



## Union with Christ – Step 1

### The need to forgive

#### Aim

To explore the meaning of sin and our human and spiritual need for forgiveness.

#### Resources needed

Leaders

- *Union with Christ notes*
- *PPT laptop & projector or TV*
- *Bible or scripture passages*
- *Prayer focus items*
- *Cut outs of sheep*
- *Prayer cards*

Young People

- *Journals*

#### Prayer Focus

Expressions of our belief

**Cloth** - *Appropriate to the Liturgical season*

**Bible** - *Open at Luke 15:1-7*

**Candle** - *Jesus the Light of the World; preferably purple for repentance*

**Stones, sheep image or replica** – *The lost sheep (or image of the Good Shepherd)*

**Prayer cards** – *Act of Contrition*

#### Liturgical Link

Penitential Rite at Mass  
Sacraments of the Church  
Act of Contrition and Sacrament of Penance

#### Overview

- What is sin?
- The human need for forgiveness
- Guidelines to follow
- Seeking the lost
- Sacraments of healing

#### Preparation by Catechists

- *Familiarise self with content and resources*
- *Share re the power of sin, feelings of being lost, power of forgiveness.*
- *Pray for the young people and leaders*

#### Scripture Passages

- Exodus 20:1-17 10 Commandments
- Deut 5:1-18 10 Commandments
- Mark 12:28-31 2 Commandments
- John 15:10-15 1 Commandment
- Luke 15: 3-7 1 Lost Sheep

#### Tenets of Faith (Faith Formation)

- The Commandments
- The extent of God's Love
- The healing power of Forgiveness and the Sacraments

## Gathering

### Welcome and Overview

- Thank the young people for coming back for this 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of the journey.
- Give overview and aim for the first of these steps through which we deepen the relationship with God, in order that each day we grow in union with God more and more.

## Introductory Activity

- Invite a show of hands as the young people respond to the following questions
  - Is the word SIN one that you hear used regularly in society?
  - Is it used in your home? Is it ever used by you?
  - Do you think you have ever committed a sin?

Explain to the young people that the word sin may not be used in popular culture or conversation much, these days, yet most of us, in a general sense have an understanding of what sin is and believe that we have at times sinned.

**Activity – What is Sin** See suggestions 9-12 Prayer and Discernment Step 1 \_

- Ask the group to stand in a line, towards the centre of the gathering space, facing the leader (catechists can join in as well). Invite the young people to respond to each of the statements by
  - taking small steps step forward for **Yes**,
  - standing still for **not sure**,
  - or stepping back for **No**.
- After 5-6 questions have been asked note how varied the line has become. The more distorted the line, the greater the difference amongst the group is the understanding of sin.
- Invite the young people to reflect on how we can we tell what is and is not a sin?

Explain to the young people that sin is any thought, word or deed that damages our relationship with God. As with anything else in life, the context of a situation can make a difference to even the most obvious of answers to a question. In relation to sin there are two important factors that determine whether our words or actions are sinful, within the context of our relationship with God and with others. (*refer to the questions used to help clarify and show how it is difficult to always have an absolute answer*)

<b>Intention</b>	a sin is something we do intentionally, rather than by accident or mistake
<b>freely chosen</b>	of our own free will, not under pressure or force from anyone else
<b>knowledge</b>	even though we are fully aware that what we are doing is against God's will

Over the centuries the use and understanding of the word sin has changed significantly, as has the popular view of right and wrong. For example, taking something that doesn't belong to us (stealing) from a shop is a very obvious act of sin; picking up coins the person ahead of us dropped at the till and pocketing them might be seen as 'good luck' by some, while others would place it in the charity box on the counter, or make the effort to return it to the other person.

## Reflection and Prayer

*(play quiet music in the background)*

- Ask the young people to sit comfortably with feet flat on the ground, and hands on knees. When they have settled invite them to reflect on
  - a time when they may have sinned against a family member, that is, deliberately doing something they knew to be wrong.
- Ask them to think about
  - How they felt at the time, or afterwards?
  - If the wrongdoing came to light, what then happened?
  - How were relationships affected?

