Forgiveness and Healing

In this unit students explore the concepts of forgiving and healing through the sacrament of Reconciliation. They explore the different Rites of Reconciliation celebrated in the Catholic Church. They examine the four stages of reconciling a friendship. Students are invited to write their own prayers of forgiveness and healing and to express their new learnings in a display for the school.

DOCTRINAL FOCUS

In planning to teach this unit the following references from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church are recommended:

#2227 Each and every one should be generous and tireless in forgiving one another for offences, quarrels, injustices, and neglect. Mutual affection suggests this. The charity of Christ demands it.

#1486 The forgiveness of sins committed after baptism is conferred by a particular sacrament called the sacrament of Conversion, Confession, Penance, or Reconciliation.
(See Compendium #200 How are sins remitted?)

#982 There is no offence, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. ‘There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest. Christ, who died for all men, desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin’.
(See Compendium #201 Why does the Church have the power to forgive sins?)

#1443 During his public life Jesus not only forgave sins, but also made plain the effect of this forgiveness: he reintegrated forgiven sinners to the community of the People of God from which sin had alienated or even excluded them. A remarkable sign of this is the fact that Jesus receives sinners at his table, a gesture that expresses in an astonishing way both God's forgiveness and the return to the bosom of the People of God.

#2843 Thus the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end, become a living reality. The parable of the merciless servant, which crowns the Lord's teaching on ecclesial communion, ends with these words: 'So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart'. It is there, in fact, 'in the depths of the heart', that everything is bound and loosed. It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offence; but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.
(See Compendium #595 How is forgiveness possible?)

SPIRITUAL REFLECTION FOR TEACHERS

Saying sorry, offering forgiveness and restoring peace in a relationship can sometimes be a long process that may involve space apart, reflection, trust and
honesty. Think of your own experiences of conflict and hurt. What have you learned about forgiveness and saying sorry? How do you process conflict and hurt among students?

Both sons in the parable of the lost son and his brother (Lk 11: 15–32) show sinfulness: the obvious sinning of the younger son and the resentment and rejection shown by the older son. The father deals with both of these experiences by accepting both sons with great love and offering them a second chance to restore their relationship between each other and with him. Which character are you attracted to in this parable? Which character reminds you of yourself? What does the parable tell you about God’s forgiveness? Does it affirm or raise questions for how you approach forgiveness in your own life or in the classroom?

LINKS WITH STUDENTS’ EXPERIENCES

Students are becoming aware of how their actions and words affect others. What are their experiences of being hurt, or of conflict? How do they handle difference? What skills or strategies do students in your class need to deal with hurt and to handle conflict?

To be able to forgive others, students need to experience being forgiven. What are the students’ understandings and experiences of forgiveness?

Students are increasingly becoming aware of the need for peace in their lives and in the world. What does it mean to live in peace?

EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE

Lk 19: 1–10
As Jesus Christ travelled through Jericho, Zacchaeus, a tax collector, wanted to see him. There were two reasons why this would have been difficult for Zacchaeus. His occupation as a tax collector meant that he made his living collecting taxes from the Jews for Rome, the occupying power. It was understood that tax collectors overcharged their own people, and kept the extra for themselves. This put tax collectors on the margins of society. The other reason was that Zacchaeus was too short to see over the crowd. He overcame this by climbing a tree, an action not necessarily associated with a sophisticated man! This demonstrates how important it was for him to see Jesus Christ, thereby joining a long list of characters in the gospels who did extravagant things in pursuit of salvation. Jesus stopped at the tree and told Zacchaeus to come down quickly as he intended to stay at Zacchaeus’ house. Zacchaeus was looked on as a sinner, so this would have been a shock to the crowd. Zacchaeus underwent a conversion and promised to give up his trade of exploitation. He offered one half of his goods to the poor, and promised to repay fourfold anyone he had defrauded. Jesus Christ accepted Zacchaeus as he was, and made the strong statement which is in two other places in Luke’s Gospel: ‘Today, salvation has come to this house’. As Zacchaeus was accepted by Jesus, so Christians can rebuild their relationship with God and with others.

