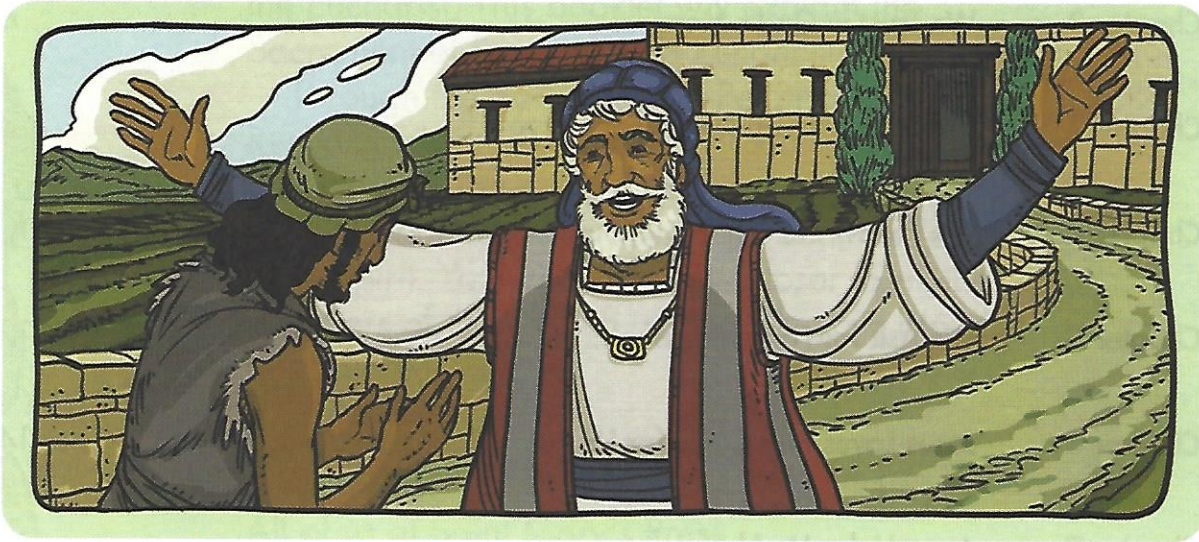


# God's Treasure of Forgiveness



## Prayer

Dear God,  
Be with me as I prepare for the Sacrament of  
Penance and Reconciliation. Help me to know your  
mercy and love. Help me to follow Jesus, your Son,  
who is your greatest gift to us. I ask this in his name.  
Amen.





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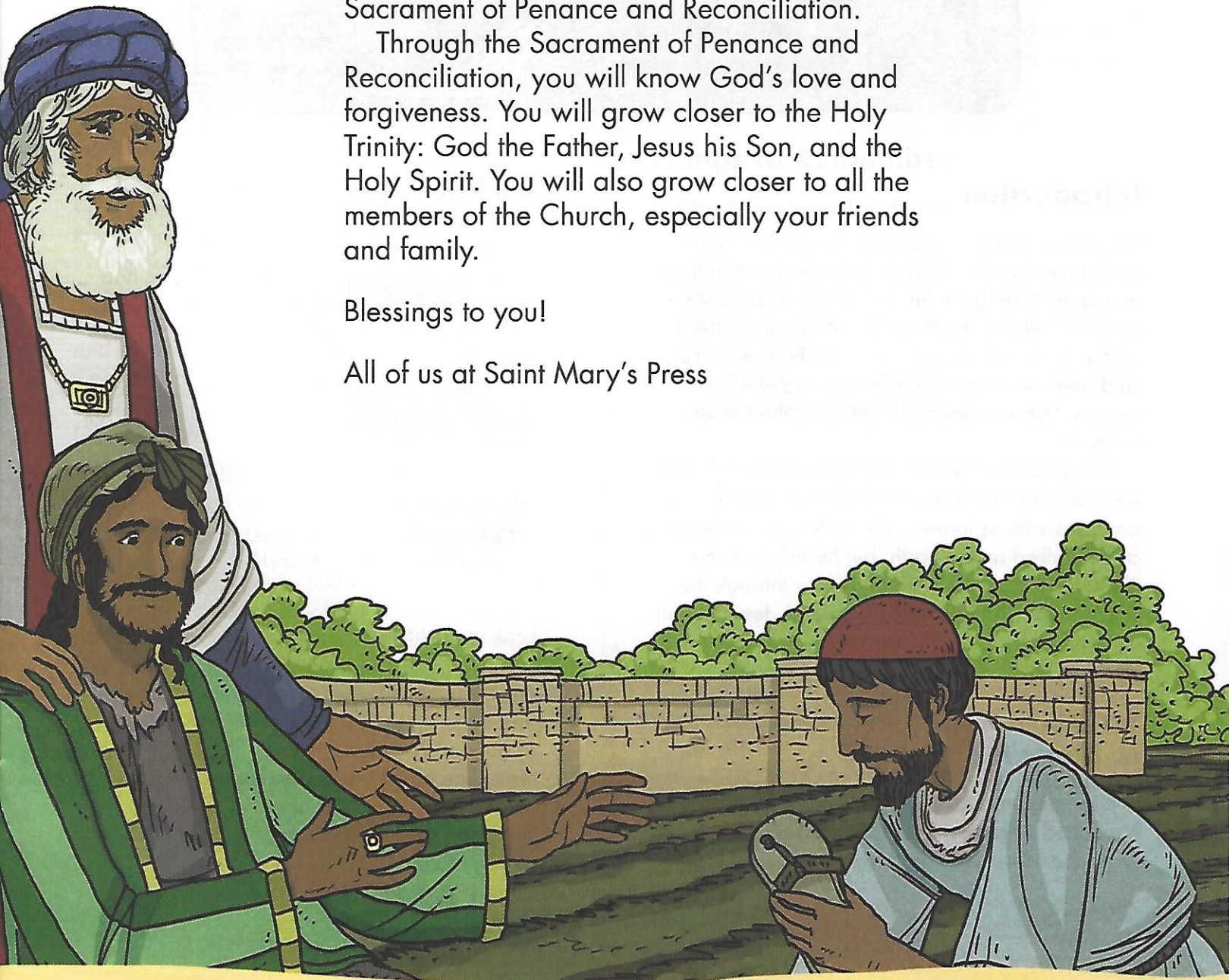
# Welcome

