



RECONCILIATION SERVICE FOR CONFIRMATION CANDIDATES & FAMILIES

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

YOU WILL NEED:

- A small pebble/stone for everyone who will be present

Please Notes:

- If this Reconciliation Service is taking place during Lent and your parish is participating in the ***Diocesan Lay your Burdens Down on the Mountain of Mercy Lenten Initiative*** then the stones can be placed on the Mountain of Mercy already in place in the church.
- If it is taking place outside of the Lenten Season then you will need to create a space where the stones can be left by the priests once the individual confessions have concluded.
- Alternatively if there is space to create a Mountain of Mercy someplace accessible to all who wish to celebrate the sacrament individuals could be invited to place their own stones on the Mountain of Mercy before returning to the seats.

GATHERING

As people come into the church they are invited to take a stone and keep it with them throughout the service.

OPENING HYMN:

Gather Round (*Alive-O₈ p288*) or
My Shepherd is the Lord (*Alive-O₇ p308*)

SIGN OF THE CROSS & GREETING

The mercy of the Father, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And with your spirit.**

WORDS OF WELCOME

Welcome to all who are preparing for Confirmation and their families. We are here to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of our journey to get ready for Confirmation. The love of God has gathered us together and so we can rejoice and be glad.

We seek forgiveness in preparation for Confirmation so that we can stand before God and know that we are as ready as we can be to welcome the gifts of his Holy Spirit into our lives. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy we are particularly conscious of God's abounding mercy for all his children. When we come seeking forgiveness, we are welcoming the mercy of God into our lives; this is a true encounter with God's love, an encounter that we in turn can carry with us into our lives where we are called to be merciful like our Father. Let us prepare ourselves to meet the merciful embrace of God who is waiting for us, who is our source of hope and peace...

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God,
You are a God of compassion and love
we turn to you hoping in your great mercy,
that you would grant us your forgiveness and so lift the burden of sin from our lives.
We are sorry for all our sins and now lay them down before your mercy.
Heal us that we may receive your grace and so go and bring your love to our homes and world, as servants of your mercy.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING: EZEKIEL 36: 26-28

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Pause

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 106

Response: *Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his love has no end.*

He changes desert into streams,
 thirsty ground into springs of water.
There he settles the hungry
 and they build a city to dwell in.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his love has no end.

They sow fields and plant their vines;
 these yield crops for the harvest.
He blesses them; they grow in numbers.
 He does not let their herds decrease.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his love has no end.

But he raises the needy from distress;
 makes families numerous as a flock.

The upright see it and rejoice
but all who do wrong are silenced.

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his love has no end.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

GOSPEL: LUKE 6:36-38

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

HOMILY

RITE OF RECONCILIATION

REFLECTION/EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

(The following examination draws on an examen offered by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and is adapted from the Diocesan Lenten Jubilee Reconciliation Service)

PRIEST CELEBRANT: My brothers and sisters, before we approach to receive God's mercy and forgiveness let us reflect on our lives and acknowledge those areas of our lives that are burdened and weighed down by the times that we have not lived and loved as we know God wants us to, those times when we have sinned ...as we do so, I invite you take up your stone and hold it in the palm of your hand.

READER 1: As you hold your stone and look upon it, notice how it feels in your palm...it may be smooth, it may feel rough in parts... notice its colours and textures. This stone is lifeless, at its very core, its heart, is hardness; right now it offers us nothing but its weight. Sin is like that. It turns our heart into stone, offering us nothing but the burden of its consequences. But God does not abandon us to the consequences of our sins. God is a God of mercy and compassion who turns and says to each one of us 'let us talk this over', who says to us 'A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you'... 'you shall be my people, and I will be your God.'

And so we examine our lives in the light of the Commandments*, our guide for Christian living...

READER 2:

I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange God's before me. (Pause)

Are there people, possessions and events that I believe are more important than you, my God? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

READER 1:

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain. (Pause)

Do I use my words to put down God, the Church or people? Do I fail to speak up for what I believe in when I hear God, the Church or those who work for God in the world criticised unfairly? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

READER 2:

Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day. (Pause)

Do I do my very best go to Mass every Sunday and on Holy Days of Obligation? Do I look for ways to spend time with family or in service of others on Sunday? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

READER 1:

Honour your father and mother. (Pause)

Do I show my parents due respect? Do I try to maintain good communication with my parents where possible? Do I criticize them for lacking skills I think they should have? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

READER 2:

You shall not kill. (Pause)

Have I participated in the killing of another person's joy, talent or good name through my words, actions, on social media or by bullying? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

READER 1:

You shall not steal. (Pause)

Have I taken or wasted time or resources that belonged to another? Have I added to the environmental damage of the earth at the cost to future generations? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

READER 2:

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. (Pause)

Have I gossiped, told lies or embellished stories at the expense of another? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

READER 1:

You shall not covet your neighbour's goods. (Pause)

Am I content with my own means and needs, or do I compare myself to others unnecessarily? (Pause)

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Have mercy on us.**

Lamb of God you take away the sins of the world. **All: Grant us peace.**

GENERAL CONFESSION OF SINS

The Priest Celebrant invites the assembly to kneel (if not already doing so) and to pray together,

I confess to Almighty God...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRIEST CELEBRANT: Assured of God's mercy and love, we stand and join in prayer to God the Father...

Our Father...

Individual Confession and Absolution

PRIEST CELEBRANT: I invite my brother priests to take their places.

As you come forward to receive the grace of this sacrament you are invited to bring your stone with you and place it in the basket (*or place it on the Mountain of Mercy in the prayer Space*) before returning to your place.

(During this time music ministers can lead the assembly in reflective music – both instrumental and sung, for example. Taize Music – "Bless the Lord My Soul"...as well as the official Jubilee Hymn – the refrain of the Jubilee Hymn has worked very well used in a Taize style at the beginning and end of this element of the celebration of reconciliation...)

If the stones have been placed in baskets the ordained ministers of the sacrament bring their baskets to the Lenten space and pour their stones onto the growing mountain of God's mercy. They then return to their seats

COMMUNAL PENANCE – JUBILEE PRAYER

This is an adaptation of the Jubilee Prayer of Mercy. It might be included in the participation sheet for the congregation or, where relevant, on a projector screen.

Lord Jesus Christ,

you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that who
ever sees you sees Him.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy,
you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Priest Celebrant: Gracious God,

your mercy is boundless
and we cannot thank you enough for this great gift you shower on us.
Give us grace to truly appreciate your merciful deeds in our lives
and through the Holy Spirit transform our hearts
into wells of mercy and forgiveness, making us merciful like the Father.
Teach us to work together for peace and reconciliation in our lives
that we may come to know the blessings of the merciful.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **AMEN.**

FINAL BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

PRIEST CELEBRANT: The Lord be with you. **And also with your spirit.**
May almighty God bless you...
Brothers and sisters, be merciful,
just as your heavenly Father is merciful. Go in peace.

CLOSING HYMN (*if desired*) Christ be our Light

** As this celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is primarily for the candidates preparing for Confirmation I have omitted Commandments 6 and 9.*