

## BACKGROUND NOTES FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

### About the Theme – The Sacrament of Reconciliation

To help us understand this Sacrament we need to know a little bit about a Sacrament. A sacrament is something that uses signs – usually a combination of words and actions, that have a message for those who are celebrating it; they give them a gift. This gift (which Catholics call grace) is given by Jesus whom they meet in the Sacrament, to strengthen their relationship with him. Through the Sacraments God helps Catholics grow in friendship with him.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is known by various names:

- **The Sacrament of Confession:** This emphasises the confession of sins to a priest.
- **The Sacrament of Forgiveness:** This emphasises the belief that through the priest's prayer of absolution God grants the forgiveness of sin.
- **The Sacrament of Conversion:** This emphasises the call to return to the Father from whom one has strayed through sin.
- **The Sacrament of Reconciliation:** This emphasis that through the Sacrament the penitent is reconciled to God, and to each other.
- **The Sacrament of Penance:** This is the official title given to the sacrament and emphasises the need for the penitent to do penance to repair any damage their sins may have done.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation the key signs are:

- The **words of absolution** which removes a person's sins.
- The **laying on of hands** which occurs many times during the sacraments to symbolise the giving of strength and power. When the sign is used in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, it reminds us of the times when Jesus laid his hands on the sick and healed them.

Through these signs Jesus heals the person of sin and reunites them with God and God's family – the Church.

This Sacrament was given by Jesus after the resurrection when he said to his apostles 'Whose sins you forgive they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain they are retained'. It was through these words that Jesus gave his Church the power to forgive sin and to reconcile sinners.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation brings those who receive it back to God, who forgives them and absolves them from their sins. During the Sacrament of Reconciliation the Church celebrates the gentle love and mercy of God which is illustrated in parables such as The Lost Sheep and The Prodigal Son. The Sacrament calls people to confess sins, seek forgiveness and be reconciled to God and to one another. It is a celebration because while Catholics are sorry for their sins, they know that, no matter how badly their friendship with God has been damaged, God still loves and heals the sinner.

For Catholics the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a source of joy and comfort. In the Sacrament they experience time and time again the extraordinary love of God.

## CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

Catholics prepare for the sacrament by thinking about what to say to the priest. They may pray to the Holy Spirit to give them strength, guidance and courage to make a sincere and honest confession. Then Catholics make an examination of conscience. Your conscience is the sense of right and wrong that is inside you, and helps you to make good choices. During an examination of conscience the penitent (the person receiving the sacrament) thinks about what they have done and the bad choices for which they are sorry. The bad choices which are done on purpose are sins – that is something that spoils or breaks friendship with God and with other people. Sin is anything that breaks God’s law of love.

### **The Sacrament**

The priest welcomes the penitent and greets him or her with kindness in the name of Jesus. They make the Sign of the Cross together. The priest invites the penitent to have trust in God. He may say *‘May God, who has enlightened every heart, help you to know your sins and trust in his mercy’*.

The priest might then read a short scripture passage which reminds the penitent of the mercy and gentleness of God who loves us and is always ready to forgive us.

The penitent confesses his/her sins – the bad choices they identified during the examination of conscience.

After the confession the priest may give a few words of advice and encouragement and then gives a penance which may be a prayer or a practical act of kindness. This is to give the penitent the opportunity to show the sincerity of their sorrow so that they may, in some small way, repair the damage his/her sins have done.

After a penance is given and accepted, the penitent expresses his/her sorrow. The person prays an act of sorrow, such as:

*“O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you and with the help of your grace I will not sin again.”*

This is one of the most important parts of the Sacrament. If the Sacrament of Reconciliation is to have an effect there must be true sorrow. To be truly sorry involves a determination to avoid repeating the wrong. It is not enough to say sorry – the penitent has to be willing to change and promise to make a new start. This is called **making a firm purpose of amendment**.

The priest then administers the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To do this he either places his hands on the penitent’s head or extends his right hand over the penitent’s head. The priest then prays the prayer of absolution which is the blessing that removes the person’s sins. The priest makes a Sign of the Cross over the penitent as he recites the final words of the Prayer of Absolution, “And I absolve you from all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” It is enough for the children to know that the sign of the cross reminds us how Jesus loved us so much he died for us. It reminds us of God’s love and forgiveness.

The penitent replies “Amen” to this prayer. The Sacrament ends with a very short prayer of thanks and dismissal which reminds the penitent of the great joy and comfort the Sacrament brings.

