

Confirmation 2016 Sacrament of Reconciliation

These notes are intended to help teachers prepare for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation with Confirmation Candidates and should be used in conjunction with the accompanying outline of the sacramental celebration.

CONSIDER:

Explore with the children the meanings of the word burden. Can they think of other words that mean burden?

That a burden can be a physical load like their school bags, the shopping, the fuel they might bring in for the fire at home but it can also be something that is harder to see, it might be an illness, a feeling of sadness, a worry about something, a sense of not being good enough, knowing that we have done something that was not right.....

What kind of burdens do people carry every day?

DISCUSS

Our faith tells us that we don't have to carry these burdens alone. God walks each step with us in mercy and love. In the Gospel of St Matthew, Jesus issues an invitation

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' (Mt 11:28-30)

This invitation is to lay down your burden, to give it to God. One of the ways that we can do this is by celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This sacrament gives us the space to think about our burdens, to reflect on what is weighing us down and to tell God about it, to give those burdens away.

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION AS PREPARATION FOR CONFIRMATION.

One of the steps on our journey to get ready to celebrate Confirmation is to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The reason we do this is so that on the day of Confirmation we know that we are as ready as we can possibly be to receive all the gifts that the Holy Spirit will give us.

It might be a while since children have celebrated this sacrament and so it is good to spend a bit of time helping them prepare for it. This will include revising the following prayers and the commandments used in the Examination of Conscience.

CONFITEOR

I confess to almighty God,
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done,
and in what I have failed to do;
through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary, ever Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

ACT OF SORROW

O my God,
I thank you for loving me.
I am sorry for all my sins,
for not loving others and not loving you.
Help me to live like Jesus and not to sin again. Amen

REVISE UNDERSTANDING AND SEQUENCE

Ask the children what they know about this sacrament. Remind them that this is a special year in the Church, it's a Jubilee Year of Mercy and the theme for Confirmation is '*Blessed are the Merciful...they shall have mercy shown them.*' (Mt 5:7)

NOTE FOR TEACHER: *If you would like to explore the theme of mercy further with the children and have not yet used the resources for Catholic Schools Week you will find plenty of options in both the 3rd/4th and 5th/6th class resources on www.kandle.ie*

Using the text for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be used make sure that the children know what happens. Remind them that they will pray the Confiteor together before going to the priest to confess. They can use the following or similar words to begin their confession:

- Bless me Father for I have sinned.....
- Bless me Father for I have not been as good as I can be.....
- Bless me Father for I have not lived the way you want me to.....

They then tell the priest about the things that burden them or weigh them down.

They then pray the Act of Sorrow and the priest gives them absolution.

MOUNTAIN OF MERCY BACKGROUND

This Lent many of our churches will have a Mountain of Mercy Prayer Space. The Reconciliation Service provided suggests the option for using this prayer space or creating one if it is not present. *Please note that this concept of a mountain of mercy does not have to be confined to Lent.*

These spaces offer the opportunity to take away a stone, or to choose a stone from another place such as a garden or favourite walk, and carry it with you while reflecting on the burdens that you carry, the places where you need God's mercy. The invitation is to return to the church and place your burden on the Mountain of Mercy when you are ready to let it go.

MOUNTAIN OF MERCY WITH THE CHILDREN

A few days before the celebration of the Sacrament with the children. You might consider reading quietly through the Examination of Conscience in the Reconciliation Service (based on 8 of the Ten Commandments) and then taking the children on a quiet walk during which they can think about what they have heard and pick up a stone to bring to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As they walk invite them to pray and reflect on where in their lives they are in need of God's mercy.

Alternatively the children can be given a stone as they enter the church before the celebration of the sacrament. As you will see from the accompanying text there are two options offered as to how the children place their individual stones on the Mountain of Mercy Prayer Space.

CONCLUDING ACTIVITY AFTER THE CELEBRATION OF RECONCILIATION IS OVER

Remind the children that this sacrament is how they experience the mercy of God and that their challenge is to 'be merciful as God is merciful'. How will they now show mercy to others? How will they be merciful?