

Children's Reconciliation Retreat

Walking Together Again

This is a half-day retreat for children. You should conduct it close to the time of the celebration of the Sacrament. If you have fewer than 15 children you may want to do the activities in consecutive order.

Outline	Environment	Materials
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gathering and Opening Prayer2. Activity Centers<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activity 1: Ceremony Review and Music for Reconciliation• Activity 2: Forgiveness Skits• Activity 3: Personal Prayer of Sorrow and Examination of Conscience3. Snack4. Closing Prayer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At least 3 group facilitators• Prayer table	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Songs of Celebration</i> CD• Snacks (pretzels)• Nametags (color coded for activity centers)• Additional materials needed are listed within each activity.

Gathering and Opening Prayer (20 minutes)

Welcome children and facilitators in a circle around the table.

Point out that one meaning of *reconciliation* is to “walk together again.”

Play selections from *Songs of Celebration* CD as background music.

Lead the opening prayer.

Lord Jesus, be with us today. Help us to learn more about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which we will celebrate together soon. Help us teach one another about your forgiveness. Help us learn to fix what is broken in our lives. Help us learn to walk with one another in peace. Help us learn to walk with you, and the Father, and the Spirit again.

Distribute the nametags.

Explain that children will be divided into three groups. Each group will travel together through three activities, then the large group will meet together again for a closing ceremony.

Make any other necessary announcements.

Match children with their facilitators and send them to their first activity.

Activity Centers

Direct the participants to note the color code on their nametag and ask them to move to the appropriate center.

Tell the group that the snack break will occur after the children have visited the three activity centers.

Activity 1: Ceremony Review and Music for Reconciliation (40 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Order of service for the ceremony, diagram of church building, song sheets, missalettes, or hymnals

Gather in the parish church or classroom. A priest or program director explains the order of service. A music minister teaches the hymns or songs.

Review with the children the order of celebration for their First Reconciliation. If you aren't meeting in the church itself, use a diagram of the church to show where the Reconciliation Room is. Also show any other places in the church where the priests will be hearing confessions.

Show them where to line up to afford privacy to others. Answer any questions.

Distribute the song materials. Teach the children the words, and explain their significance.

Sing the songs as time permits.

Rotation and Break (5 minutes)

Activity 2: Forgiveness Skits (40 minutes)

Materials Needed

- **Children's/Candidates' Reconciliation Retreat Handout 1** (*Sacraments Source Book CD*)
- Pencils

Gather in a classroom with a facilitator.

Explain that many of our sins involve hurting others.

Invite the children to think about things that would hurt others, or times when others have hurt them. Tell children that hurting someone's feelings with words or actions can be a sin, too.

Distribute the handout and divide the group into smaller groups of 3 to 5 children.

Tell the children that they will have 15 minutes to plan and rehearse a skit about forgiveness. Suggest that they use the handout as a guide.

Walk among the groups to offer assistance.

Call the group back together. Remind the children to be attentive as all groups present their work.

Ask for a volunteer group to begin, or call on each group in turn until all have performed.

Rotation and Break (5 minutes)

Activity 3: Personal Prayer of Sorrow and Examination of Conscience (40 minutes)

Materials Needed

- **Children's/Candidates' Reconciliation Retreat Handout 2** (*Sacraments Source Book CD*)
- Pencils
- Copies of Prayers of Sorrow, Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, Works of Mercy (*Catholic Source Book*)

Gather in a classroom with a facilitator.

Remind children that the Examination of Conscience and Prayer of Sorrow are part of the Reconciliation service. Point out that when the children pray their daily prayers, they can use any prayers they like, even prayers that they write.

Have children work individually or in groups of 2 to 3, depending on abilities and learning styles.

Distribute the handout and go over the directions for writing a prayer of sorrow. You could show them other written prayers of sorrow.

Walk among children offering assistance where needed. When the children are finished, ask volunteers to share their prayers. Praise their work.

Select one child to share his or her prayer at the closing gathering.

Introduce the Examination of Conscience section of the handout. Remind children that sins can hurt our relationship with God or with other people.

Have them work in pairs or small groups to write an Examination of Conscience that they can use every day. If possible, have the Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, and Works of Mercy posted in the room.

Walk among the children to offer affirmations and assistance.

Encourage the children to use their personal prayers every night.

Snack (20 minutes)

At some point in the retreat, incorporate a snack. Pretzels are an ideal treat, especially paired with a small drink. Check to be certain that no child will have an allergic reaction. As children are eating, tell them the story of pretzels.

Long ago, people observed Lent very strictly. They could not eat milk, butter, cheese, or meat. They made bread out of water, salt, and flour. They rolled the dough and shaped it to look like a person with his hands folded over his chest, which was the way that they prayed. They called the bread "little arms," or "bracella" in Latin. The word changed over time to be our pretzel. Today, it reminds us to pray and of our special heritage as Catholics.

Closing Prayer (20 minutes)

Assemble the group again in the large gathering space.

Praise children for their participation and thank the facilitators for their help.

Call each group to share its work. Then ask the selected children to share their prayers of sorrow.

Ask everyone to join you in the closing prayer:
Lord Jesus, we thank you for being with us today. We are ready to receive your forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Thank you for teaching us to walk with one another in peace.

Conclude with one of the selections from the *Songs of Celebration CD* that the children learned today.