Lk 15: 11–24 The Parable Of The Lost Son And His Brother
The naming of this parable has always been problematic. Perhaps it could be labelled ‘The Forgiving Father’ or ‘The Lost Sons’. This is the third of three parables dealing with being lost and found. Jesus was answering the grumblings of the Pharisees and Scribes who were concerned because he welcomed sinners and ate with them. In this third parable the younger son asked for his share of his father’s property before his
father’s death. This meant he abandoned the household and any responsibility for maintaining the family property and the welfare of the family. He used his inheritance in dissolute living, and soon became a hired labourer for one of the citizens of the foreign country he was living in. He was given the worst job any Jew could have been given – he had to feed the pigs, thus rendering him unclean. We discover through the story that by ‘coming to himself’ he slowly realised that he had done wrong. He wanted to ask forgiveness of his father, and even said he knew he was not worthy to be called his son. His father ran to him (unconventional behaviour for a rich Palestinian man) when he returned home. His father insisted on recognising his son and on celebrating his return.

This is where the older son came into the story – often a son who, many people feel, was badly done by. However, the reaction of this son is told with equal understanding and sympathy. The father affirmed that his relationship with his older son was not diminished by the sinner’s return. He was invited to the feast to celebrate that his brother had returned to life and had been given a second chance. The younger son experienced God’s mercy. The reader never hears the response of the older son, and is left pondering whether he too comes to know the merciful love of the father.

POSSIBILITIES FOR PRAYER AND WORSHIP

- Pray an Act of Contrition at the end of each day as part of the daily routine of prayer. See KWL, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 18, p. 148.

- Alternatively, reflect on the day’s or week’s choices through an examination of conscience.

- Participate in the sacrament of Penance. With the parish priest, prepare a celebration of the First or Second Rite of Reconciliation for your class. Invite parents, family members and parishioners to the celebration.

- Celebrate a Liturgy of the Word with a penitential focus.
  
  Suggestions include:
  
  
  Gospel reading: Lk 15: 8–10 (The Lost Coin).
  
  A sharing of reflections on the gospel.
  
  Prayers of hope in God’s mercy, with a response ‘Lord, have mercy on us’.
  
  Concluding song: ‘A New Heart For a New World’ (Gather Australia, No 438).

Related Chapters – KWL, 2nd edn, Year 3: Chapter 2, Created by God, Called to Love; Chapter 12, Forgiveness and Strength are Gifts of the Lord; Chapter 14, Living in the Life of the Holy Spirit.
Faith concepts: forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, penance, peace, relationships.

Seeking understanding:
What does it mean to forgive and be forgiven?
How do people heal relationships?
Why and how do people celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation?

Understanding:
Forgiving and being forgiven bring peace to self and others.
Healing involves reflecting on what has happened, saying sorry, and giving someone a second chance.
Scripture stories about forgiveness help Christians think and pray about forgiveness in their own lives.
Forgiveness and healing are celebrated in the sacraments of Penance and Anointing.
Through the sacrament of Penance Christians rebuild their relationship with God and others.

Scripture Text: Lk 19: 1–10 Story of Zacchaeus; Lk 15: 11–32 The Prodigal Son and His Brother.

