

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 deepen and develop 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.

Overview

Key Vocabulary	<u>YEAR 1</u> <u>Being Sorry</u> <u>RECONCILIATION</u>
choice happy sad disappointed sorry forgive rules wrong right feeling love Sign of Peace Peace be with you	<p>For Christians it is important to make choices in the light of our belief in a loving God. There are times when we need to acknowledge our sorrow for making wrong choices. The Church offers the Sacrament of Reconciliation which celebrates God’s unconditional love for us.</p> <p>Children know and understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We can make choices – sometimes we choose well, and sometimes wrongly• God helps us to choose well and to be sorry. God forgives us <p>See Background Notes for Parents and Carers</p> <p>Week 1: Tell a story about making a wrong choice. Talk about the times we make good choices – good for others and for ourselves – and times we make wrong choices which make others and ourselves unhappy. Discuss how it is sometimes hard to say sorry when you have made a wrong choice – and sometimes it can be hard to forgive someone else when their choice hurts you. Ask children to label the pictures as good or bad choices and why. Invite children to draw their own good choice/bad choice picture and tell the story of what is happening.</p> <p>Week 2: Read the stories of Levi and of Zacchaeus. Discuss the key questions for each story. Think about how Levi and Zacchaeus changed and said sorry? Ask children to write a letter as if they were Levi or Zacchaeus saying sorry to Jesus for the wrong choices they made.</p> <p>Week 3: Talk about the meaning of ‘sorry’ and ‘forgive’. Invite children to make a prayer card with a sorry prayer to keep it in their bedroom and read it at night. Read <i>A New Rule</i> based on John 13:34-35 about a new rule Jesus gave us. Ask children to write ways that they can keep this rule inside and around the circle of friends.</p> <p>Week 4: Look at the key vocabulary for this topic and use it to remember all we have learnt about making the right choices, saying sorry when we make the wrong choice and how we can be happy when we follow Jesus rule to love each other. Celebrate with a simple Act of Worship.</p>

Year 1

In **Year 1** the foundations for understanding the Sacrament of Reconciliation are laid. The children are not yet introduced to the Sacrament but are helped to understand more fully the difference between right and wrong, the importance of saying sorry and how we can make up and make a fresh start with our friends.

Week 1: Tell a children's story about making a wrong choice (there are several on Youtube). What happens as a consequence? Talk about the situations where we have to choose what to do and how sometimes we make good choices – good for others and for ourselves – and sometimes we make wrong choices which make others and ourselves unhappy. Talk about how it is sometimes hard to say sorry when you have made a wrong choice – and sometimes it can be hard to forgive someone else when their choice hurts you. *Look at the pictures below – can you say which pictures show good choices and why? Try to draw your own good choice/bad choice picture and tell the story of what is happening in your picture.*

Week 2: Jesus looked for people who had made wrong choices and gave them the chance to say sorry. Here are the stories of two people Jesus met. Tell the story of Levi (see below). Tell the story of Zaccheus (see below). Discuss the key questions for each story. Think about the stories of Levi and Zacchaeus. Do you think they found it easy to change their ways and to be sorry? It is not easy to do this by ourselves, but God is there to help us, just as Jesus helped Levi and Zacchaeus. *Write a letter as if you were Levi or Zacchaeus saying sorry to Jesus for the wrong choices you made.*

Week 3: What do 'sorry' and 'forgive' mean? These are more than just words – we need to *mean* what we say. It may take a little time before we understand that what we have done has made others and ourselves unhappy. It is good at the end of the day to stop and think about what has happened during the day. Sometimes we quarrel with each other and have arguments, it is important to say sorry and to forgive others when they say sorry to us. God always forgives us when we are sorry.

Make a prayer card with this sorry prayer and keep it in your bedroom. Read it at night:
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.

Read *A New Rule* based on John 13:34-35 (see below). In John's gospel, we hear about a new rule Jesus gave us. It is a rule which Jesus always kept. Jesus is always there to help us. *Inside and around the circle of friends write ways that we can keep this rule, for example by helping others.*

Week 4: Look at the key vocabulary for this topic and use it to remember all we have learnt about making the right choices, saying sorry when we make the wrong choice and how we can be happy when we follow Jesus rule to love each other. Celebrate with a simple Act of Worship (see below).