## Overview

Key Vocabulary	<u>YEAR 2</u> <u>Rules</u> <u>RECONCILIATION</u>
rules	<p>For the Christian Christ's rule of love of God and neighbour offers freedom and happiness. The exercise of the conscience enables the Christian to follow God's law and through love to express sorrow for wrong doing. The Sacrament of Reconciliation grants pardon and peace.</p> <p>Children will know and understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How rules can help at home and in school</li> <li>• The reasons for rules in the Christian family</li> </ul> <p><b>See the Background Notes for Parents and Carers</b></p> <p><b>Week 1:</b> Talk about how rules are necessary in sport, at home, in the classroom, out in the road etc. Tell the Rules of Sport story and ask the questions. What rules are we having to follow at the moment and why are they so important? Ask children to make a poster of rules using words and pictures and explain why each rule is important.</p> <p><b>Week 2:</b> Talk about God's rules that help us live well with ourselves and each other. Read God's People. Talk about which words or phrases you like best. Explain that when we deliberately break God's rules about loving that is called a 'sin'. Read Chloe's Story and discuss Chloe's actions and the need to be sorry and say sorry and make up in some ways for the hurt we have caused. Ask the children to imagine they are Chloe and to draw and write their account of the story, including how they felt, why what they did was wrong and how to make things better?</p> <p><b>Week 3:</b> Jesus taught us to always forgive people who hurt us. Introduce the idea of examining our consciences at the end of each day and that our consciences guide us to follow God's rules. Ask children to make a sorry prayer card and learn the prayer. Talk about the Sacrament of Reconciliation that helps Catholics, to examine or look at their consciences and ask for God's forgiveness. Ask children to add words to the speech bubbles in the picture of the Sacrament.</p> <p><b>Week 4:</b> Look at the key vocabulary for this topic and use it to remember all we have learnt about rules, God's rules for living well, how to say sorry to God and others when we break those rules and how to forgive others and what happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Celebrate with a simple Act of Worship</p>
care	
safe	
sorry	
forgive	
right	
wrong	
make up	
choices	
sin	
consequences	
examination of conscience	
Sacrament of	
Reconciliation	

## Year 2

**Year 2** children are introduced to the idea of sin and the importance of saying sorry and forgiveness. They are taught about and learn how to make an examination of conscience, say a simple prayer of sorrow and are introduced at a basic level to what happens during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Week 1:** Talk about how rules are necessary in sport, at home, in the classroom, out in the road etc. Tell the Rules of Sport story (see below) and ask the key questions. What rules are we having to follow at the moment and why are they so important? *Make a poster of rules using words and pictures. These could be rules for home or school or when outside. Explain why each rule is important.*

**Week 2:** God has rules to help us live well with ourselves and each other. Read God's People (see below). Talk about what it means and which words or phrases you like best. But sometimes we deliberately break important rules about loving. When something bad is done on purpose, that we know will upset or hurt someone, that is called a 'sin'. When we purposely don't do something that we know we should do and know that it will hurt or upset someone that, too, is a sin. A sin breaks our friendship with God and others and makes us feel bad. When we sin, God still loves us, just as our parents love us even when they do not like what we do. Read Chloe's Story (see below).

Talk about the choice Chloe made, what she did, why she did it and how she can make up for it. When we have upset and hurt someone we need to recognise and admit that. We need to be sorry and say sorry to them. We also need to make up in some ways for the hurt we have caused. Sometimes it is hard to forgive, but that is important too. We all have times when we want to be forgiven. *Imagine you are Chloe, draw and write your account of the story, including how you felt, why what you did was wrong and what should you do to make things better?*

**Week 3:** The friends of Jesus asked him about forgiving people who had hurt them. (See the story below) Peter thought it would be good to forgive them seven times and that would be quite hard to do. Peter was surprised when Jesus told him that you have to keep on forgiving, but he did say that the person who had done wrong should say sorry and really mean it.

At the end of each day, we should try to think over what has happened during the day, to thank God for all the good things that have happened and to remember if there have been times when we have not been very kind or loving. This is called an *examination of conscience*. Your conscience is the sense of right and wrong that is inside you and helps you to follow God's rules. *Make a prayer card using the sorry prayer (see below) and learn the prayer. Try to say it each night at bedtime.*

There is a Sacrament, a sign of God's love, that helps Catholics, to examine or look at their consciences and ask for God's forgiveness. It is called the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You think of the sins you are sorry about, the things you have done wrong on purpose. You ask God to forgive you, and tell the priest, who won't tell anyone else. The priest tells you your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name and asks you to make up for them by being kind or by saying a prayer. *Look at the picture below and add words to the speech bubbles.*

**Week 4:** Look at the key vocabulary for this topic and use it to remember all we have learnt about rules, God's rules for living well, how to say sorry to God and others when we break those rules and how to forgive others and what happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Celebrate with a simple Act of Worship (see below).