Explain to the young people that no one is perfect, and so at times we do forget to keep Jesus and his teachings at the centre of our lives. Despite praying regularly to be free of temptation, we give in to what we know is not right. In recognition of this, we begin Mass with a Penitential Rite. Here we are invited to acknowledge the love and mercy of God alongside our own weaknesses.

Sometimes, depending on the action and its impact on others the sin can cause hurt that has lasting effects on individuals and relationships between those involved, and even the wider family.

Jesus calls us to take responsibility for our actions. So, if we know we have sinned, causing hurt, we need to acknowledge that and ask to be forgiven.

When hurt is deep, individuals find it more difficult to forgive. But when we do forgive, inner peace. The act of forgiveness helps lift the feelings of guilt or shame that sin can cause. Forgiveness is an important step towards healing relationships, restoring the sense of wellbeing and harmony between the people, enabling an act of reconciliation happens.

## Prayerful response

- **Prayer focus** - *refer to items and their significance here and as appropriate later*
- Gather the group around the prayer focus and explain the significance of the items in relation to the theme of the gathering.
- Explain to the young people that being a Christian, a follower of Jesus, requires us not to be perfect, but to be striving each day to be more like Jesus who came to call sinners, and offer forgiveness.

- Let us spend a few moments thanking God for the times when family members and friends have been willing to forgive us. Let us ask for the grace not to be tempted by sin.

### ***Together we pray***

Lord God,

We are grateful for the times that you, and others, have forgiven our wrongdoing.

You, who can see into hearts, know everything about us.

Help us to recognise the ways in which we need to change our attitudes, words or actions to become more like you.

Each day help us to look to Jesus as our way, our truth and our life,

so that we live in love, helping bring forgiveness and peace into the lives of those we meet.

We make this prayer in the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

## Scripture Reflection

### **Activity – Guidelines to Follow**

In both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament clear guidelines are given about how to live in the God calls us to.

- Invite the group to recall any of the ***when, who, what and why*** of the above statement (allow 30 seconds).
- Ask them to have a conversation in pairs then take feedback. Prompt to help them get started if need be.

### **Where in the Bible?**

**Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament)** There are many examples but probably the best known is probably God giving Moses the 10 Commandments.

#### ***Exodus 20:1-17***

Having released the people of Israel from slavery God made a Covenant, a pact or contract, with them through Moses, at Mount Sinai. The summary of this is known as the 10 Commandments. These were short enough to commit to memory, using fingers and thumbs to help. The commandments gave the basic rules that would allow God's people to live together in peace and security.

#### ***Deuteronomy 5:1-18***

Moses reminds the people of the Covenant and calls on them to know and live by the 10 Commandments.

**New Testament** – the Gospels record many times and places in which Jesus reinforces different aspects of the 10 Commandments. He also goes to great lengths to use stories to explain the meaning behind the commandments and God's desires for humanity.

### **Mark 12:28-31**

One of the Scribes ask Jesus which is the first commandment. In response he condenses the Ten Commandments into two, the love of God and the love of neighbour.

### **John 15:10-15**

As Jesus is preparing the disciples for what is to come, his passion and death, he simplifies the Commandments even further, telling them, 'Love one another as I have loved you.' The love of Jesus has been total and unconditional, as is that of his Father. This love is far greater than simply being nice to each other.

### **Activity – following the Commandments**

- Invite the group or have a brief conversation in 2-3's on the following questions. Then take feedback.
  - How well did the people of Israel and of Jesus time follow the Commandments?
  - How well do people follow these today?
  - How does the Church try to help keep people on the right track, following God's ways?

Explain to the young people that the Church reminds us how to live the teachings of Jesus to love God and to love our neighbor through in a variety of ways. These include:

### **Teaching and Preaching**

The Pope, Bishops and Priests all help to reinforce the teachings of Jesus through their writings, their homilies and the liturgical celebrations they lead.

### **The Sacraments**

Based on the ministry of Jesus, the Church formed seven Sacraments, each offers a different way for individuals to make a commitment to God. Through the Sacraments God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit to the strengthen us to live a life of faith and goodness.

