

SECOND GRADE: *Act of Contrition*

**O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You,
and I detest all my sins because of Thy 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 children 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 implement one simple aspect frequently.

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 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, ask to be forgiven and commit to try and sin no more.

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.
- 2) Understand that Jesus wants to forgive us and will do so with great love.
- 3) Become more aware of how our sins offend Jesus, others and ourselves.
- 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

- **The *Act of Contrition***



Contrition is “sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the with the help of God’s grace.

▪ **O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You**

In praying the *Act of Contrition*, we tell God that we are sorry for our sins with all our heart and that we will seek to do better, with the help of His grace. Actual grace is God’s interventions and is received during prayer and acts of charity. Actual grace will help during difficult moments. Sanctifying grace is a share in God’s life. Sanctifying grace is received in the Sacraments and is habitual grace, “the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God’s call” (CCC 2000). However, sanctifying grace – union with God – can be lost through serious sin. When a person commits a serious sin, it is necessary to confess this sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be re-united with God. Confessing a serious sin, also referred to as a mortal sin, is necessary before receiving the Holy Eucharist. Sanctifying grace received in the Sacrament of Reconciliation will help us to become stronger in avoiding sin.

▪ **I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments**

We want to detest our sins because we were created to choose the good. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, which is called sin, we hurt ourselves and others. The words of this phrase express that we are sorry because of sins consequences: the consideration of sin’s ugliness, the harmful effects that sins have upon us, the penalties threatening the sinner and the fear of eternal separation from God forever if we choose to commit very serious sins. This is a contrition primarily of fear and therefore referred to as “imperfect contrition.” This is not the ideal but God accepts us where we are. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, hereafter CCC, paragraph 1453)



Jesus, the Good Shepherd carrying the sheep as a sign of His great love for us.

- **but most of all because they offend You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love.** We express in the words of the prayer that we greatly dislike our sins and desire true sorrow because we are upset that we have offended God, Who loves us completely and because He deserves our love. our desire is to love Him wholeheartedly. This is referred to as “perfect contrition.” Our life will be a journey from imperfect to perfect contrition as we come to recognize more clearly how much God loves us and gives us everything, even dying on the Cross for us. We want to return His love by never offending Jesus.
- **I firmly resolve with the help of Your grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.** We make a firm decision – a sincere resolution and commitment – with the help of God’s grace 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. (CCC 2856)
- The standard version of the Act of Contrition includes the words Thee and Thy, referring to God. You may replace these words with You and Your.

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.
- 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* daily reminds us to avoid sin.
- Only God forgives sins. (CCC 1441-1442)



Jesus Heals The Paralytic by Harold Copping

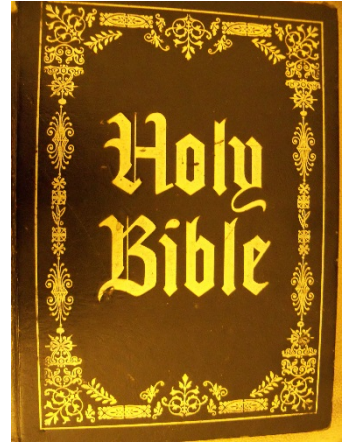
- The *Act of Contrition* is also prayed during the Sacrament of Reconciliation after confessing our sins. We turn *back* to Jesus, acknowledging our need for His healing power in our lives. His mercy is there for us as long as we approach Him with humility and make a sincere effort not to repeat our 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.

Jesus healing the paralytic and forgiving his sins. (Mark 2:1-12)

- 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, which brings us true peace.
- 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, also know as Confession and Penance.
 - 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 parents to implement “Going Deeper in Prayer” is to pray the prayer every day. A teacher is to begin or end each class with the designated prayer throughout the year.
- Echo prayer: Have children 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 girls and boys 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.
- Explain the word contrition, which means sorrow for sin and a desire, along with a commitment, to break the habit of sin.
- Encourage and support parents to pray with their children at home.
- Parents may place the prayer commitment on the child’s bedroom doorknob 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 children understand the meaning of the words and how to pronounce the words.

- **This one prayer is the prayer the children 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 children 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 young people to think about why the word or phrase stood out for them.
- After they have received explanation of each phrase, allow the children 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 children 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)
- “This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the Blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. We know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commands. Whoever says, “I know Him,” but does not do what He commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys His word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know

we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did.” (1John 1: 5-10 and 2:1-6)

- The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in mercy. Psalm 103:8

Examination of Conscience for Children – The Ten Commandments

- **“I am the Lord your God. Do not have other Gods before Me.**

We are to love the Giver more than any gift. We have received everything from God and so we are to love Him more than all the gifts we have in life. We are to love God above all people and all things. In what ways have you chosen other things or people before God? Do you take time to talk with God in prayer each day?

- **“You shall not use the name of God in vain.”**



Our language needs to reflect that we believe and follow Jesus. Have you used God’s name in a disrespectful manner? Do you have a habit of swearing?

- **“Keep holy the Lord’s Day.”**

Jesus said that unless we eat His Body and drink His Blood we have no life in us. This means that in the Mass we do not simply remember Jesus. He actually comes to help us and to give us the graces we need to follow Him and to live for Him. Have you failed to grow in your love for Jesus by not attending Mass out of laziness on a Sunday or Sat. night or holy day of obligation? Have you been distracted at Mass by playing and talking, not paying attention rather than speaking with and listening to Jesus in the prayers?

- **“Honor your father and your mother.”**

Without your parents you would not exist. Do you show the necessary respect for your parents through your words and actions? Have you disobeyed your parents or been dishonest with them? Have you made fun of your parents or spoken badly about them to others? Do you help with chores and in the care of your brothers/sisters? Do you thank your parents for all they do for you? Do you pray for your parents? Do you show proper respect toward teachers and other authority figures in your life?

- **“You shall not kill.”**

Have you ever wished harm to other persons because you were angry with them? Have you spoken about others in ways which damage their reputations? Even if what we say is true, we do not always have the right to talk about it except to the proper people and at the proper time. Have you refused to forgive someone for something they did to you? Have you refused to apologize when you’ve offended someone? Are you angry with someone now? What do we say to Jesus when we cannot love those around us or even respect them? Have you been causing someone else to commit a sin?

- **“You shall not commit impure acts.”**

Have you committed actions that are dishonest and you would feel ashamed if someone knew about them? Did you see movies, videos or pictures that are not good?

▪ **“You shall not steal.”**

Have you purposely damaged someone else’s things or property? Have you cheated in games to win? Have you copied your homework or tests? Have you kept something that is not yours? Have you helped someone else to steal something?

▪ **“You shall not lie.”**

Have you lied to your parents? Have you lied to your teachers? Have you lied to hurt someone else? Have you lied so as not to get into trouble?

▪ **“You shall not look at another with evil desires or wishes.**

If we are going to grow in love for God and others, then we need to train not just our actions, but also our thoughts and desires. Do you let your imagination think about things or actions that are wrong or disrespectful? How do you stop this when you become aware of it? Do you let your imagination think about people in bad or disrespectful ways?

▪ **“You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods.”**

Do you spend too much time thinking about what others have and wishing that you had them? Are you jealous of others because of what they have or what they can do? We all work, with the help of God’s grace, to become better persons. But at the same time, can you be happy with what you have and who you are? Do you believe that God will give you the talents you will need to be happy and will give you the things in life necessary for your happiness? We so often want more. Can you trust that God will walk with you and will teach you not to be selfish? Instead of saving things for yourself, do you share them with others?

