconciliation

CONCEPT

The sacrament of Reconciliation brings us to the action of asking God's forgiveness for the hurtful actions we have done. In the sacrament of Reconciliation we celebrate the joy of God's forgiveness and love for us. Students who are able to identify sins, hurtful actions they have done and are able to express sorrow for these actions are capable of celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation.

GET READY

Before the students celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation, invite the priest to visit with the students and talk about God's great love for them and what a gift it is to celebrate God's forgiveness. If it is possible, have the priest visit with the students at Church so they can become familiar with the environment where Reconciliation will be celebrated. Have the students practice sitting or kneeling as they will when they celebrate the sacrament. It is important that the students experience both the preparation and participation of the sacrament in a positive and life-giving way.

GO

The following steps show the process of preparing to celebrate the individual sacrament of Reconciliation.

1. You pray and ask for God's help to prepare to celebrate Reconciliation.

O God you love us very much.. When I do hurtful actions I want to show my sorrow for causing hurt. I want to ask forgiveness. Help me Jesus to be honest and to ask for forgiveness because I know you invite me to be loving to others. O God, thank you for your love. Amen.

2. You think about your actions (Examination of Conscience)

Do you pray to God each day?

Are you willing to go to Mass on Sunday?

Do you obey your parents and teachers?

Do you tell the truth?

Do you take things that do not belong to you?

Do you talk about God with respect?

Are you a peacemaker?

Do you include others when you play?

Do you help others when they need help?

3. You tell God you are sorry (Act of Contrition)

O God I know you love me very much. I am sorry for the times when I chose to do hurting actions. I will try not to sin again. I ask you to help me make good and loving choices. I love you God with all my heart. Amen.

4. Confession

You go to the place where you celebrate individual Reconciliation. The place of individual Reconciliation is a special room designated for Reconciliation or a location near the altar.

You make the Sign of the Cross and use these words to talk with the priest. "Bless me Father for I have sinned. These are my sins." Now you tell the priest the hurtful actions you have done. You end by saying to the priest, "I am sorry for these sins and I ask God for forgiveness."

The priest may talk with you about the actions you have done. Listen to what the priest tells you. For your penance the priest will give you prayers to say or acts of kindness to do. Performing your penance is a way of showing God that you want to do loving actions.

You pray the Act of Contrition. (See the prayer above in step #3)

The priest prays the special words of absolution. These are the words of God's forgiveness and love for you because you have said you are sorry and you have asked for God's forgiveness.

You thank the priest and leave the place of Reconciliation.

5. You say the prayers of Penance the priest gave you. You thank God for God's love and forgiveness.

A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION OF RECONCILIATION

CONCEPT

The following Prayer Celebration is a prayer gathering to share the theme of “Forgiveness”. This community prayer is a meaningful way to help the students prepare for the celebration of individual Reconciliation. This prayer gathering is also appropriate for those students whose intellectual abilities would make it difficult for them to celebrate individual Reconciliation.

GET READY

- I Will Follow The Good Shepard song # 10 of grade 1, We Belong to God
- Let’s Share the Peace song # 17 of grade 1, We Belong to God
- Adapted version of the Gospel story Luke 15. 4-7
- Adapted version of Luke 15. 11-24
- Stuffed lamb used when sharing the Parable of the Lost Sheep
- Polished stones and a basket used when sharing The Return of the Prodigal Son

GO

PRAYER CELEBRATION

Opening Song: I Will Follow the Good Shepherd

Leader: We have come together as brothers and sisters in God’s family. Today we celebrate God’s loving care and forgiveness. Jesus you are the Good Shepherd who will always search for us when we are lost. You welcome us home again with love. We ask you to help us always welcome others when they have been lost. We ask your help dear Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

All: Amen.

Reader: We listen again to the story of the Parable of the Lost Sheep. Hold up the stuffed lamb that was used in the earlier session of teaching this Gospel story. Take time to recall the experience of great rejoicing when the Good Shepherd found the lost sheep.

