

The Holy Spirit Calls Me Back

Objective: The students will be able to tell the story of the Prodigal Son and be able to state that we ask for the Mystery of Repentance when we have sinned. They will learn the procedure for the Mystery.

For the Catechist

"Reform your lives! The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Our Lord began His ministry with a call to repentance. Repentance (*metanoia*) is defined as a change of heart, which means a change of life and action. In our decision to return humbly to our Father, to admit our failings and to ask forgiveness, our repentance truly comes alive.

The child and repentance. In the previous years of the series, the words "I'm sorry; please forgive me" have been taught to the students. Hopefully they say these words spontaneously when they know they have hurt someone. Hopefully the parent has heard these words and has offered forgiveness to the child. If you find the children do not offer stories of their own experiences of repentance and forgiveness, be ready with your own to engender the concepts of returning to a parent to ask forgiveness. Through forgiveness the children will experience the joy of reconciliation. It is important for the child to have a grasp of returning to a parent for forgiveness. The story of the Prodigal Son requires this as does our concept of returning to God as Father.

The Mystery of Repentance. What a great gift has been given to the Church that through the Holy Spirit we can ask and receive forgiveness for our sins: "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained" (John 20:22-23). When the text talks about the Mystery, discuss with the children how the Mystery is celebrated in your own parish. They should learn words or prayers that may be expected from them as well as the order and actions of the

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: Prayer for Forgiveness

Introduction: Explanation of the introductory story of last lesson. **Need:** candle from icon corner.

Read Text Aloud: Have students read text aloud. **Need:** Consult your priest to get wording to use for teaching the students the procedure for Mystery of Repentance.

Activity Tracks:

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

- *Basic:* Coming Home

- *Group:* Practicing "Forgiveness"

Need: Consult your priest to get wording to use for teaching the students the procedure for the Mystery of Repentance.

- *Craft:* "New Life" Kite

Closing: Prayer for Forgiveness

Come Bless the Lord Icon Packets:

Packet I:

Packet II: Parable of the Prodigal Son

Teaching Pic:

#S9 Holy Penance—Confession,
#S10 Holy Penance—Absolution

Mystery. It is asking quite a lot to have children aware of their need for repentance and their need to ask for forgiveness during the Mystery. Stress the joy of being forgiven. Encourage the children to think of how they feel (relieved, peaceful, brought back into the family) when a parent forgives and hugs them.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted.)

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

"This story is often called the parable of the merciful or loving father, for it is the father's love and mercy that remains uppermost in the story. In this parable the Lord is actually showing us the steadfastness of our heavenly Father's love. We tend to live out our lives nonchalantly, forgetting Him and His way. But God continually remembers us and His longing to communicate Himself to us never ends. He patiently waits for us to remember that He is there, waiting for us to become aware of His love" (*Celebrating Forgiveness* 28-29)

The Mystery of Repentance

"The Church forbade the repetition of baptism but allowed the forgiveness of subsequent sins by a separate rite, the mystery of Repentance. The absolute renunciation of sin made in baptism could not be compromised, yet God's mercy could welcome back those who stumble and fall on the road of life if they were truly repentant. In the first centuries of the Church, this mystery was performed publicly. It consisted generally of a public admission of sin, exclusion from the worshipping community during the performance of an adequate penance, and eventual absolution through the imposition of the bishop's hands. The Fathers often termed this mystery of repentance the 'second baptism.' Origen explained the difference between the forgiveness of sins in baptism, which was gratuitous and complete, whereas the forgiveness of penance required much tears and labor" (*LLII* 80).

The Priest's Role in the Mystery

"In Baptism the candidate or sponsor publicly expresses repentance and conversion to God. In the same way, Confession is a public testimony, both to our weaknesses and to our faith in the constancy of God's love for us. The celebration of this Mystery often begins with a communal penance service. The priest-confessor represents the whole Church, witnessing our repentance and praying to God for our forgiveness" (*Celebrating Forgiveness* 38-39).

Standing before Christ

"'It is not me to whom you are speaking, but to God, before whom you stand.' In some Byzantine usages the priest says these words to the person who has come to Confession, emphasizing that the One actually at work in this Mystery is the Lord. This is also why confessions are usually heard before some image of God's presence: an icon of Christ, a cross, or the holy Gospel book. When the Church acts in the fullness of its character as the Body of Christ, it is Christ at work.

"Approaching Christ in this encounter of pardon ought to be a great moment of thanksgiving for us: for when we have felt the healing power of divine forgiveness, we know that truly God is with us" (*Celebrating Forgiveness* 39).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

[Gather the students at the icon corner.] *We've been learning about sin and forgiveness. Today we'll learn about how we are forgiven. Let's pray the Prayer for Forgiveness.*

Introduction

Last week we learned about saying "No" to God or sin. Who remembers what sin is? (Doing something wrong on purpose; doing something hurtful) Last week I told you a story about a young girl. Do you remember what the story was about? (A young girl leaves her family's cottage in the woods to travel to the city. She says "No" to her parents when they ask her to stay. They don't stop her, but they keep a candle lit in the window. Finally she misses her family and tries to go home. It gets dark, and she sees the candle in the window. The candle guides her home.) The story has four things to teach us about being a Christian. Any ideas? [Allow a few responses.]