Welcome, children! You are about to start out on an adventure. You are about to discover God's treasure of the Sacraments. You will be seeking and finding two wonderful Sacraments that Jesus gave us: the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. This booklet will explain the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.

Through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, you will know God's love and forgiveness. You will grow closer to the Holy Trinity: God the Father, Jesus his Son, and the Holy Spirit. You will also grow closer to all the members of the Church, especially your friends and family.

Blessings to you!

All of us at Saint Mary's Press





# Chapter 1: Jesus Is Always with Us



## Introduction

Do you remember celebrating Christmas? You may remember that Christmas is the day that Jesus was born. God gave his Son, Jesus, to us to save us and to lead us back to him. When Jesus lived on the earth with us, people could hear what he said and see what he did through his words and actions. What a wonderful gift God the Father gave us!

Do you remember celebrating Easter? At Easter, we celebrate that Jesus rose from the dead for us and lives with us forever. We no longer see Jesus as he walked on the earth, but he still gives his life to us. He gives his life to us now through the Sacraments. Through the Sacraments, Jesus is with us always.

## Scripture Story: Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

In this Scripture passage, we find out what happened when Jesus rose from the dead. He met his friend Mary. Let's read together:

Mary stood crying outside the tomb. While she was still crying, she bent over and looked in the tomb and saw two angels there dressed in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and the other at the feet. "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked her.

She answered, "They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!"

Then she turned around and saw Jesus standing there; but she did not know that it was Jesus. . . .

Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

(John 20:11-14, 16)

Look at the title of the story. Do you know what "Risen Jesus" means? It means that Jesus was crucified on the cross but rose from the dead to live forever.

Who was Mary Magdalene? She was a friend to Jesus. She loved Jesus very much. That is why she was visiting his tomb, or grave. She was crying because she did not know where Jesus was. But when Mary Magdalene turned around, she saw Jesus! Later Jesus would appear to his other followers.



This is the story of the very first Easter Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead. Each year at Easter, we celebrate that the Risen Jesus is with us today. One special way he is with us is in the Seven Sacraments.

## Jesus Gave Us the Sacraments

Jesus gave us seven great and holy signs of God's love. These signs are called Sacraments. Jesus is present to us in a special way in the Sacraments so that we can follow him more closely. The Sacraments give us grace, the gift of God's life in us. Grace makes us God's children and helps us do good things. We can be sure that when we receive the Sacraments with faith, they will accomplish what they signify. That is, they will do in us what the words and actions of the Sacraments say they will do. They will help us to be faithful followers of Jesus.

Grace also helps us to stay away from sin. A sin is something we say, do, or think that does not follow God's Law.

The Seven Sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance and Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. The Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist begin our life in the Church and are called the Sacraments of Christian Initiation. Do you know the date of your Baptism? Ask your parents to tell you.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

In Baptism we become children of God and start a new life with God. All of our sins are washed away. If we sin after we are baptized, our new life with God is weakened—or even lost if it is a big sin. That is why we have the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, to forgive the sins we commit after we are baptized.

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation has many names:

- Its official Church name is the **Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**. Often this is shortened to "the Sacrament of Penance" or "the Sacrament of Reconciliation."
- We often call this Sacrament **confession**, because in it we confess what we have done wrong. We say, "We are going to confession tomorrow afternoon."
- Sometimes it is called the Sacrament of **conversion**, because this Sacrament helps us to *convert*, or change, for the better.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we ask God to forgive us. After we confess our sins and are forgiven, our new life with God will be strengthened if it had been weakened or restored if it had been lost.