## Week 1 Rules of Sport

Faye asked her big brother David if he would play football with her. David explained that football has rules and that you have to keep the rules to play properly. Faye was only four so she did not understand about the rules of football. David explained simply that she had to try to get the ball and kick it into the net. David knew he had to be patient with Faye. Faye ran round making silly noises, kicked David and picked up the ball and ran up the garden path. When she came back David asked her whether she wanted to play with the other boys and girls in the park. "Yes, yes," replied Faye. "Right," said David, "well if you are going to play with others you have to learn some rules or no one will want to play with you."

David told Faye she must kick the ball and not pick it up, she was to keep on the pitch and not hurt other players. Faye understood and tried hard when she and David practised. The next week Faye was joining in the game with other boys and girls in the park. She really enjoyed herself. David was proud of her.

- Q What new rules did Faye learn?
- Q Why were they important?
- Q What do you think of David?
- Q What made Faye happy?
- Q What would have happened if Faye had not followed the rules when she played with the others?

# Different gifts



## God's people (based on Colossians 3:10-17)

**Y**ou are created by God, to be like God.  
You are God's people, his saints. God loves you.  
You should be kind and gentle, and  
patient and forgiving, and loving like God.  
You are all different.  
You come from different places,  
speak in different ways, have different customs.  
But the important thing is  
that you are God's children.  
So love one another, help one another,  
be at peace with one another,  
and let the love of Jesus  
fill your hearts and minds.



# God's people

- Q Which words do you like best and why?
- Q Which things are hardest and why?
- Q What does St Paul say is important?
- Q How do you think you feel when you are at peace and when the love of Jesus fills your mind?

## Week 2 Chloe and Phoebe



Chloe and Phoebe were sisters, Chloe was seven and Phoebe was three. Usually they were great friends, but one day Chloe was in a bad temper because mum had told her off for not letting Phoebe play with her toys.

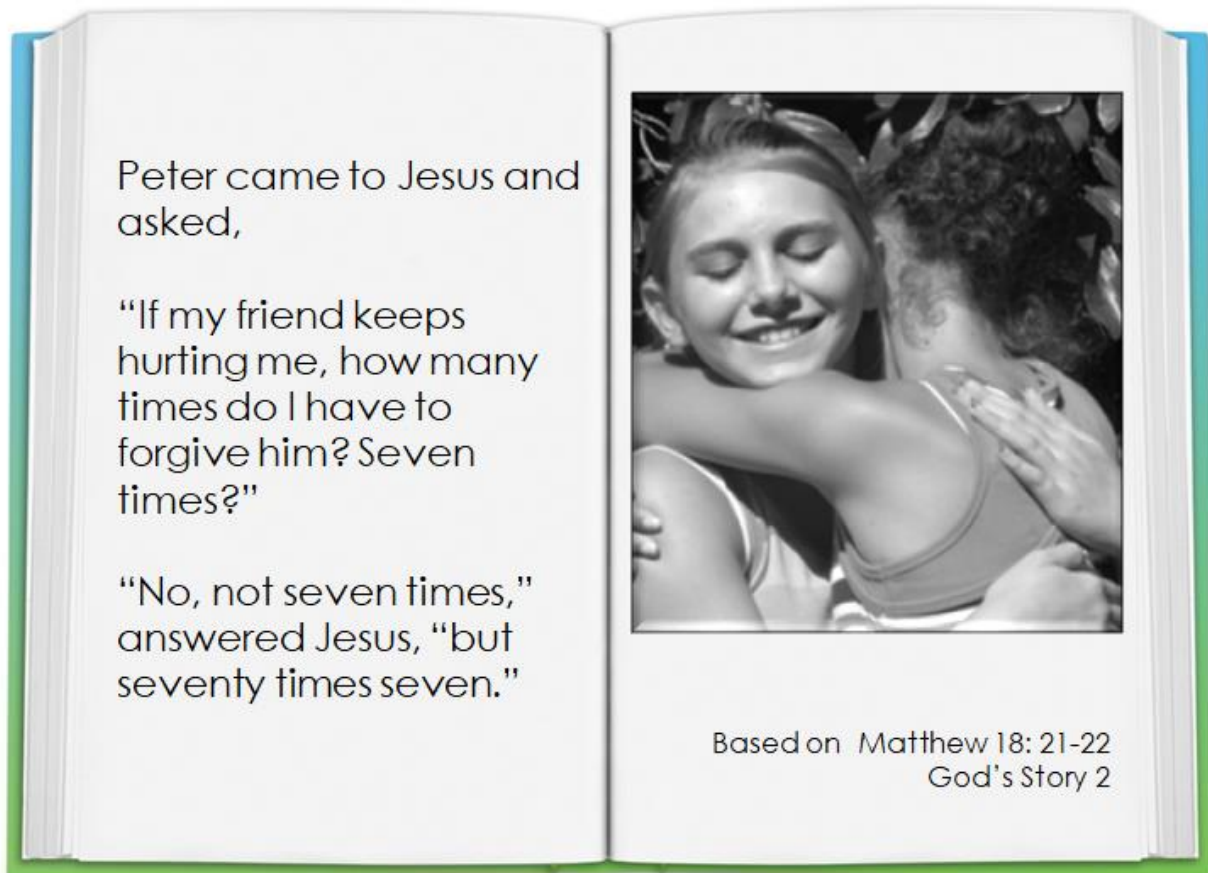
‘Right’ thought Chloe, ‘I’ll get my own back.’ so she got a felt tip and she wrote Phoebe’s name on the back door. ‘Aha,’ she thought, ‘now Phoebe will get into trouble’.

