

## *Respect* LIFE WEEK

### Jesus Invites Us to Forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation

#### A Lesson on Forgiveness and God's Love

#### Grades 7-9

**Goal:** Students will recognize that sorrow for sinning should be accompanied by self-forgiveness and a willingness to change behavior. Students will learn that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a sacrament of healing, in which Jesus is seeking renewed relationship with us.

### ***Diving into Dignity***

What is human dignity?

Human dignity is the universal, intrinsic and inalienable value of human persons. Every person has dignity and it can never be taken away. Dignity is unique to us as humans. We'll be learning more about human dignity during our lessons this week and how it affects the way we treat ourselves and others.

*Based on the Human Dignity Curriculum (World Youth Alliance)*

**Lesson:** Each of us is in need of forgiveness because we have all sinned. Sin is the choice to do what we know is wrong. Sin wounds our relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves. Perhaps you've had the experience of hurting someone you love and feeling totally helpless to "make things better." We can't go back into the past and change our actions. So, what can we do? We need a Savior! We need someone who can forgive our sins and bring us back into relationship with God and with others. This is why Jesus came and died on the Cross for us. Sin doesn't have the last word! This lesson will explore how we can receive forgiveness and rejoice in it!

**Watch:** [Lump](#)

**Discussion:**

Can you relate to that feeling of the little boy, hiding under the covers? Why do we feel the need to hide when we've done something wrong? (*Think of Adam and Eve hiding from God after they ate the forbidden fruit*).

Why do we need God's forgiveness?

What does the father in the video's response teach us about God's love?

Is there anything that we can ever do that is so bad that God cannot forgive it?

No matter what we do, we can always turn back to God if we are truly sorry for our sins, confess them, and ask for God's forgiveness. As Catholics, we seek God's forgiveness for our wrong choices in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The gift of the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to restore our union with God. The graces we receive through the Sacrament of Penance make us stronger in our faith commitment to try NOT to sin again, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, and to allow his grace to transform us so we don't choose what is wrong over what is right.

**Watch:**

["I Confess"](#)

[The Power of Confession](#)

**Discussion:**

Why is it sometimes difficult to go to Confession? Why do you think some people are afraid to go to confession?

What would you say to encourage someone to go to Confession?

Why is it important to confess to a priest instead of just "going to God directly?" – this is the way Jesus established the Sacrament, the priest acts "in persona Christi" (in the person of Christ) and enables us to hear and know definitively that our sins have been forgiven by God!!

**Read:** [The Permanent Wounds of Mercy](#)

Jesus knows all of our sins and sufferings, all of our wounds. He doesn't want to just sweep them away and "forget" them, He wants to make them glorious, beautiful signs of His grace and His love for you. When we let Him touch our wounds, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, they are transformed. He is so tender and loving, we never have to be afraid to be totally honest with Him.

**Activity:** Lead the students through an examination of conscience (copy and paste the following link in browser to access):

<https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/1161/documents/2018/5/An%20Examination%20of%20Conscience%20for%20Middle%20School%20Using%20the%2010%20Commandments.pdf>

Encourage the students to close their eyes as you read the questions and answer silently in their hearts. When you have finished, encourage them to bring these sins to the Merciful Jesus in Confession. Try to arrange for a priest to be available to hear the students' confessions that day or later that week.

**Showing Mercy to Others:**

Once we have experienced the mercy of Jesus, we want to extend it to others. Remember, nothing is beyond God's mercy - "there is no mess that God cannot clean up!" The rest of this week will explore areas where we need God's help and forgiveness. When we forgive others, we become like God and help to show His face to the world.

**Watch:** ["Signs of Forgiveness"](#)

**Closing Prayer:**

[The Litany of Mercy](#) (closing prayer)

*Lesson adapted from the plans on the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Office of Life, Justice and Peace website*