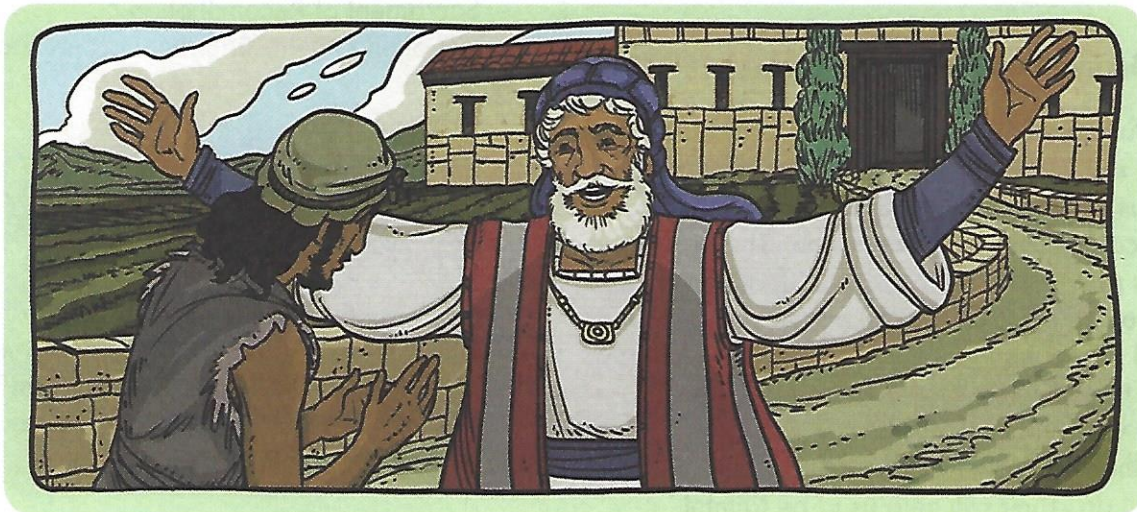
## Things to Remember

- Christ died, rose from the dead, and is with us now.
- We meet Jesus in the Sacraments.
- The new life with God that we receive in Baptism is weakened by our sins or even lost if it is a big sin.
- We confess our sins and are forgiven by God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



# Chapter 2:

## We Trust in God's Mercy



### Introduction

What choices do you make every day? Sometimes the choices are easy: Should I have chocolate or vanilla ice cream? Should I have an apple or a banana? Choices about our own actions are not always easy. Should I be mean or nice? Should I do what Mom or Dad asks, or not?

It does not matter if we have chocolate or vanilla ice cream. But it does matter if we are mean or nice and if we obey Mom or Dad. Sometimes we choose to do wrong. We sin. Sin is a choice to take the wrong path. But we can always come back. We can always make the next good choice.

### Scripture Story: The Forgiving Father

When Jesus walked on earth, he was well-known for telling stories, or parables. The Parable of the Forgiving Father is one of Jesus' most famous stories. It is about a son who ran away and came back. In this part of the parable, the son is on his

way home. He planned to tell his father how sorry he was that he had left home and wasted all his money. Let's see what happens next:

Jesus went on to say, . . . "[The sinful son] was still a long way from home when his father saw him; his heart was filled with pity, and he ran, threw his arms around his son, and kissed him. 'Father,' the son said, 'I have sinned against God and against you. I am no longer fit to be called your son.' But the father called to his servants. 'Hurry!' he said. 'Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet. Then go and get the prize calf and kill it, and let us celebrate with a feast! For this son of mine was dead, but now he is alive; he was lost, but now he has been found.'" (Luke 15:11, 20-24)

Look at the title of the story: "The Forgiving Father." In the beginning of this parable, the son wanted to leave. He wanted all of the money coming to him when his father died. He took the money and went far away. He spent all of it in very foolish ways!



Then when he had no money for food, he decided to go back home. He thought of his father's house, where everyone was cared for and well-fed. He decided to go back home. He said, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you." The father could have been angry with his son, but he was not. The father was a forgiving father. The father was filled with love and mercy and called for a celebration!

Our Father in Heaven is like this father. God is a forgiving father. God will always love us, welcome us back, and forgive us when we are sorry. Jesus told this parable so that we would always trust in God's forgiveness.

## God's Forgiveness and Mercy

This parable teaches us about God's forgiveness. Many times in the Gospels, Jesus teaches us about the importance of forgiveness. We must ask the people we hurt by our sins for their forgiveness. We must also forgive other people when they make mistakes or hurt us. We must do this even when people are not sorry for what they have done.

It is important that we also ask for God's forgiveness. We hurt our friendship with God when we sin. The special Sacrament in which we ask for God's forgiveness is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We ask God for forgiveness through the priest, and our sins are forgiven. We become reconciled, or reconnected, with God and with the Church. Sometimes other people may not forgive us, but God will always forgive us if we are truly sorry.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

When we confess our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we receive God's forgiveness.

At the very beginning of the Sacrament, the priest will greet us and welcome us. We then pray together the Sign of the Cross. Making the Sign of the Cross reminds us that we are baptized and that we belong to God. The priest will usually say

something like, "May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and to trust in his mercy" (*Rite of Penance*, number 42).

**Mercy** is the loving-kindness of God toward all of his children. When we go to confession, we trust in God's mercy, and we trust that if we are truly sorry for our sins, God will forgive us. When we confess our sins to the priest, he can never tell those sins to anyone else. He has made a promise never to tell what he hears in confession. This is called the seal of the confessional.