Read the adapted version of Luke 15.4-7.

The Gospel of the Lord Response: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Response: Sing the chorus of “I Will Follow the Good Shepherd”

Leader: Distribute the stones that were used in sharing the Gospel story of the Return of the Prodigal Son. Recall the discussion about our hearts being like a stone when we do hurtful actions.

Reader: *Read the Adapted version of Luke 15.11-24.*

The Gospel of the Lord Response: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: Like the Prodigal Son we will now think about the times we have sinned by choosing to do hurtful actions.

(After each statement is read the response “We are Sorry” is used. Also a stone is brought forward and placed in a basket to express the desire to give up the hardness of our hearts.)

- For the times we do not pray R.
- For the times we are not willing to go to Sunday Mass R.
- For the times we do not obey our parents and teachers R.
- For the times we did not tell the truth R.
- For the times we took something that did not belong to us R.
- For the times we did not talk about God with respect R.
- For the times we were not peacemakers R.
- For the times we did not include others R.
- For the times we did not help someone who needed help R.

Leader: Now together let us pray the Act of Contrition to tell God we are sorry for our sins.

O God I know you love me very much. I am sorry for the times when I chose to do hurtful actions. I will try not to sin again. I ask you to help me make good and loving choices. I love you God with all my heart. Amen.

Closing Song : Let’s Share the Peace



SCRIPTURE STORIES

THE NATURE OF LOVE

(Adapted from 1 Corinthians 13.4-8a)

Paul wishes to help the members of his church in Corinth to understand what it means to love others as Jesus loved. This is what he wrote to the Corinthians in a letter.

People who are full of love are always patient and kind. They never wish, in a mean way, to have what others have; instead they are happy for the other person. They do not brag about what they have or what they have done. They do not think they are better than others. A person who is full of love is humble and polite. They are willing to do the good things that others ask them to do. A loving person is happy and cheerful. They make others feel happy when they are around. They want to make good choices and are sad when they make hurtful choices. Loving people want to know the truth. They are able to remain loving even when they experience something that hurts or upsets them. Loving people never lose faith in God and continue to hope even when they are very sad. Their love remains strong no matter what happens. Their love never ends.

The Word of the Lord.

Response: Thanks be to God

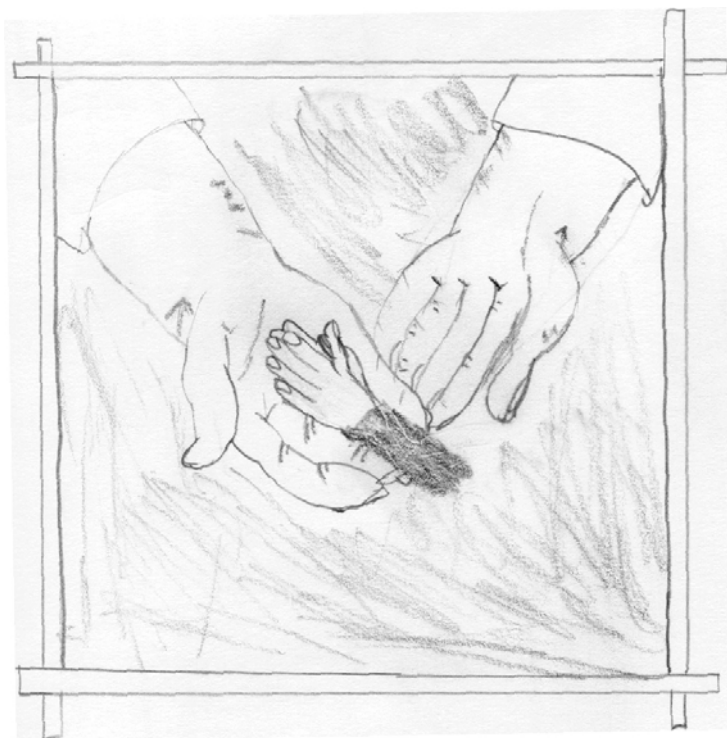


Illustration by Rebecca Greenlaw, Sir Albert Love Catholic School

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

(Adapted from Luke 15:4-7)

Think about this. If you had one hundred sheep and one of them was lost, wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine, even in a place that might be dangerous, and go to find the one that was lost? Wouldn't you look for the lost sheep until you found it? When a good shepherd finds a lost sheep, he picks him up and puts him on his shoulders to carry him home. The shepherd is very happy that he has found the lost sheep that he cares so much for. When he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Be happy with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I tell you that when someone who sins is sorry and asks for forgiveness, Jesus and everyone in heaven are very happy and rejoice.