Unit specific learning:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students will learn about</th>
<th>Students will learn to</th>
<th>Students will undertake to</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Understanding</td>
<td>Reasoning &amp; Responding</td>
<td>Personal &amp; Communal Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>The stages of reconciliation in a relationship: admitting wrong; saying sorry; being forgiven; making up (being reconciled). Ways that reconciliation and forgiveness are expressed in the gospels: the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Story of Zacchaeus.</td>
<td>Express their ideas and beliefs about forgiveness and healing in light of their learning about these ways of living in the gospels. Express prayers of sorrow for areas of brokenness or conflict in their own lives.</td>
<td>Participate in a Rite of Penance.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
- The words and actions of the First and Second Rites of Penance.
- Words and actions of the Sacrament of Anointing.
- The relationship between the expressions of healing and forgiveness in the gospels and the sacraments of Anointing and Penance.
## PHASES OF STUDENT INQUIRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Reading for Teachers</th>
<th>Orientation to Inquiry</th>
<th>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do students already know, think or feel in relation to the topic? What are students’ questions about the topic? What experiences and reflections can we offer students to become engaged with the topic?</td>
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Forgiveness is one of the great characteristics of the Christian faith. God forgives us all our sins and faults, but we too are required to be forgiving people. In fact the words of the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus Christ himself taught his disciples, asks God to 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'. Sometimes our friends and family let us down, as we sometimes let them down. Forgiveness of each other, as God forgives us, restores the bonds of love and friendship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brainstorm K–W–L: Forgiveness and Healing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students brainstorm words to describe their understanding of 'forgiveness' and 'healing'. Teachers complete a wall chart under the following headings: What we already Know. What we Want to find out. What we have Learnt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students consider some of these questions:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What do we learn from others about forgiveness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why do you need someone to forgive you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Why do you need to forgive others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- When is it easy to forgive?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- When is it hard to forgive?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What are the qualities of people who forgive us?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Tell us a time when Jesus Christ forgave.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Share</th>
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<tr>
<td>Read a picture storybook about forgiveness and reconciliation such as Pumpkin Soup to the students. As a class discuss the different elements of friendship and compromise that were evident throughout the story between Cat, Squirrel and Duck. After the discussion students complete an action/reflection cycle sheet:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students identify key actions which caused hurt.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Assessment for Learning
These tasks will indicate students’ thinking and experiences about the place of forgiveness and healing in friendship.
### Open-Minded Portrait
Each student folds an A4 sheet of paper, drawing an oval shape that becomes their face. Cut the outline of the face, leaving a fold at the top. Inside the students write their responses to this:
I am a good friend when I …

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Reading for Teachers</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What experiences and religious texts will provide new learning for students? What skills will students need in order to work with these resources? What strategies and tools will enable students to think and reflect on these experiences and texts? How will students process their thinking and learning?</td>
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</table>
**Repent** comes from the Latin word meaning 'to be sorry'. It involves a turning away from sin and a turning towards God.

**Sin**: The Hebrew words for sin mean to shoot an arrow and miss the mark, i.e. to fail to achieve a goal. The Church’s understanding of sin is that it is a *deliberate* choice to do wrong, or to hurt other people or ourselves; to be unfaithful to God’s law of love. Often sin is spoken of in two categories: venial and mortal sin.

**Venial sin (minor faults and failings)**, committed in the course of our daily lives, puts our selves and our own comfort, amusement, satisfaction and desires before God and others.

**Mortal sin** is much more serious. It is a fully conscious decision to think, say or do something we know to be seriously opposed to God's law.

**Grace** is the free gift of God. It is the saving action and presence of God in the midst of our human lives.

**Examination of Conscience**: This is the act of examining the way we are living our lives. We weigh up the good and the wrong directions our lives are taking. We identify any sinfulness and resolve to repent. It is usual to have an examination of conscience before celebrating the sacrament of Penance.

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- **Scripture ‘Royal Commission’: Lk 19: 1–10 The Story of Zacchaeus**

  Read the text in *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 3, Chapter 12, p. 96. Discuss the role and perception of tax collectors in the time of Jesus (see the explanation of scripture above).

  Locate Jericho on a map of Palestine in 1st century AD.

  After reading this gospel story the students, in groups of four, will take part in a 'Royal Commission' into the Story of Zacchaeus.

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**Process:**

Choose a Commissioner, Zacchaeus, Jesus and Recorder and complete the following table:
**Forgiveness:** The Hebrew words for forgiveness literally mean to lift up and carry away. When we ask for God’s forgiveness we are asking that God will lift up our sins and carry them away from us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions for Zacchaeus</th>
<th>Possible responses</th>
<th>Questions for Jesus</th>
<th>Possible responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factual Information: Where were you heading when you heard Jesus speaking? What was your business in Jericho?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Why were you in Jericho?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about the event: How did you feel when Jesus spoke to you? How did you feel when Jesus said he was coming to your house?</td>
<td></td>
<td>How did you feel about meeting Zacchaeus? How did you feel when the crowd called Zacchaeus a sinner?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasons for acting in a particular manner: Why did you climb up the tree? Why were you collecting taxes for the Romans?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Why did you want to stay at Zacchaeus’ house?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reactions after the event: How did this event change your life?</td>
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</table>

The Recorder will report to the class.