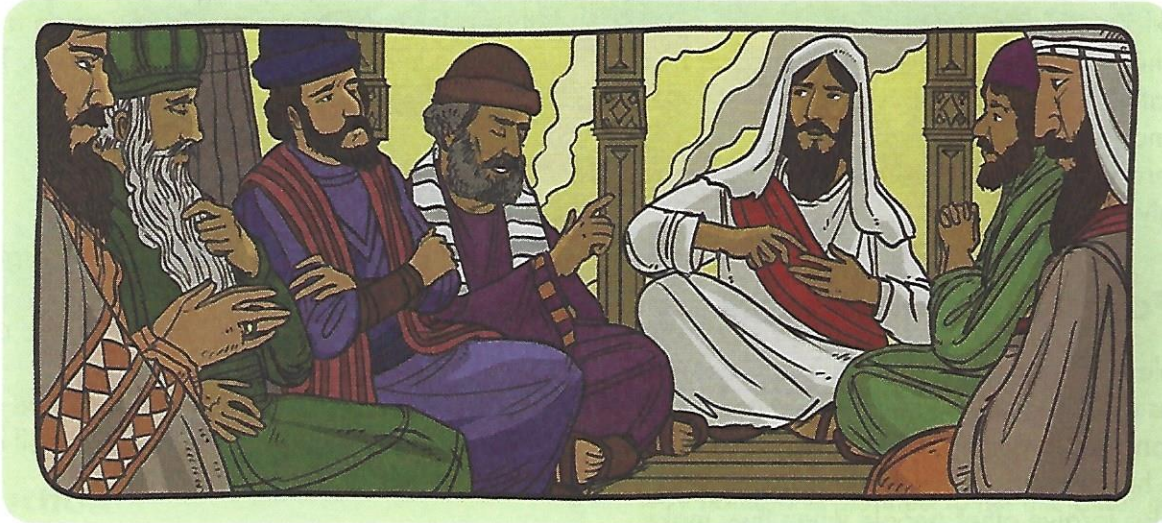
## Things to Remember

- God is a loving Father. He always forgives us when we are truly sorry for our sins.
- God's mercy and forgiveness come to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess our sins to the priest. He can never tell anyone else what he hears from us.



# Chapter 3:

## We Follow Jesus' Message of Love



### Introduction

What is the most important thing you will do today? Will you brush your teeth? Will you wash your hands before eating? Will you pick up your things and put them away? All of these tasks are important. But what do you think Jesus said was the most important thing to do in our lives? Let's listen to the Word of God and hear what Jesus said.

### Scripture Story: Love Is the Greatest Commandment

In this Scripture passage, we find out what Jesus thinks is the most important thing we could ever do. He answered a very important question. Let's read together:

A teacher of the Law . . . came to [Jesus] with a question: "Which commandment is the most important of all?"

Jesus replied, "The most important one is this: 'Listen, Israel! The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second most important commandment is this: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment more important than these two." (Mark 12:28-31)

When we say something is "the most important," we mean that it should be taken seriously. We will be learning about other commandments. We are not to lie or steal or be mean to others. But all of those commandments are included in the commandment to love God and love our neighbor. If we love God and others, we will be sure to be following all the other commandments as well.



## Jesus Teaches Us to Love

At the end of our lives, Jesus will not care how much money we made or how smart we were. But he will ask us, "How much did you love?" The greatest thing we can do in life is to love God and to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

How does the commandment to love help us in our families at home? It helps us to remember what Jesus taught about love. It helps us to remember not to start fights with our brothers and sisters. It helps us remember to share. How does it help us with our friends? It helps us to remember that we must treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated. It helps us to remember to be kind and helpful to others.

Love is not just a good feeling. Love is a good action toward God and others. Love is praying to God, honoring God, and helping others.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

We learn about God in the Bible. Another name for the Bible is **Sacred Scripture**.

When we read Sacred Scripture, we are reading God's Word. Today's Scripture story is not just another story. It is God's Word to us today. We hear God's Word in every Sacrament. We hear God's Word at Mass. We will also hear God's Word in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

After the priest greet us, we make the Sign of the Cross with the priest. Then he says a few words to encourage us to trust in God's mercy. Next we may hear God's Word from the Bible. The priest may read a short passage from Sacred Scripture, or he may ask us to read the passage.

Reading from the Bible helps us to hear about God's love and forgiveness and helps us to love God and one another better. Sacred Scripture can help us see when we may not have loved as fully as we are called to, or when we may have sinned. It tells us that we can trust in God's loving-kindness and that we can ask for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## Things to Remember

- We follow Jesus by following the most important commandment to love God and others.
- We learn about love in Sacred Scripture.
- We can ask God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation when we fail to love fully.



# Chapter 4: We Follow the Ten Commandments



## Introduction

What rules do you follow in your family? Some family rules might be, "No phones at the table," or "Hang the towels back up after you use them." How do your family's rules help you keep safe and happy? You follow rules at school too. Some school rules might be, "Raise your hand before speaking," or "Walk, don't run, in the halls." How do your school rules help you keep safe and happy?

God has given us rules, sometimes called laws or commandments, too. God's rules also help all of his people to be safe and happy. Today we will learn more about the rules that God gave us in the Ten Commandments.

## Scripture Story: God Gives His People the Ten Commandments

God's people were once slaves in Egypt. God chose a man named Moses to lead them to freedom. Then God gave Moses Laws for the

people to follow. The short version of these Laws is called the Ten Commandments. Let's read them now:

"I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves.

**Worship** no god but me. . . .

I show my love to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my laws.

Do not use my name for evil purposes. . . .

Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. . . .

