

LESSONS 41 & 42: RECONCILIATION

Instruction for Faith Educators

For Basic Level / Age 9	:	Cover points 1 to 12
For Intermediate Level / Age 12	:	Cover points 1 to 12
For Advanced Level / Age 15	:	Cover points 1 to 15

Note to faith educators: It is very crucial in these lessons that the younger children be taught how to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation in preparation for their reception of First Holy Communion. This is why two sessions are allocated for the Sacrament.

Revision from previous lesson:

In the previous lessons, we have learned about the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist) and the Sacraments of Service (Holy Orders and Matrimony). In this lesson, we will be discussing the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which belongs to a new category of Sacraments called “Sacraments of Healing”.

Current lesson:

1. Although we have been cleansed of original sin, the gravitation towards sin and evil remains. This is because the effects of original sin remain. This is called concupiscence.
2. Sin breaks our relationship with God. Sin also breaks our relationships with others. Sin is progressive. It takes you further than you want to go, and it will cost you more than you are willing to pay.
3. There are venial sins that injure but do not totally break our relationship with God. There are mortal sins that involve the severance of our relationship with God. Venial sins, when habitually committed and condoned, eventually lead to mortal sins (CCC 1863).
4. Venial sin is a “less serious” sin that arises out of weakness even if we still love God. Such a sin does injure our relationship with God but does not turn us away from Him (CCC 1855).
5. Mortal sin arises from hardness of heart (CCC 1864). It destroys the love that we have in our hearts and turns us away from God by willfully preferring something else to God (CCC 1855). Mortal sin can be healed only by God’s mercy and a conversion of heart that we experience through the Sacrament of Reconciliation (CCC 1856).
6. How can we know when we have committed a mortal sin?
 - A) We have committed a serious wrong – breaking the Ten Commandments (CCC 1858);
 - B) We are fully aware that what we are doing is wrong (CCC 1859);
 - C) We choose to willfully commit the wrong (CCC 1859).
7. Jesus gave the Apostles the authority to forgive sins. (John 20:23: “Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”)



8. The Apostles exhort us to confess our sins. (James 5:16: “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”)
9. We are assured of forgiveness if we confess our sins. (1 John 1:9: “If we acknowledge (confess) our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing.”)
10. Examine your conscience properly before you go for confession. Make a review of mortal and venial sins since your last sacramental confession, and make a firm resolution not to sin again.
11. In order for a confession to be a valid Sacrament, four elements must be present:

- A) **Confession.** Make the sign of the cross and say “Father, bless me for I have sinned. My last confession was (say when you had your last confession)”. Then tell the priest what your serious sins are.

Be sincere and honest in naming your sins. A priest is bound by the seal of confession and will not divulge your sins to anyone else no matter how grave.

After naming your sins, say, “I am sorry for these and all my other sins”. Then listen to the words/advice of the priest.

- B) **Contrition.** When the priest has finished advising you, pray the prayer of contrition:

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you. I detest all my sins because I fear the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

You must be sorry for your sins and have an intention to change. Contrition can be imperfect (e.g. story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-31) or perfect (e.g. Jesus’ encounter with Zacchaeus the tax collector in Luke 19:1-10).

Notice that the prayer of contrition aims to gravitate the penitent towards perfect contrition.

- C) **Satisfaction (Penance).** The priest will usually assist you in this aspect by giving you an act of devotion to perform as an outward sign of your inward desire to repent. However, if your contrition is perfect, this aspect is usually already fulfilled even prior to your going for confession.

- D) **Absolution.** This aspect is to be pronounced by the priest.

*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.*

12. It is highly recommended that we should receive this Sacrament at least once a month.
13. Indulgences are “the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned” (From *Handbook of Indulgences*).
14. Indulgences granted by the Church can be partial or plenary. A partial indulgence removes part of the temporal punishment due for sins. A plenary indulgence removes all of it. This punishment may come either in this life, in the form of various sufferings, or in the next life, in purgatory.
15. How to gain a plenary indulgence:
 - Make a confession
 - Receive communion
 - Pray for the intentions of the Pope (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be)
 - Perform the prescribed action
 - Be free from attachment to sin (otherwise the plenary indulgence becomes partial)



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