**Reconciliation:** The word ‘reconcile’ is from Latin, meaning to bring back together, or to restore. Reconciliation is about restoring or

- **Identifying the Four Stages of Reconciliation**
  Students illustrate the story of Zacchaeus in
healing a broken relationship or friendship between people.

Humanly speaking there are four steps we take to restore broken relationships:

1. We recognise and regret our wrongdoing.
2. We admit what we have done.
3. We say sorry to the people we have offended and are forgiven.
4. We do something good to make up for what we have done.

There are many reasons to regret something we have done wrong: we may simply fear punishment; we may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable; or we might be deeply sorry because we know that what we have done has hurt another person, or is against the fundamental Law of Love for God and neighbour.

There is a progression in the moral awareness of human beings, but at whatever stage we are, the important thing is recognising that we have done wrong and being sorry. This is called contrition. Then it is possible to make a fresh beginning by naming the sin: confession; receiving the forgiveness of God: absolution; and making up for the wrong we have done or the pain we have caused: satisfaction.

- Zacchaeus admitted what he did was wrong.
- He promised to give the money back and said that he was sorry.
- He was forgiven.
- He was reconciled with everyone again.

Scripture: Lk 15: 11–32: The Prodigal Son and His Brother
Read and discuss the text. Students dramatise the story.

- **Gospel Roulette**
  After reading and dramatising the gospel story of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15: 11–32) students complete a Gospel Roulette. Questions numbered 1–6 are displayed:

1. List the main events of the story.
2. How might the main characters have felt at the beginning of the story? At the end?
3. If you were one of the main characters would you do something differently?
4. What might have caused the character to make the choices he did?
5. What is the message of this story?
6. Which is the best part of this story? Why?

This activity can be completed as a whole class or in groups. Roll the die and answer the question for the number you rolled. Give the die to the person on your left.

- **Identifying the Four Stages of Reconciliation**
  Students illustrate The Story of the Prodigal Son in the following four stages in their journals:
  - The son **admitted** what he did was wrong.
  - He came back and said that he was **sorry**.
  - His father **forgave** him.
  - He was **reconciled** with his father again.
The Church celebrates two **sacraments of healing**: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.

The word **penance** comes from Latin, meaning regret. There are two understandings of the word penance. The first meaning involves an act of prayer or self-denial carried out in sorrow for sin. The second meaning is the official name for the sacrament of Penance.

### Wall Chart of Four Stages of Reconciliation

Present the four steps for reconciliation using the illustrations from Zacchaeus and the Prodigal Son under the following headings.

- **Admit:** When you tell someone what you did.
- **Say sorry:** Let them know that you felt badly about it.
- **Be forgiven:** When you feel that the person is now all right.
- **Make up:** When you know everything is all right between you.

### Celebrating Forgiveness Liturgically

List the ways we express and celebrate God’s forgiveness liturgically. For example: the sign of peace; the sign of the cross; peace be with you; Lamb of God; Lord I am not worthy; and Lord have mercy. Read the Prayer of Sorrow from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 3, Level 3a.

### Rites of Penance and Anointing

Use the excerpts of the Rites of Penance and Anointing from *KWL*, 2nd edn, Year 3. Emphasise that the rites use special words and prayers to give strength and encouragement to those who participate.

### Assessment of Learning

The wall chart will indicate students’ understanding and knowledge of the four stages of reconciliation.
Within the **sacrament of Penance** there are three Rites of Reconciliation. The **First Rite** is celebrated between the penitent and priest. It involves individual confession and absolution of sins. The Second and Third Rites are communal celebrations with the whole community and the priest. The **Second Rite** consists of readings and prayers followed by individual confession and absolution. The **Third Rite** involves a communal admission of sin and general absolution of the whole community. This is permitted only in extraordinary circumstances. Anyone with a serious sin is expected to confess this sin within the First Rite of Reconciliation.