Respect your father and your mother. . . .

Do not commit murder.

Do not commit adultery.

Do not steal.

Do not accuse anyone falsely.

Do not desire another man's house; . . . his wife, his slaves, his cattle, his donkeys, or anything else that he owns."

(Exodus 20:2-3, 6-8, 12-17)



## The Ten Commandments Today

The Ten Commandments are still God's rules for us today. He gave us these rules because he loves us and wants us to be safe and happy. Do you remember that Jesus taught us that loving God and loving others is the most important commandment?

The Ten Commandments show us ten different ways to follow Jesus' commandment of love. The first three commandments teach us how to love God. The next seven commandments teach us how to love other people. Here is a list of the Ten Commandments:

1. I am the Lord your God, you shall not have other gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's possessions.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

Sometimes we fail to love God, others, or ourselves. Can you think of ways people can fail to love God? Can you think of ways people can fail to love others? Can you think of ways people can fail to love themselves? Here is one example: People who drive recklessly are not loving themselves or others, because they are risking their lives and the lives of others.

When we fail to love God, others, or ourselves, we can confess our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. After the priest greets us and we hear the Word of God, we are ready to confess, or tell, our sins to the priest.

We confess our sins to the priest because Jesus gave the Apostles the power to forgive sins. The Pope and the bishops are successors to the Apostles. The bishops give the authority to forgive

sins to the priests. Only a priest who has received this power from the Church can forgive sins in the name of Christ.

It is important to remember that we confess sins, not accidents, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To commit a sin, you must *know* it is a sin (something against God's Law and against love), you must *choose* to do it, and you must do it *freely*.

An **accident** is something that you do by mistake, that you *did not* intend to happen. Let's think about the difference between a sin and an accident. Here are two examples:

1. Johnny breaks a lamp while he is sweeping the floor. Is that a sin? No, it is an accident. Johnny was not doing something wrong, and he did not intend to break the lamp.
2. Sally's parents have a rule not to throw balls in the house. She throws a ball in the house anyway, and it breaks a lamp. Sally knew her parents did not want her to throw the ball in the house, so throwing the ball is a sin because she knew it was wrong and did it anyway.

Was breaking the lamp a sin? No, that was an accident, because Sally did not want to break the lamp. But the lamp broke because she threw the ball, so she needs to be sorry and make up for both actions: for throwing the ball and breaking the lamp. We always need to make up in some way for any damage we cause because of our sins, whether it is hurt feelings or something that is broken or stolen.

## Things to Remember

- God gave us rules to keep his people safe and happy.
- The Ten Commandments show God's love for us.
- The first three commandments teach us about loving God, and the last seven commandments teach us about loving other people.
- There are differences between a sin and an accident.
- In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess our sins and are forgiven by the priest in the name of Christ.



# Chapter 5: We Ask for Forgiveness



## Introduction

How easy is it for you to say, “I’m sorry” or “Please forgive me”? For some people, this is very hard to do. Even if it is hard, we should do it anyway. No one is perfect. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone sins. We need to be honest with ourselves, with other people, and with God when we make mistakes or do bad things.

The good news is that God loves you very, very much. He loves you even when you are not perfect, even when you sin. You should never worry about confessing your sins to God. If you are sorry and promise to do better, he will always love you and forgive you.

## Scripture Story: Jesus Forgives a Woman’s Sins

Jesus was having dinner at the house of a man named Simon. All the guests were eating and talking, when suddenly a woman walked in. She was looking for Jesus. This is how it happened:

In that town was a woman who lived a sinful life. She heard that Jesus was eating in the Pharisee’s house, so she brought an alabaster

jar full of perfume and stood behind Jesus, by his feet, crying and wetting his feet with her tears. Then she dried his feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured the perfume on them.

[Jesus said,] “The great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven.

Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.” (Luke 7:37–38, 47–48)

Like the woman in the story, we have room in our hearts for two things: love and sin. Remember that sin is anything we think, say, or do that goes against God’s Law, especially the commandment of love.

The more love we have in our hearts, the less room we have for sin. The more sin we have—the more meanness and selfishness—the less room we have for love. When we are forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we have more room for love.



## True Sorrow for Sin

This story teaches us that Jesus is a friend of sinners and forgives them. It shows us the meaning of being truly sorry for our sins. The woman had true **contrition**. *Contrition* means “having true sorrow for our sins.”

The woman showed her contrition and love with her tears, kisses, and gift of perfume. Jesus forgave her sins because she had great love. We also need to ask Jesus to forgive our sins. This is why Jesus gave the Church the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Sacrament gives us an opportunity to come to Jesus and ask his forgiveness.

## God’s Treasure of Forgiveness

The woman gave her greatest gift to Jesus—not the perfume, but her great love. Jesus gave back a greater treasure, the treasure of forgiveness. If we give our love and contrition to God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we too will receive God’s treasure of forgiveness.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we must confess all mortal sins. A mortal sin is a serious sin, committed on purpose, that completely breaks our relationship with God. Mortal sin is a serious sin against the Ten Commandments and God’s Law of Love. Mortal sin is a sin like murder. Or we can sin against God by refusing to worship him as he deserves. We can refuse to go to Mass on Sunday or on Holy Days of Obligation.

