

SECOND GRADE: Act of Contrition

**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You,
and I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments,
but most of all because they offend You, my God,
who are all good and deserving of all my love.
I firmly resolve with the help of Your grace to sin no more
and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.**

(From the Compendium of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*)

Praying and focusing on this one Prayer throughout the entire year will allow the students to deepen their friendship with Jesus and to know and experience His love and healing forgiveness. The following resources are meant to foster this process. Please consider implementing one simple aspect each session.

God's love for us

God gave us Laws of Love so that we would know how to act in order to love Jesus, our neighbor, and ourselves. Sometimes we break God's Laws of Love, by committing a sin. That makes us sad because when we sin, we offend God Who loves us very much. But God wants us to have peace and joy and to come back to Him. We need to admit that what we have done is wrong. And then we must be truly be sorry that we have offended God by being selfish or unkind to others. He will give us the grace to help us be sorry. He will always forgive us. There is nothing that we can do that is so bad that God won't forgive if we are truly sorry. It shows God that we really love Him when we tell Him we are sorry for having offended Him and want to be forgiven.

Jesus told the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) to show how God loves and forgives. Our Heavenly Father is just like the father in the story. Sometimes we sin and "run away" from God like the younger son. Although God hates sin because of the effects that it has on us, He loves each one of us very much. He is always ready to forgive us when we are sorry for our sins.

Why do we want to pray the Act of Contrition every day?

- 1) We want to acknowledge that we have sinned but come to a realization that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins. God loves us very much and is always ready to forgive us and
- 2) Understand that Jesus wants to forgive us and will do so with great love and
- 3) Become more aware of how our sins offend Jesus, others and ourselves and
- 4) Be truly sorry with all of our heart for our sins and truly want, with the help of God's grace, not to sin again
- 5) To not be afraid and to understand that we can tell Jesus anything.

Meaning of the Words

- In praying the *Act of Contrition*, we tell God that we are sorry for our sins and that we will seek to do better, with the help of His grace. Grace is a share in God's life. Grace received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to become stronger in avoiding sin.



- Contrition is “sorrow for sins and the sadness we have for the sins we have done, along with the wish (resolution, commitment) to never do them again. (CCC 1451) This is only possible with the help of God’s grace. We have sorrow for sins because we are sad that we have offended God, and because we fear His correction.
- In praying this prayer, we are speaking with Jesus. When we sin we turn away from God. We choose to be unkind and selfish toward others and thereby offend God Who loves each person very much, and so we are sorry with all of our heart.
- We greatly dislike our sins and desire true sorrow because we are sad that we have offended God, who loves us completely and because He deserves our love. We also recognize the ugly and harmful effects that sins have upon us and fear being separated from God forever if we choose to commit very serious sins.
- With the help of God’s grace, we make a firm decision – a sincere resolution or commitment – not to sin again by avoiding situations and people that might lead us to sin.
- Amen means “So be it.” This means that we believe the words that we just prayed and we will strive to live it.



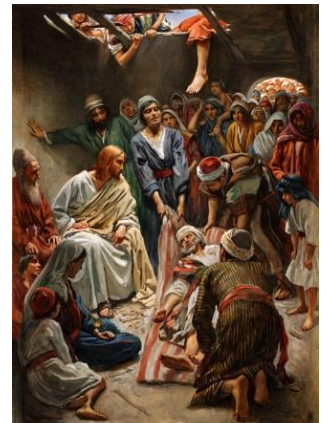
Learning the Principles

- God is our loving Father and He always hears our prayers. “Prayer is a vital necessity.... Prayer and the Christian life are inseparable.” (CCC 2744-2745)
- It is sad but true that we all sin sometimes. Because of Original Sin we aren’t always strong enough to say no to sin and yes to God. But God loves us very much and is always ready to forgive us.
- It is good to examine our conscience each night to acknowledge what we have done that shows our love for God by being kind and good toward others. We also want to recognize what we did that was unkind and selfish toward others. We will want to pray the *Act of Contrition* before we go to bed so that we can be sorry for our sins, seek to do better the next day with the help of God’s actual grace and to sleep peacefully.
- Only God forgives sins. (*Catechism*, paragraphs 1441-1442)
- The *Act of Contrition* is also prayed during the Sacrament of Reconciliation after confessing our sins. We turn *back* to Our Heavenly Father, acknowledging our need for His healing power in our lives. His mercy is there for us as long as we approach Him with humility and make a sincere effort not to repeat our sins.
- The priest takes the place of Jesus. When we confess our sins, Jesus forgives us through the words and actions of the priest.
- Before we go to confess our sins, we must get ready. We should think about our sins and be sorry for them. Then we tell our sins to the priest. The priest says “I **absolve** you from your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” We respond “Amen” which means “I believe” or “So be it.” (CCC 2856)
- In the Sacrament of Confession, Jesus takes our sins away and gives us grace. Sanctifying grace gives us a share in God’s life, and helps us to be stronger against sin. We will feel peace and joy when God takes away our sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- The priest will never tell our sins to anyone. He only wants to bring us God’s forgiveness. He wants to help us to be good and stay close to Jesus.
- The new life of God’s grace received by a child (or adult) in Baptism can be weakened and even lost by serious sin. Praying the *Act of Contrition* reminds us to avoid sin.
- The five steps to make a good confession in the Sacrament of Reconciliation / Penance
 - Know your sins: ask the Holy Spirit to help you to know your sins. Allow some time for silence and He will help you to remember.
 - Be sorry for your sins: Ask Mary to help you to be sorry for all of your sins.
 - Make up your mind not to sin again
 - Tell your sins to the priest in the Sacrament of Reconciliation / Confession
 - Do the penance the priest gives you. (CCC 1451, 1454, 1456, 1459-1460)

