

Objective: The students will learn that sin is saying "No" to God and His commandments, and they will be able to state that Jesus wants us to repent when we have sinned.

For the Catechist

When we succeed in loving as we have been loved, we witness to the power of Christ working in us. But we do not always succeed. As we pray at every memorial service, "There is no one who lives and does not sin: You alone are without sin" (Prayer "O God of all spirits . . ."). Thankfully, Jesus came to save us from our sins: "*I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world*" (John 12:47). Jesus gave us light in the darkness. This unit attempts to give form to the concept of sin by teaching the Ten Commandments and the Greatest Commandment. The child is being readied for the Mystery of Repentance, which will be discussed in the next lesson. Before the next lesson, ask your priest the procedure and wording he uses for the Mystery so that you can convey that to the children.

Sin as selfishness. To sin is to act in such a way that we turn in on ourselves, if only for a moment. Doing this in a serious or long-term way can jeopardize or even lose our communion with others and with God. Whether we act by commission (acting against others) or omission (ignoring others by refusing to act), we are in fact building a wall of separation. When we refuse to forgive others, we add stones to this wall. In this tension between knowing how we are meant to live as God's people and the difficulty of actually following this way every day, we come to a living awareness of sin.

Children and sin. Young children are very aware of sin although perhaps not by that name. They are very aware of being hurt and being wronged. What an adult might consider a minor act (a promise not kept, blame or a scolding not deserved), this act may resound within the child's spirit for sometime afterward. While a child is easily aware of being hurt, he or she may not so readily be aware of how

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: Prayer for Forgiveness

Introduction: Story about child leaving home **Need:** candle from the icon corner.

Read Text Aloud: Have students read text aloud.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- *Basic:* New Life Again
- *Group:* "Ten Commandments" Memory Game
- *Craft :* Weaving: "Love God and Neighbor"

Closing: Prayer for Forgiveness

Come Bless the Lord Icon Packets:

Packet I:

Packet II: The Prodigal Son

Teaching Pic:

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his or her wrong actions are serious "hurts" to another. One of the biggest challenges for the young child is putting himself or herself in another's place. When that concept takes root, the foundation for understanding sin is built. An equally challenging concept is retaliation. The child who is struck wants very much to strike back. Adults must help children channel their anger: "I won't play with you if you hit me again!"

By accident and on purpose. In the previous two grades, the wording "by accident" and "on purpose" was used to define sin. Although one is sorry in both cases, sin is something we do "on purpose"; we choose to sin. Be patient as the children present cases to you that fall in between, for example, whether "finders keepers" is stealing. Rather than trying to unravel what they did or said, start from the general instance and guide them along the path of right actions, "When I come across something that isn't mine, the first thing I do is" They may always turn to a parent or teacher when they don't know what is right.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

Repentance

"Repentance begins when we realize that we have forgotten our place in God's family. It also means realizing that our God still loves us. In our decision to return humbly to our Father, to admit our failings and to ask forgiveness, our repentance truly comes alive. We seek ways to express our sorrow as we want to be in touch with God again. Repentance takes root when we actually change our patterns of behavior and begin living anew in Him. We confirm by the choices we now make that we value communion with Him above all" (*Celebrating Forgiveness* 29).

Forgiveness in the Church

"Baptism signifies our complete break with 'the old man.' The candidate must renounce all evil and make a commitment to Christ. The early Church was quite emphatic about being faithful to this commitment. In some places, for example, there was no return after apostasy from the way of Christ: 'If we sin willfully after receiving the truth, there remains for us no further sacrifice for sin' (Heb 10:26). Yet Our Lord had taught us the mystery of forgiveness as an ongoing process. The disciples were taught to forgive each other repeatedly: 'seventy times seven times' (Mt 18:22). The early Church saw a distinction between the 'daily sins' of even the most committed believer and a more dramatic or decisive renunciation of Christ and His way. It included prayers for forgiveness of the 'daily sins' in most of its services, but restricted reconciliation from serious sins in a solemn way" (*LLII* 80).