Phoebe.  
x

When mum saw it she was not very pleased and was about to call Phoebe, when she suddenly realised of course Phoebe was too young to write her name.

She knew who had done this. She still loved Chloe but was very disappointed that she had done something naughty.

## Week 3



Peter came to Jesus and asked,

“If my friend keeps hurting me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?”

“No, not seven times,” answered Jesus, “but seventy times seven.”



Based on Matthew 18: 21-22  
God's Story 2

**Teaching Point:** Seventy times seven is a way of saying always.

- Q How do you think Peter felt when he heard what Jesus had to say?
- Q How do you make up with others after something has gone wrong?
- Q How do you feel when you realise you have to keep forgiving?



### Week 3 A Prayer of Sorrow

God, Our Father,  
thank you for loving me.  
I am sorry for the times I have  
not shown love to others.  
Help me always to live like Jesus.  
Amen



Come and See

### Week 3 The Sacrament of Reconciliation



- Q What is good to do at the end of the day and why?
- Q How do you think someone feels who has celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation?
- Q What does the priest tell you in this Sacrament?
- Q If you were a priest, what kind of things would you ask someone to do to make things right?
- Q How can you show you are really sorry?

## Week 4

### Act of Worship

#### Year 2

#### RULES

### “The reason for rules in the Christian family”

#### Gathering

#### Together

You might like to set up a focal table:

Table with a purple cloth and candle

Bible if possible

Any work done on the topic

We begin our liturgy together by lighting our candle and remembering that God is with us.....

We gather together **‘In the name of the Father...**

We have been thinking about how rules keep ourselves and others safe. We always need rules to help us live peacefully together, showing consideration for others, rather than always looking out for ourselves. Rules help everyone to make life more enjoyable and safer.

Rules are there to protect us all, and to make our lives more pleasant. We have school and classroom rules to ensure that we think of others, as well as of ourselves. They help us to behave more responsibly. Here are some rules we know .....

#### The Word of God

Let us listen to a letter St Paul wrote to Christians living in Colossae. He tells them they are God’s people and reminds them of some rules to help them live well with each other.

A reading from St Paul’s Letter to the Colossians

You are created by God, to be like God.  
You are God’s people, his saints. God loves you.  
You should be kind and gentle, and  
patient and forgiving, and loving like God.  
You are all different.  
You come from different places,  
speak in different ways, have different customs.  
But the important thing is  
that you are God’s children.  
So love one another, help one another,  
be at peace with one another,  
and let the love of Jesus  
fill your hearts and minds.



The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Response to  
the Word**

It is important every day to think about if you have followed good rules and made good choices. This is called an *Examination of conscience*.

Your conscience is the sense of right and wrong that is inside you, and helps you to make good choices.

There is a very special Sacrament, a sign of God's love that helps Catholics to examine their consciences and ask God's forgiveness for the times they have made bad choices. It is called the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You think of the sins you are sorry about, the things you have done wrong on purpose, you ask God to forgive you, and tell the priest, who keeps it a secret and won't tell anyone. The priest tells you your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name and asks you to make up for them by being kind and by saying a sorry prayer.

Let's say a sorry prayer together now for all the times we have broken rules for living and to ask God to help us to live like Jesus.

**God, Our Father, thank you for loving me.**

**I am sorry for the times I have not shown love to others.**

**Help me always to live like Jesus. Amen.**

**Going**

For the next week we will try to remember to pray our sorry prayer every evening before we go to bed. We will say sorry for the times during the day we did something wrong on purpose or hurt and upset others.

In John's gospel Jesus says, '*My commandment is this; love one another, just as I love you.*' (John 15: 12). Jesus has one rule, love God and one another.

When we go to Mass, just after we have all said the Our Father we give each other a Sign of Peace to show we are or want to be friends with one another. Let us offer each other the 'Sign of Peace'.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