Activities for Learning the Words

- Pray the *Act of Contrition* at every appropriate opportunity. One way for a catechist to incorporate “Going Deeper: A Specific Focus on One Prayer at each Grade Level” could be to begin or end each class with the designated prayer throughout the year.
- Echo prayer: have students repeat each phrase after you
- Explain one phrase at a time for better understanding.
- Fill in the blanks of key words of the prayer. Write out the prayer.
- Make flash cards with a phrase of the prayer on each card
- Have a “Round Robin” recitation
- Practice praying the prayer with a partner
- Read children’s Bible stories that portray God’s forgiveness and healing, providing deeper meaning to the Sacrament of Confession the healing of the paralytic, both his body and soul - Mark 2:1-12 the prodigal son – Luke 15: 11-24 (For teacher reference, see the process of conversion and repentance in the *Catechism*, paragraph 1439) This parable is a way to explain God’s love and forgiveness. Nest Videos has an animated DVD on this parable.
- Make a puzzle of the words of the *Act of Contrition* and then put the puzzle together.
- Have the prayer printed out on poster board. Cut out in sections and have the students match the strips into the right order to make the prayer.
- Use Sacred Art pictures to portray the meaning of the prayer, such as the Prodigal Son
- Make a booklet of the *Act of Contrition*, with a phrase and a picture on each page.
- Teach about God our Father and how much He loves us perfectly. He kept His promise to Adam and Eve, our first parents, when they committed the first sin. He promised to send the Savior. Our Heavenly Father sent Jesus to die on the Cross so that our sins can be forgiven through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Use Sacred Art to portray these truths. Google the theme, click on images, click on Advanced Settings for “Free to use”.
- Teach the students how to pray with their heart; not just rattling words. “Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of Him ‘to whom we speak.’ (CCC paragraphs 2700, 2704) We want to think about what we are saying to the Person of our Heavenly Father, in the same way that we speak with someone we love.



Jesus Heals The Paralytic by Harold Cooper



- Explain the word contrition, which means sorrow for sin and a desire, even a commitment, to break the habit of sin.
- Encourage and support parents to pray with their children at home.
- Place the one page prayer commitment along with parent instructions into a plastic sleeve and tie a small circle of yarn to the top loop. Parents may place the prayer commitment on the child's bedroom door knob in order to use it for prayer times (so it won't be misplaced). Prayer commitments at the beginning of the academic year, and during Advent and Lent are especially welcomed. A gift, such as a medal and chain or a small statue could be given for incentive to be faithful each day during a period such as Advent to help children develop a daily habit of prayer. A calendar could be included.

Spiritual Comprehension – Do they understand?

- Ask questions often to ensure that students understand the meaning of the words.
- **This one prayer is the prayer the students should know by heart and with good understanding before they advance to the next grade level. Therefore it should be prayed at every opportunity.** Please continue to teach the other prayers as listed in the Diocesan Religion Curriculum that are to be introduced at Second Grade.

Encountering God in Prayer

- Pray the *Act of Contrition* aloud and allow students to listen, preferably with their eyes closed. Invite them to take notice of a word or phrase that stood out for them. Provide some time of silence for the students to think about why the word or phrase stood out for them.



- After they have received explanation of each phrase, allow student's quiet time to reflect on the phrases of the *Act of Contrition*. This takes it to the next level of a deep personal encounter. As a further progression, provide silence so that students may have a "heart-to-heart" talk with our Heavenly Father or Jesus. Encourage them to speak with our Heavenly Father in their own words.

Scriptural Foundation

- Having been raised from the dead, our Lord commissioned His Apostles to carry on with His work just before He was to ascend to Heaven. Jesus said to the Apostles, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20: 21-23)
- Jesus said, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as *I have loved you*. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you...I call you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:9- 14, 15b)
- The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy. Psalm 103:8

Resources

- "Jesus forgives my sins" (small booklet) Sr. Terese Mary Donze, Ligouri Press
- "King of the Shattered Glass" by Susan Joy Bellavance, Marian Press ShopMercy.org