Human Perfection

"We live out our baptismal commitment daily whenever we turn from what is wrong and do what is right. Maturation in learning to choose the good is an apt description of the Christian way. Gregory of Nyssa writes, 'Human perfection consists precisely in this: constant growth in the good.' Having chosen the right road of life does not eliminate stumblings and errors. Participating in the mystery of repentance enables us to continually adjust our sights to the right path as we walk towards enlightenment and fullness of life" (*LLII* 82).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

We've learned that when we don't follow God's rules, we must ask forgiveness. Today our lesson is about not following God's rules. Let's pray the Prayer of Forgiveness.

Introduction

In all the lessons of this unit, and some before, we've seen one word over and over again. Do you know which word I'm talking about? ("Yes") To whom are we saying "Yes?" (To Jesus) Jesus has called us to follow Him. Jesus will lead us to the Father. We have to say— "Yes!" We say "Yes" when we pray, fast, receive the Eucharist, and when we follow God's rules.

Here is a simple question. What is the opposite of "Yes?" ("No") Do we ever say "No" to God? What happens? [Allow responses.] Here is a story to start our lesson.

Once a little girl lived with her parents in a cottage in the woods. She had very good parents and sisters and brothers who loved her very much. When she got older, she decided her life wasn't very exciting. She wanted to go to the big city. She knew in her heart she was doing the wrong thing, but she packed her clothes anyway and said good-bye to her parents. They asked her to stay, but she said, "No." Her parents loved her very much, so they didn't stop her. However, they kept a candle lit in the window every night. [Bring over candle from the icon corner.]

The girl went to the circus in the city. She ate at fancy restaurants. She saw performances on stage. All day long she did everything she always wanted to. She tried to make friends, but they weren't like family. After a month of doing everything she wanted, she began to miss her family. She missed having people who loved her. She wanted to go home.

She started through the woods only to find that she'd forgotten how to get home. After a time it became dark. Then, in the distance, what do you think she saw? (The candle in the window) When she reached home, her parents were so happy to see her. They embraced her and made her a meal. Her brothers and sisters jumped up and down and hugged her. She was so glad to be home again.

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When I Say "No"

God has given us everything good. God gave us life. God made us in His image. God is love. We are to love.

When we follow God's rules, we are loving. We say "Yes" to God when we follow God's rules. It is good to say "Yes" to God.

Sometimes we say "No" to God. When we steal something, we say "No" to God. When we don't respect our bodies, we say "No" to God. When we lie, we say "No" to God. We also hurt others. When we hurt others on purpose, it is sin. When we don't respect and honor God, it is sin.



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Reading of Text

As the children read aloud, help them interact with the text using the comments or questions below which are keyed to the text phrases (in bold type).

We are to love.

Who is love? (God) We are made in God's image. WE are to love, too.

It is good to say "Yes" to God.

How do we love? (By following God's rules) Tell me some of God's rules. (Refer to the Ten Commandments and the Greatest Commandment.)

When we don't respect and honor God, it is sin.

Tell me how we say "No" to God. (When we steal, when we don't respect our bodies, when we lie) These are bad things. When we do something bad on purpose or hurt someone on purpose, what is it called? (Sin) Whenever you do something that has hurt someone, you always say, "I'm sorry." When you've done something bad on purpose, you have sinned. It is time to say "I'm sorry; please forgive me" to the person and to God also. We'll learn about this in a few minutes.

He went to his house.

Do you remember the story of Zacchaeus? Zacchaeus was so small he had to climb a tree to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was also a sinner. Everyone knew that. When Jesus saw him, he called to him in the tree. Zacchaeus came down. Later, Jesus stayed at his house. Jesus looked for sinners. He wanted to them to repent or change so they could be close to God again.

When we repent we can be close to God again.

"Repent" is a good word to learn. Do you know what it means? (Repent means to change your direction—to change what is wrong in your life. It also means to change your heart.) When you change your heart you reach deep inside you so that the change affects your whole life.