The Gospel of the Lord

Response: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ



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PETER DENIES JESUS

(Adapted from Luke 22. 66-71)

Then Jesus was taken and led away bringing him into the high priest's house. Peter was following at a distance. They started a fire in the courtyard to keep warm.

While Peter was in the courtyard one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he moved to the entrance of the courtyard. Then the rooster crowed.

And the servant girl saw him again and began saying to the other people standing around, "This man is one of them." But again Peter denied it. Then after a little while some of those in the group said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But Peter began to curse and he swore an oath. "I do not know this man you are talking about." At that moment the rooster crowed for the second time.

Jesus turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times." And Peter broke down and wept bitterly.

The Gospel of the Lord **Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS
(Adapted from Luke 19. 1-10)

Jesus came to the town of Jericho to teach the people about God’s love. There were many people in the crowd who came to listen to Jesus. One of the persons was Zacchaeus a rich man who was a tax collector.

Zacchaeus was a short man so he could not see Jesus because of the large crowd of people. Zacchaeus wanted very much to see Jesus so he decided to climb a tree. He knew Jesus would walk past the tree and then he could see Jesus. When Jesus walked by the tree he looked up at Zacchaeus and said, “Hurry and come down for I would like to visit with you”. Zacchaeus hurried down from the tree and was so happy to welcome Jesus to his house.

Many of the people who saw Jesus go with Zacchaeus complained and said “Jesus has gone to be a visitor with someone who is a sinner”. Zacchaeus told Jesus that he had made some wrong choices that were hurtful and he wanted to make some changes in his choices and actions. Zacchaeus said to Jesus “ I will share my money and give to the poor. Any people I have cheated, I will pay back four times their money”.

Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “Today you have chosen to follow God’s teachings and to accept God’s great love for you”. I have come to look for the people who have sinned and want to live their lives in God’s love.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Response:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



*Illustration by Rebecca Greenlaw
Sr. Albert Love Catholic School*

The Return of the Prodigal Son

Adapted from Luke 15.11-24

Jesus told this story to those who had gathered to listen to him, ‘There was a man who had two sons. The younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me right now the share of your property that you will leave me when you die.’ So the father divided his property between his two sons. A few days later the younger son took everything he had including the money his father had given to him, and traveled to a country far away from his father’s home, and there he spent all his money on selfish things that were hurtful to himself and others. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country. The people in that country ran out of food and he was unable to find food for himself. No one would give him food or a place to stay unless he was willing to work very hard for it. So he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He was so hungry he was willing to eat the food that was meant for the pigs but no one gave him anything to eat. Finally he thought about his father and the home he had left behind. He said, ‘All of the men who work for my father have lots of bread to eat and even some left over, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go home to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have done sinful things that have hurt you and disappointed God; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of the men who work for you.’” So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still far away from his father’s house, his father saw him and felt very sorry for him. He ran down the road to meet him and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have done sinful things that have hurt you and disappointed God; I am no longer worthy to be called your son’ But the father said to the men who worked for him, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And prepare a meal with my most tender meat, and let us eat and celebrate that my son has returned home to us. He went away and did hurtful things but now he is sorry and has returned; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

The Gospel of the Lord

Response: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ



RECONCILIATION RESOURCE DOCUMENT

FEEDBACK FORM

You, the Teacher Catechists, are the best reviewers of this catechetical document. Please send any suggestions that clarify and/or make these materials more useful for your students.

Please send to:

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