Week 1 Choices

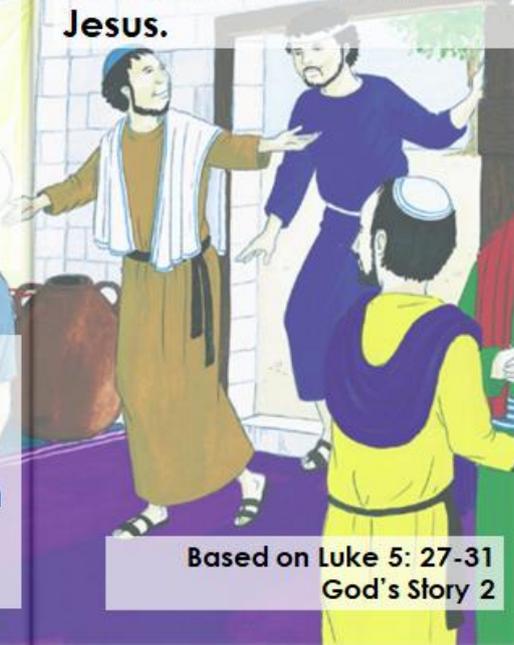


Week 2 The story of Levi

One day Jesus saw Levi the tax collector sitting at his table collecting people's taxes. Jesus knew Levi had not always been honest, but still he asked him to follow his way.

Levi was really pleased at Jesus' invitation and he got up and said: 'Come to my house I am going to have a big party to celebrate.'

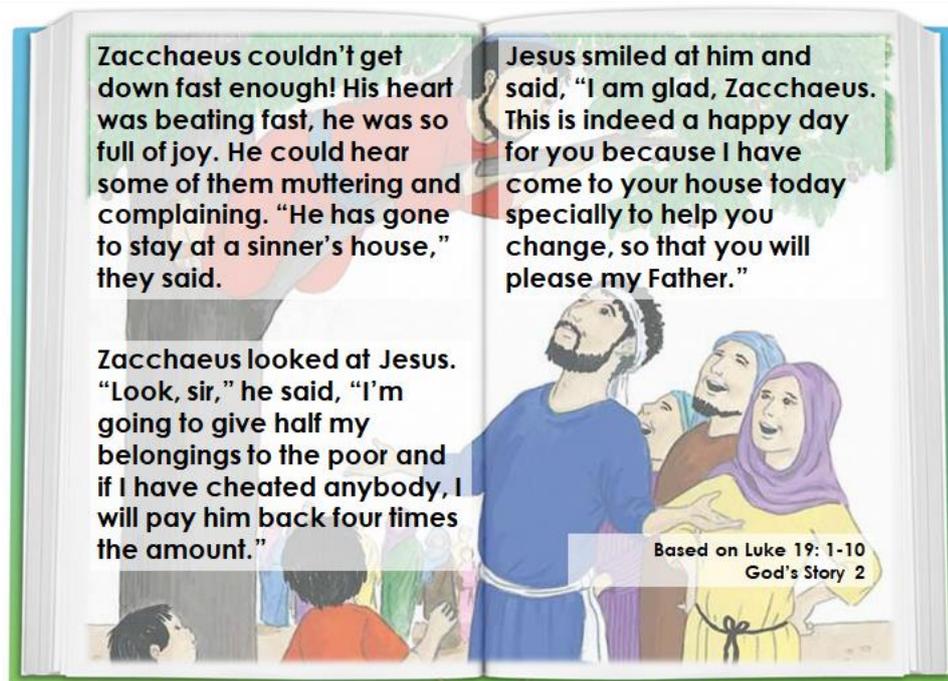
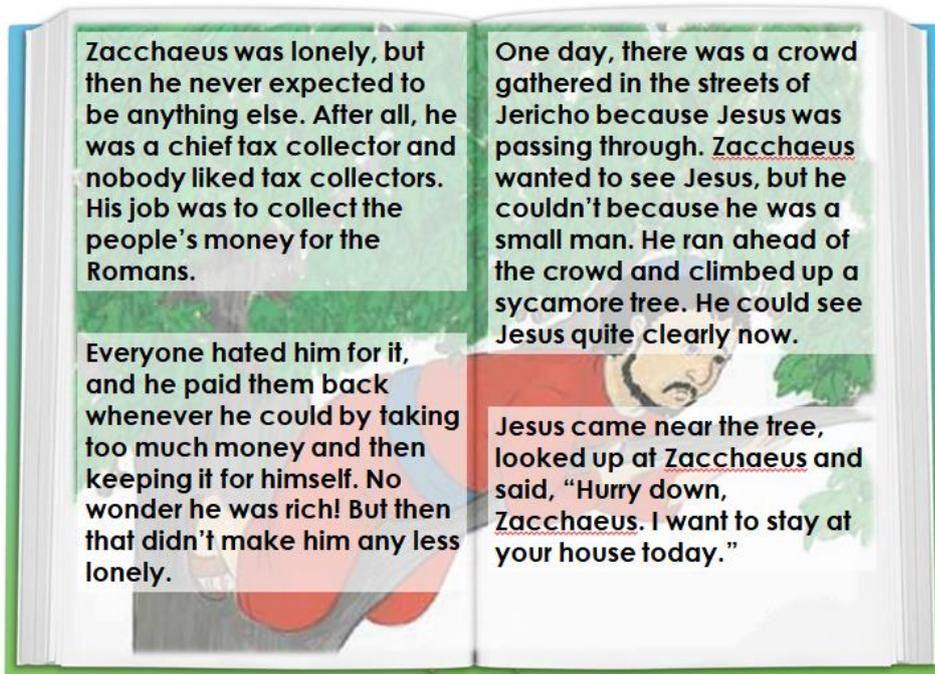
Levi changed his ways and became a friend of Jesus.



