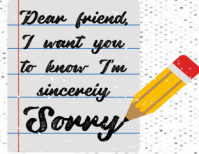


Teacher Quick Guide Card



HOLY HABITS CHALLENGE



MAKE AMENDS



CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION/CONFESSION IN ADVENT OR LENT.



CELEBRATE THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION/CONFESSION MONTHLY.



PRAY A DAILY EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

The Background

The New Testament Scriptures, as well as the practices of the early Christians, make it clear that sin was seen as a communal reality just as much as it was seen as an individual one. Sin impacts others without exception. This means that the way sin is dealt with must also involve the community. True healing, and the fullness of mercy, are made available through the ministry of the Church.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation, or going to Confession, makes the most sense if sin is fully understood as a communal problem that requires a communal remedy. Catholic priests and bishops are able, in virtue of their ordination, to absolve sin because they act in the name and power of Christ, and, also in the name of the entire community of the Church. The Sacrament incorporates into one celebration all the essential components of forgiveness.

Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year if someone is mindful of serious sin is a precept, or a commandment, of the Church for all Catholics who have attained the age of discretion. The Season of Lent is an especially fitting time to do this, and Advent is as well in so far as it is a season of preparation. Many Catholics celebrate the Sacrament even more often in order to grow in their union with Christ.

An essential step in preparing to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation is making an examination of conscience. An examination of conscience is an exercise of self-reflection that intentionally calls to mind specific instances of sin, often utilizing a written guide to assist in the reflection process.

A regular practice of examining one's conscience is a helpful, daily, tool to combat small or larger sins. The examination at the end of each day is also an important way to become mindful of all the ways that God has blessed us during the day as well.

Also important is the practice of making the Act of Contrition Prayer at the end of each day, after making an examination of conscience, and before going to sleep.

Useful texts:

An Act of Contrition:

"O My God I am heartily sorry for having offended you, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell; 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 confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen."

Holy Habit Pledge:

"I pledge, together with my brothers and sisters in Christ, to make the Holy Habits Challenge, and to run so as to win the crown of righteousness."

A Saint for the Habit:

- **Saint John Vianney:** *The French parish priest who spent several hours every day, for many years, hearing Confessions.*
Feast Day: August 4th
- **Saint John of Nepomuk:** *The Bohemian priest who chose to die rather than violate the seal of Confession*
Feast Day: May 16th

Classroom Tips:

- Incorporate the Habit and Logo on a classroom board.
- Lead the class in an examination of conscience and talk about the various ways that people of all ages enter into sin.
- Pray the act of contrition aloud as a class regularly and ask the students to memorize it.
- Read the Scripture story of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32) and talk about the mercy of God and how it relates to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Incorporate the act of asking for forgiveness into the classroom rules of behavior.
- Talk about the harm caused by holding grudges; encourage hurts to be let go quickly in any classroom disputes that arise.

Catechism Connection:

- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* section 2042 on the Second Precept of the Church to confess sins at least once a year.
- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* section 1426 on the call to conversion and self-examination.
- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sections 1446 and 1447 on the importance of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sections 1435 and 1454 on the importance of an examination of conscience.
- See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* section 2631 on need for prayers of forgiveness.