When we don't follow God's commandments, we sin. Jesus always looked for sinners. He called Zacchaeus out of the tree. He went to his house.

Jesus wants all of us to be united to God. When we sin, we are lost. Jesus will look for us. Jesus wants us to repent or change. When we repent, we can be close to God again.

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The Holy Spirit leads us to the Mystery of Repentance.

Who is it that helps us see what we have done? (The Holy Spirit) Who is it that touches our hearts and helps us repent? (The Holy Spirit) When the Holy Spirit touches your heart, you will want to ask forgiveness of anyone you've hurt. God does not want us to hurt anyone, so you must also ask forgiveness from God.

We are forgiven by Jesus.

How do we talk to God in the Mystery of Repentance? (Through the priest) Where does the priest stand? (Near the person confessing the sin) Who forgives the sin? (Jesus forgives the sin, and the priest gives Jesus' blessing.) We are united to God again.

... always.

What does God want? (God wants us to live united to Him—always.)

***Let's review:** What are we saying to God when we don't obey his commandments? (No) What does Jesus want us to do when we have sinned? (Repent) Who leads us to the Mystery of Repentance? (The Holy Spirit)*

Activity Tracks

Basic: New Life Again

We learned today that when we say "No" to God, we can ask forgiveness. When we are forgiven, it's as if we are wearing our baptismal robe again. We are given a second chance. We are given new life again. Try the dot-to-dot, and let's see what we have. Then we'll complete the sentence below.



The Holy Spirit helps us repent. The Holy Spirit touches our hearts. The Holy Spirit helps us see what we have done. The Holy Spirit leads us to the Mystery of Repentance.

The Mystery of Repentance brings us home to God. We stand before Jesus in the icon. We ask Jesus to forgive us. The priest gives the blessing of Jesus. We are forgiven by Jesus.

God loves us. God wants us to live united to Him—always.

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New Life Again

Leave the baptismal gown WHITE. Color outside the gown, and draw in the rays of the rainbow. Fill in the blank below.



The Mystery of _____ brings us new life again. It is like wearing our baptismal gown once more.

Group: "Ten Commandments" Memory Game

Today we'll play a game of zipper to review the Ten Commandments. This is how we'll play. We'll form a circle. The first person will say the first commandment; the second, the second commandment; and on to the tenth. If someone makes a mistake, we'll begin with the first commandment again with the next person in the circle. Do you think we can make it all the way from the first commandment to the tenth?

Craft: Weaving: "Love God and Neighbor"

Materials: Sample, Weaving activity sheets 1 and 2 copied onto two different colored papers), Title Worksheet, construction paper, glue, scissors; optional: piece of large weave cloth such as burlap to show weaving concept



[Have sample ready to show children. Ahead of time you may wish to mark their construction paper for them to place the weaving pieces.] *We learned many things about the Holy Spirit today. The Holy Spirit touches our hearts and calls us to repentance when we have done wrong. The Holy Spirit helps us to do right again. The Holy Spirit helps us follow the Greatest Commandment, which all the other commandments lead to. Do you remember the Greatest Commandment? (Love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself.) We must love God [raise hands above you], and we must love our neighbors [spread hands to side]. Our love must flow in two directions. To remember this, here is a weaving. When you weave, threads go in two directions to make a finished piece, usually a piece of cloth. [Show sample.] The Holy Spirit helps us to love in two directions. Here is a project to show that. [Show sample.] The one set of threads, or pieces of paper, says: "I Love God." The other set says: "I Love My Neighbor." We are to weave those two kinds of love together in our lives. We are to come to the Mystery of Repentance whenever we have failed to love God and our neighbor. Let me show you how to do this project. First, paste the title onto your construction paper. Next, paste the strips that say "I Love My Neighbor" below the title. Then paste the strips that say "I Love God" on the left side. When you get that far, stop. We'll do the weaving as a class. [After guiding them through the weaving you may have them paste down the loose ends.]*

Closing: *Let's gather and pray for forgiveness. [Prayer for Forgiveness.]*

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I LOVE MY NEIGHBOR

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