These are the Holy Days of Obligation:

- Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1)
- Ascension (40 days from Easter Sunday; may be celebrated on the last Thursday or Sunday before Pentecost)
- Assumption of Mary (August 15)
- All Saints’ Day (November 1)
- Immaculate Conception (December 8)
- Christmas (December 25)

Mortal sin cannot be committed by accident. It is very serious. To commit a mortal sin, you must first *know* it is a serious sin, you must *choose* to do it, and you must *freely* do it.

If we commit a mortal sin and are sorry for it afterward, we must go to confession as soon as possible. We have broken our loving relationship with God and with the Church, and we must ask forgiveness. The Sacrament of Reconciliation then reconciles us, or brings us back, to God and to the Church. This is the only ordinary way that a mortal sin can be forgiven and we can be reconciled with God and the Church.

A less serious sin is called venial sin. Venial sin weakens, but does not break, our relationship with God. A venial sin cannot be committed by accident. We must know something is a sin, must *choose* to do it, then do it freely. Some examples of venial sin are talking back to our parents and being sassy and rude, or fighting with our brothers and sisters. Can you think of some others?

The Church encourages us to confess venial sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation because receiving forgiveness from God in this Sacrament helps us to do better and to follow Jesus more closely. Even though venial sin does not totally break our relationship with God, we want to stay away from it. We do not want to harm our loving relationship with God or others the least little bit.

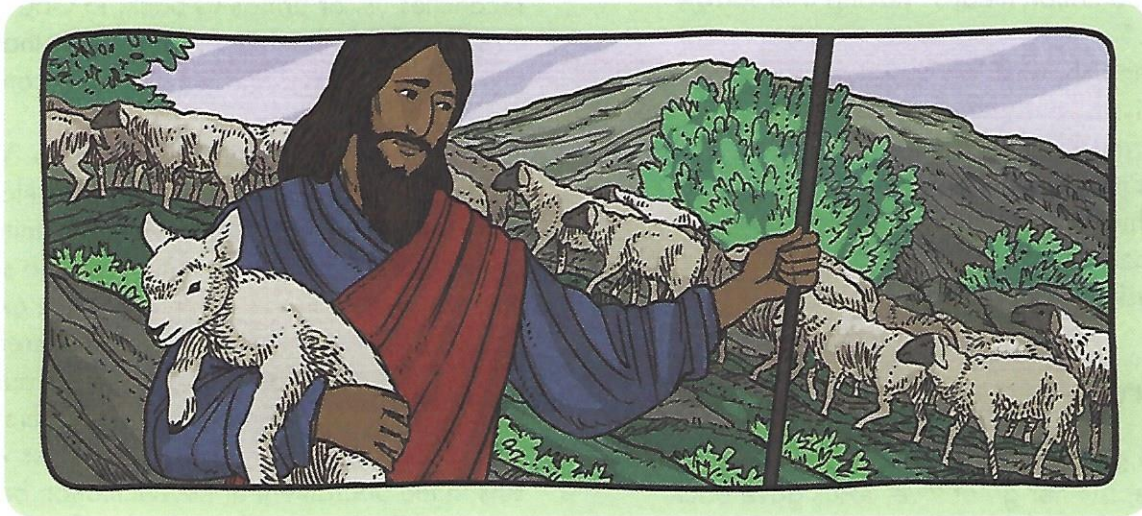
There are other ways venial sin can be forgiven. We can ask God to forgive us at the beginning of every Mass, in the Penitential Act. We can ask God to forgive us in our private prayer. The best way to receive God’s forgiveness is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, because the grace we receive from this Sacrament helps us to grow in God’s love.

## Things to Remember

- God will forgive our sins if we are truly sorry.
- We have more room for love when we are forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- There is a difference between mortal (serious) sin and venial (less serious) sin.
- We must confess mortal sins. It is also helpful to confess venial sins because, through the grace of the Sacrament, we grow in love.



# Chapter 6: Jesus Loves and Cares for Us



## Introduction

Do you know what a shepherd is? A shepherd is someone who cares for sheep. A shepherd feeds the sheep and takes care of them. A shepherd makes sure the sheep are always safe. Who are the shepherds in your life? Who takes care of you and keeps you safe?

We call Jesus the Good Shepherd. If Jesus is the Shepherd, then who are the sheep? We are! The whole Church is the flock of Jesus. He takes care of each of us and all of us.

## Scripture Story: Jesus Is the Good Shepherd

Let's listen to what Jesus says about being our Shepherd:

[Jesus said] "I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and

does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them." (John 10:11-15)

The Good Shepherd in this story is Jesus. Jesus takes good care of us.

Will Jesus run away when danger comes? No! He will stay with us and help us. And who is the wolf? The wolf is anyone who might harm us or lead us to do wrong. Jesus will chase the wolf away and stay with us. If we lose our way, the Good Shepherd will find us. The Good Shepherd gives his own life to save his sheep.

## The Priest Is God's Shepherd

We have many shepherds in our lives. We have many people who take care of us. We have parents, teachers, maybe grandparents, and other caregivers.

The priest who hears our confession in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is also a shepherd. He welcomes us with love and care. When we confess our sins to the priest, we are confessing



them to God. The priest is God's representative, God's shepherd. The priest will listen carefully to our confession and guide us on the right path. He will help us to follow Jesus. He will forgive us in the name of Jesus.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

Let's review the steps in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that we have learned so far:

- The priest greets us, and we make the Sign of the Cross with him.
- The priest may read a passage from Sacred Scripture.

