

Part II: The Prodigal Son

Directions:

1. The priest should read the Prodigal Son. (Lk 15:11-32)
Read the scripture passage from Luke out of the Bible then summarize at their level or use the story from this manual.
2. Have the image of the Return of the Prodigal Son in view as you read.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Who tells us this story and why?
(Jesus, He wanted to teach us about the Father's forgiveness)
2. What did the younger son want?
(He wanted his inheritance early so he could spend it)
3. Did the father allow him this?
(Yes)
4. Where did the son go and what happened to him?
(He went far away and spent the money on bad things that his father would not have liked.)
5. Why did the son decided to return home?
(A famine hit the land and he could not earn enough to even feed himself)
6. What did he tell his father?
(He asked his father to forgive him)
7. What happened when he returned home?
(His father had been waiting and hoping he would return, he forgave him and gave him many gifts)
8. Examine the print by Rembrandt.



Direct their attention to the artwork of the Return of the Prodigal Son. Explain that this artwork is a print of a famous painting done by Rembrandt. This is his idea of how he saw the story.

- A. Tell me what is going on in this painting? Who is the son who returned? Who is the father? *(The other people are those assisting the father to welcome the son back.)*
- B. What is the father doing? *(Showing forgiveness & mercy)* And how is the son responding? *(he is on his knees, a sign of being sorry for his sins)* Notice the ragged clothes on the son. It shows he has had a really hard time and living conditions.

9. How many of you think the father should have forgiven his son and taken him back?
10. Does it matter what sin you have done? Will God the Father always forgive you?
(God the Father always loves and will always forgive us.)
11. Today as you move around to different rooms and activities it would be good to have this image of the father forgiving the son in your mind as you start to think about your own sins and the mercy and forgiveness God the Father wants to give you.

Transition Prayer:

End with reciting the Transition Prayer for this retreat, which is the Act of Contrition: "*Oh my God ...*"

Genuflect and leave the Church. Have small group leaders gather their group and continue to the next station. Parents or small group leaders should hold onto the handouts in-between use so the children do not need to keep track of it.

Story of the Prodigal Son

Jesus told us the story of the Prodigal Son to teach us about God's love and mercy that we receive in the Sacrament of Penance. The story goes something like this ...

There once was a man who had two sons. The younger son no longer wanted to live on the farm or do all that his father told him. So, one day, he said to his father: "Father, give me the share of your land that is to be mine. I want all that I would receive after your death right now." The Father was saddened by this, but he respected his son's wishes. His son could choose to go any time. So the father gave to his younger son the money he would have left for him after his death. The younger son took all he had and left the farm and went into a far off country.

Now the younger son was not very good with money, and spent it all very quickly on things that would not please the father. In fact, the way he spent his money was very offensive to the father and hurt him very much. After he spent all his money, a famine hit this country and the son had to work very hard just to have food to eat. One day, the younger son realized that his father's servants had a better life than the one he was living. They had lots of food, but he was always hungry. So, this son decided to return to his father, and confess or tell him his sins, and tell his father that he is sorry. The younger son started on his way home.

Now back on the farm, the father longed for his younger son to return to him, for he loved him very much! He would watch and wait for his son to return. One day, the father saw his son coming and he was filled with joy and love. He ran to his son, hugged and kissed him. The son told his sins to his father and told him that he was sorry. The father was so excited and overjoyed at the return of his son, that he sent his servants to bring his best robe, a ring to put on his finger, and shoes on his feet. They cooked a great feast and had a big party. His father knew that his son was lost and dead because of sin, but now that he had confessed his sins and returned to his father, he was home and alive with grace.

The same will happen to you when you go to confession. Sometimes we are weak and sinful, and this saddens God our Father greatly. He waits for us to return to Him because He loves us. When we confess our sins and are sorry, God forgives us and is happy that we have turned away from sin and back to God. This is what we do in the Sacrament of Penance.