Based on Luke 5: 27-31
God's Story 2

- Q What was Levi's job?
- Q What wrong choice did he make?
- Q What was Levi's answer to Jesus' invitation to follow him?
- Q What invitation did Levi give to Jesus?
- Q How do you think Levi changed?

Week 2 The story of Zacchaeus



- Q What wrong choices did Zacchaeus make?
- Q Why do you think he wanted to see Jesus?
- Q How did Zacchaeus feel when Jesus told him that he was coming to his house?
- Q Why did the people complain?
- Q How did Zacchaeus show he was sorry for his wrong choices?
- Q Why was it a happy day for Zacchaeus?

Week 3 A Sorry Prayer to Learn

*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.*

A New Rule



Jesus said, "I'm going to give you a new rule.

It's this: Love one another.

I love each one of you, and I want you to love each other.

When you're all happy together, everyone will know that you love one another, and that you are my friends." (based on John 13:34-35)

- Q How did Jesus show his love for all the people he met?
- Q What would happen if we all kept Jesus' new rule - what would the world be like?
- Q How do you think the world would be a happier place?
- Q How can we try to be more like Jesus?
- Q What rules could we have for ourselves that would make others happy?



Week 4
Act of Worship
Year 1
BEING SORRY



“God helps us to choose well and be sorry. God forgives us.”

Gathering

Together

You might like to set up a focal table:

Table with candle and purple cloth

Bible if possible

Any work done on the topic

We begin our liturgy on ‘Being Sorry’ by lighting our candle and remembering that God is always with us and loves us no matter what we do.....

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

We have been thinking about: how to make good choices; how it is sometimes hard to say sorry when you have made a wrong choice; how sometimes it can be hard to forgive someone else when their choice hurts you and how we are glad when others forgive us.

**The Word
of God**

Jesus was gathering a group of people to help him spread the Good News. He did not choose people who did nothing wrong but those who would follow him faithfully and would be sorry for what they had done. Zacchaeus the tax collector was one of those people.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke

Glory to You, O Lord

(We make the sign of the cross on our forehead, lips and heart, in preparation to hear the Good News of the Gospel. We make the sign of the cross on our foreheads to show we believe in God’s Word, on our lips to show we try to speak God’s Word to others, and on our hearts to show we love God’s Word and will try to live a good life).

Zacchaeus was lonely, but then he never expected to be anything else. After all, he was a chief tax collector and nobody liked tax collectors. His job was to collect the people’s money for the Romans. Everyone hated him for it, and he paid them back whenever he could by taking too much money and then keeping it for himself. No wonder he was rich! But then that didn’t make him any less lonely. One day, there was a crowd gathered in the streets of Jericho because Jesus was passing through. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he couldn’t because he was a small man. He ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up a sycamore tree. He could see Jesus quite clearly now. Jesus came near the tree, looked up at Zacchaeus and said,
“Hurry down, Zacchaeus. I want to stay at your house today.”
Zacchaeus couldn’t get down fast enough! His heart was beating fast, he was so full of joy. He could hear some of them muttering and complaining.
“He has gone to stay at a sinner’s house,” they said.
Zacchaeus looked at Jesus.

“Look, sir,” he said, “I’m going to give half my belongings to the poor and if I have cheated anybody, I will pay him back four times the amount.”

Jesus smiled at him and said,

“I am glad, Zacchaeus. This is indeed a happy day for you because I have come to your house today specially to help you change, so that you will please my Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ

**Response to
the Word**

When we make wrong choices like Zacchaeus did, we need to show that we are sorry in some way. Let us pray quietly for a moment and during our prayer perhaps you would like to make a silent promise to God - that next time you choose to do the wrong thing, you will say sorry to the people you hurt and say sorry to God.

**Going
Forth**

When you go to bed tonight try to think about the good things that have happened and say, ‘Thank you!’ to God for them. Then think about the wrong choices you have made and say ‘Sorry!’

Now we will end our liturgy by praying a sorry prayer together.

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.