The next thing we do is confess our sins. Then, after that, the priest may give us some words of advice or encouragement. He will then give us a **penance**. A penance is a prayer or good action that shows that we will do better. Doing a penance shows, in a small way, that we want to make up for what we have done.

Sometimes a penance is a prayer to pray. Sometimes it is an action to do. Sometimes it is a kind act to help someone we have hurt in some way. It is important to do our penance as soon as possible.

The priest will then invite us to pray an **Act of Contrition**. The Act of Contrition is a prayer that tells God we are sorry and will not sin again. Here is one Act of Contrition you can say:

My God,  
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.  
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do  
good,  
I have sinned against you whom I should love  
above all things.  
I firmly intend, with your help,  
to do penance, to sin no more,  
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.  
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.  
In his name, my God, have mercy. Amen.

The word *contrition* means "having true sorrow for sin and a desire to avoid sin in the future." This is how we return to God and mend our relationship with him. This is the process of conversion and repentance.

Our Act of Contrition in the Sacrament of Reconciliation tells God that we are sorry for our sins. In the Sacrament, we can say the Act of Contrition by heart or we can read it from a card. We should practice ahead of time so that we understand its words and can say it with our whole heart.

God wants us to be honest and sincere when we ask for forgiveness. That is why these four things are necessary for the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be complete:

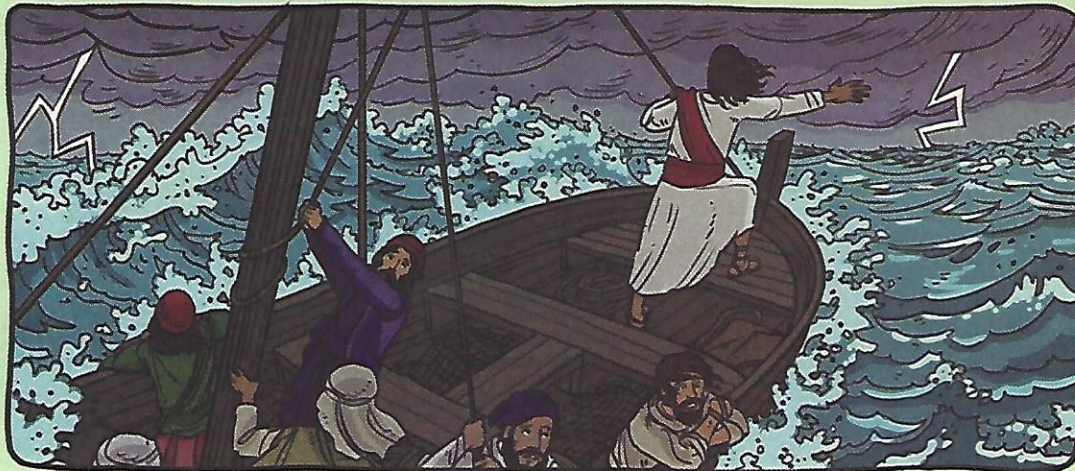
1. We must have true sorrow for our sins (contrition).
2. We must be honest in confessing our sins to the priest.
3. We must do our assigned penance and do our best to make up for the sin.
4. We receive the priest's absolution.

## Things to Remember

- Jesus loves and cares for us as a good shepherd cares for his sheep.
- Jesus seeks us out when we lose our way because of our sin. We can return to him through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- The priest is God's representative and forgives us in the name of Jesus.
- We express our sorrow for having sinned by praying an Act of Contrition during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



# Chapter 7: Jesus Helps Us Always



## Introduction

You may remember what a thunderstorm is like. The sky gets cloudy and dark. Then comes the crashing of thunder and bright flashes of lightning. The wind blows and the rain falls. Sometimes it is kind of scary. It is best to be inside during a thunderstorm!

Everyone is afraid sometimes. Even brave people are afraid at times, but they might not show it. We should be afraid of things that can hurt us, but we do not have to be frozen with fear. We can still make good and brave decisions because we know that God is always with us.

## Scripture Story: Jesus Helps Us in Times of Trouble

One time Jesus was in a thunderstorm with his disciples. They were out on a lake, in a boat. This is what happened:

Jesus got into a boat, and his disciples went with him. Suddenly a fierce storm hit the lake, and the boat was in danger of sinking. But Jesus was asleep. The disciples went to him and woke him up. "Save us, Lord!" they said.

"We are about to die!"

"Why are you so frightened?" Jesus answered. "What little faith you have!" Then he got up and ordered the winds and the waves to stop, and there was a great calm.

Everyone was amazed. "What kind of man is this?" they said. "Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:23–27)

Many of the disciples were fishermen. They knew how to handle boats. But this storm was too big and too powerful for them. The boat was about to sink!

The disciples called on Jesus to help them. Jesus calmed the storm. The disciples wondered, "What kind of man can do this?" We now know who Jesus is. Jesus is the Son of God, and he can calm every storm.

## Stormy Times

Sometimes we call hard or difficult times in our lives "stormy times." These stormy times can be caused by many things. Maybe it is a big change in your family. Maybe it is just the way you feel about something. Maybe you are having a hard time at school.