The sacrament of **Anointing of the Sick** can be celebrated either communally or individually. It consists of specially chosen readings and prayers to give comfort and support to the sick and dying. The sick are anointed with holy oil. Forgiveness of sins is also part of this sacrament. It can only be administered by a priest.

Use the following statements for students to sequence the procedure for reconciliation using the first rite.

- The Rite of Reconciliation for Individual Penitents (First Rite).
- The priest welcomes me in the name of Jesus Christ and the Church.
- I listen as the priest reads God’s word to me.
- I confess my sins in specific areas. I try to be as honest as I can about attitudes which are the causes of my sins. This is what I am asking God to heal in me.
- The priest listens to me and encourages me to see how I might live more faithfully and in a more loving way.
- The priest gives me a suitable penance.
- The priest then asks me to tell God that I am sorry in a prayer of sorrow (Act of Contrition).
- The priest extends his hand over my head and says the words of absolution through which I receive God’s loving forgiveness.
- The priest will pray with me a short prayer.

**Assessment of Learning**
This sequencing activity will demonstrate students’ knowledge of the parts of the Rites of Reconciliation.
of praise and thanks to God.

- **Guest Speaker: Parish Priest/Pastoral Associate/Parishioner**
  For the students to become familiar with the Rite of Anointing invite your priest or pastoral associate or a parishioner to describe the rite. They should lead the students to understand that the sacrament supports and strengthens those who are frail, seriously ill or in danger of death, and it calls the community to respond with love towards those in need. They can highlight the gestures and symbols used during the celebration of this rite.

- **Rite of Reconciliation Chart**
  As a class construct a chart (WAG Strategy) outlining the major gestures and words within the Rite of Reconciliation. Draw up parallels between the words and gestures that Jesus Christ used and the words and gestures we use in the sacraments of Penance and Anointing.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Gestures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rite of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rite of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
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</table>
### Additional Reading for Teachers

**SYNTHESIS**

How will students demonstrate their understandings, beliefs, values, skills and feelings in relation to the topic? How will students take action based on their learning? What strategies and tools will enable students to discern their action, to plan and implement action and to evaluate their action?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Anointing</strong></th>
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- **Poster of Forgiveness and Healing**
  Use the gospel readings Lk 19: 1–10 Story of Zacchaeus, and Lk 15: 11–32 the Prodigal Son and His Brother. Students prepare and display posters depicting quotations from these gospels which describe forgiveness and healing.

- **Prayers of Forgiveness and Healing**
  Using the Prayer of Sorrow as a model, students will write their own prayer of forgiveness and healing.

- **School/Church Display**
  Place the poster quotations and prayers of forgiveness and healing in the school and/or church.

- **Participate in a Rite of Penance**

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**Assessment: for learning, as learning, of learning**

- Assessment as Learning
  The prayers of forgiveness and healing will enable the students to reflect upon their new learning in relation to forgiveness.
RESOURCES

To Know, Worship and Love, 2nd Edition
Year 3: Chapter 2, Created by God, Called to Love; Chapter 12, Forgiveness and Strength are Gifts of the Lord; Chapter 14, Living in the Life of the Holy Spirit.

Music, CDs
Farrell, B ‘God of Mercy’ in Share the Light, OCP Publications.
O’Brien, M & Watts T 1985, ‘A New Heart for a New World’ in Gather Australia, GIA.

Teacher Resources

Film
Shrek 2007, animation, Dreamworks.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STANDARDS
This unit may be used to assess some of the Level 3 standards.

Students identify with biblical characters and people in the past and present Church by making inferences about their actions, feelings and motives. Students interpret key actions, signs and symbols of liturgy and sacrament by providing a meaningful explanation of their significance. Students evaluate their choices and actions by reflecting on Scripture and Church teaching.