### **Sacraments of Healing**

Two of the seven sacraments of the Church recognise the human need for forgiveness and inner healing. They are the **Sacrament of Reconciliation**, also called Penance or Forgiveness and the **Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick**.

This Sacrament of Reconciliation provides the opportunity for members of the Church to come before a priest, who acts in the name of God, to acknowledge our sins and ask forgiveness. God who always loves us, sees that we are truly sorry and offers us forgiveness and we receive the strength to fight temptation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a great source of spiritual healing and strength, and therefore a sacrament we are encouraged to use on a regular basis.

The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, brings peace and healing to those are suffering serious illness, of facing death.

- Check if anyone in the group has experienced a relative receiving the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick or know of the impact it had on the life of a sick person.

## Going Deeper

### **The Parable of the Lost Sheep Luke 15:1-7**

*(9-12 Prayer and Discernment Step 1 \_ Luke 15 1.7)*

Explain to the young people that there are many stories in the Gospels about forgiveness, possibly the most famous being the Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

The Parable of the Lost Sheep was one of the Parables Jesus told to help deepen people's understanding of God's desire for sinners to return to him.

Invite the young people to open their heart to allow God to speak to them as they hear the passage read. Invite all present to close their eyes and be free from distraction while listening.

Ask the young people to reflect on:

- What in the story has a link to my life?
- Is there a time when I have felt truly lost, or abandoned, however briefly?
- What message is being conveyed by Jesus in the story?

Explain to the young people that many of us may have experienced being lost, separated from others in a large group at a large gathering. It can be very frightening, even if only for a short time. Some may of us may also have experienced a deeper feeling of being lost, due to a family breakup, or death of a loved one, or possibly being pushed aside by friends.

Throughout life, there will be many times when our own resources are not sufficient to help us get through the difficulties we face. On such occasions we need the spiritual help and healing that Jesus promised. In the parable of the lost sheep Jesus makes clear:

- God rejoices each time one of his children returns to him.
- Confident that the 99 are secure in God's care, the important task is to seek out the one who is lost.
- When we sin, we turn away from God, so causing a separation in the relationship.
- God will never give up hope on us finding our way back.
- The door / gate will always be open.

In this parable Jesus is teaching us the hopeful anticipation God has for the return of the sinner - as we also witness so clearly in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. God's arms are wide open ready to embrace and love the one who comes back.

## Closing Prayer

Gather the group around the prayer table, hand out sheep cutouts (9-12 *Prayer and Discernment Step 1 \_ Sheep*) and prayer cards, (9-12 *Prayer and Discernment Step 1 \_ Prayer card*)

**Reflection**      *Come back to me* - by Greg Norbert

Invite the young people to listen to the song and reflect on the temptations in life that separate them from God. From this reflection they write on the back of the sheep cutout one temptation they need help to overcome and so be able to grow closer to God.

**Song** *Come back to me* by Greg Norbert, based on Hosea 14:1 access via <https://youtu.be/SfccyT1k5vc> (4 min 24)

### **Prayer**

Having reflected on our temptations let us now offer them to God using an Act of Contrition, which can be used to confess sorrow for our sins during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Leader**      O my God, I am very sorry for my sins, which separate me from you.  
In being tempted to do wrong I offend others and you.  
Help me to love you more each day,  
and send your Holy Spirit to strengthen me,  
so that I am able to avoid any thoughts, words or actions  
that will lead me to sin.  
This prayer we make in Jesus' name, Amen

## Closing Remarks and Next Step

- Invite response to the Step 1 gathering.
- Prayer and Discernment Step 2 is Crossroads RCIA session 1.
- If the gathering is being conducted as a Rite of Dismissal during Sunday Mass adequate preparation is needed.

**\*\*Alternatively, Preparation for the Scrutiny could be undertaken as part of this gathering, with the Dismissal happening the following Sunday during Mass along with the Scrutiny.**

- For Step 2 the **Hand Examen** is included in the resources section as are additional materials for reconciliation. Alternatively, these could be incorporated into another step along the way.
- Encourage personal and prayer support of one another and attendance at Mass.