At those stormy times, we can do what the disciples did. We can call on Jesus for help. Jesus is our friend, who is with us in any trouble. He is our Savior, the Son of God, who came to save us from sin and death. He can save us from every evil, bringing us to eternal life and joy with him in Heaven.

Jesus is especially with us when we confess our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Jesus knows when we are going through hard times. He knows when we have made wrong choices. Jesus knows and, if we are sorry, he will forgive us and bring us peace.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

We are the disciples of Jesus. We are his close followers. He wants to take care of us and to save us, just as he saved his disciples in the storm. One of the ways Jesus saves us is by forgiving our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

After we confess our sins to the priest and are given a penance, we are given **absolution**. Absolution is the forgiveness of our sins, through the words and actions of the priest. The priest extends both hands, or just his right hand, as he prays the prayer of absolution. This prayer ends with the priest saying, "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 (number 46)." We answer, "Amen."

We then give thanks to God and the priest sends us forth, saying this or another similar prayer: "The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace" (*Rite of Penance*, number 47).

Pardon and peace are two great gifts of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We are given peace with God, ourselves, and others. Here are some other gifts of the Sacrament of Reconciliation:

- We are given grace, God's own life in us.
- We grow closer to God and to all God's people, the Church.
- We are given a peaceful **conscience**. (Our conscience is the knowledge we have within us of right and wrong.)

- We are given grace and strength to avoid sin and live as a Christian.
- We are able to repair some of the harm done to our relationships that our sin caused.
- We are helped to stay in friendship with God in this life so that we can be happy with him forever in Heaven.
- We are saved, if we have confessed a mortal sin, from being separated from God forever after we die.
- We are more ready than ever to follow Jesus as his disciples!

## Things to Remember

- Jesus is the Son of God who saves us in times of trouble.
- We are disciples of Jesus who call on his mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Our sins are forgiven and we are restored to peace when we receive absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



# Chapter 8: The Holy Spirit Teaches Us



## Introduction

We all need help at one time or another. We need people to help us learn new things. We need people who can help us with good advice and encouragement. Who helps you? You might think of your parents, your teachers, or your friends.

Jesus knows that we need help to follow him, and he sent the Holy Spirit to help us. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as our Helper. The Holy Spirit lives in us and helps us to be the best followers of Jesus we can be.

## Scripture Story: Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit to Help Us

Jesus was speaking with his disciples at the Last Supper, the night before he died. He knew that after he died and rose again, the disciples would need help to remember his teachings and to follow his way. So he promised to send the Holy Spirit to help them. Let's listen to what Jesus said to his disciples that night:

[Jesus said,] "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, who will stay with you forever. He is the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God. . . . You know him, because he remains with you and is in you. . . ."

"The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you.

"Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid." (John 14:16–17, 26–27)

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are all one God. They are the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

We first receive the Holy Spirit at Baptism. The Holy Spirit is our Helper. We cannot see him, but he works within us. The Holy Spirit helps us understand what Jesus taught, especially in the Bible. He helps us be better followers of Jesus by inspiring us to make good choices and giving us the strength to live out those choices. The Holy Spirit is at work in us each day. We can ask him for help and guidance.



## An Examination of Conscience

One of the things that the Holy Spirit helps us with when we prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation is our **examination of conscience**. Each of us has a conscience. This is another name for our inner knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. An examination of conscience helps us to think over what we have done since our last confession. It helps us remember any sins we have committed.

Before we make an examination of conscience, we pray to the Holy Spirit. We ask him to bring to our minds the things we have done to follow God's Law of Love and the things we have not done. We also ask him to help us to be truly sorry for our sins. You can find an examination of conscience in the *Rite of Reconciliation and Key Words* booklet.

## God's Treasure of Forgiveness

In this last lesson, it would be good to review some of the important things you have learned. Here are some questions to help you. The answers are given after the questions. You might want to ask someone else to ask the questions and check your answers!

1. What do we call God's life in us? (*grace*)
2. When we disobey God's Law, we call it what? (*sin*)
3. What is the Great Commandment that Jesus taught us? (*to love God and to love others as ourselves*)
4. When we fail to love fully, where can we ask for forgiveness? (*in the Sacrament of Reconciliation*)
5. Why did God give us rules? (*to keep us safe and happy*)
6. How is an accident different from a sin? (*An accident is something unexpected that you did not choose to happen. A sin is a deliberate choice.*)
7. What is the difference between a mortal sin and a venial sin? (*A mortal sin separates us from God and from the Church. A venial sin harms our relationship with God and*

*others. We must confess a mortal sin and ask forgiveness as soon as possible.*)

8. What prayer do we say in the Sacrament of Reconciliation to express our sorrow for our sins? (*an Act of Contrition*)
9. When can we call on Jesus for help? (*any time, but especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation*)
10. What happens when we receive absolution in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? (*Our sins are forgiven, our relationship with God and with the Church is strengthened or restored, and we are given the gift of peace.*)

## Things to Remember

- Jesus sends the Holy Spirit as our helper and guide.
- The Holy Spirit helps us examine our conscience and recall our sins.
- The Holy Spirit helps us remember important facts about the Sacrament of Reconciliation.