*First, the girl in the story knew she was doing wrong. Why? She had a **conscience**. We know we are doing wrong because God gave us a conscience. Our conscience let's us know when we're about to sin, or let's us know right after we've sinned. What does a conscience do? (Let's us know when we've done wrong.)*

Second, the girl in the story said "No" to her parents when they asked her to stay. We say "No" to God by not following the Ten Commandments or the Greatest Commandment. What do we call it when we say "No" to God? (Sin)

Third, the girl in the story left her home, and her parents didn't stop her. When we sin, we leave God, and God will not stop us.

Finally, her parents kept a candle in the window so she could find her way back. [Bring candle from icon corner.] God gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us back home because God always wants us united to Him. He'll always take us back.

Today we'll learn what to do when we've left God when we've sinned. It's a gift from God called the Mystery of Repentance.

The Holy Spirit Calls Me Back

Sometimes we say "No" to God. We don't love each other as He told us to. When we don't love, we sin. When we hurt others, we sin. We also hurt ourselves and may feel sick.

Jesus wants to heal us. Jesus has the power to heal us. Jesus wants us to come home to the Father. Here is a story Jesus told about coming home.

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).

Jesus wants us to come home to the Father.

What are two ways we sin? (When we don't love and when we hurt others) When we sin, how do we feel? (Lost) Does Jesus want us to be lost? (No) What will Jesus do? (He will look for us.)

He was unhappy.

What did the son say to the Father? (Give me my inheritance.) What is an inheritance? (A possession or money of a parent given to the child when the parent dies.) What did the son do when the father gave him his inheritance? (Left home) Why was son unhappy later? (He wasted all his money, and he was hungry.)

He was sorry he left.

Why was he sorry he left? (Because he could be at home well fed and cared for)

His father embraced him.

What does embrace mean? (Hug) What does it mean when we hug someone? (We like them.) Was the father mad at the son? (No) What do you think the father was feeling when he saw his son? (Happy) What do you think the son felt when the father embraced him? (Happy and relieved the father wasn't angry) Did you ever do something wrong; and when you should have gotten into trouble, your mom or dad forgave you? [Allow responses.] They had mercy on you. This is how it is with God our Father. He wants us to come back to Him. He will be merciful and forgive us.

The Mystery restores our new life in Christ.

There is a special Mystery in our Church for when we sin. It is called the Mystery of Repentance. We ask for and receive God's forgiveness. Do you know anything about the Mystery of Repentance? [Allow responses. Explain the wording and procedure for the Mystery as celebrated in your parish.]

Our sins will be gone, and we will be healed.

It feels wonderful when the priest says, "Your sins are forgiven." The Mystery of Repentance is a wonderful gift Jesus gave to us.



Parable of the Prodigal Son

A rich man had two sons. The older son said, "Give me what is mine." The son took his money and left home. Soon he wasted all his money. He was hungry. He was unhappy.

He thought about his home. He knew if he went home, he would be well cared for. He knew home was where he belonged. He was sorry he left. He started for home.

Before he reached his house, his father saw him. His father ran out to meet him. His father embraced him.



That is the way it is with God. God is our Father. He wants us united to Him.

When we sin, we ask for the Mystery of Repentance. The Mystery helps us become well again. The Mystery restores our new life in Christ.

When we begin the Mystery, we ask Father to bless us. We tell Father what we have done wrong. The Holy Spirit helps us open our hearts.

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It is so good to be reunited with God.

The Mystery of Repentance is like a new life. We start new again and pray that we sin no more. We try harder to be good and to work with God's Holy Spirit.

Let's review. *Who can tell me what happens in the Mystery of Repentance—what is the first thing that happens?*

[Lead the students through a review of the wording and procedure.] *In the Mystery we ask for and receive God's forgiveness. Let's review what we've learned in this unit. Turn to the unit review page.*

Father will talk with us. Father will tell us how to pray. We ask forgiveness from Jesus. The priest gives us the blessing of Jesus.

God is merciful. Our sins will be forgiven, and we will be healed.

When we were made Christians, we received new life from the Holy Spirit. The Mystery of Repentance gives us new life again. It is like wearing our baptismal robe again.

It is so good to be reunited to God.

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Activity Tracks

Basic: Coming Home

We learned many things today about sin and coming home again to God. There's a hidden message in this worksheet. Can you figure it out?

Coming Home

A. Begin at Start 1: (1) Skip every other letter for the first part of the message below. Then go to 2: (1). Work backward, skip every other letter for the rest of the message.

Start 2 | Start 1

I O W N I J R U E S H
S L L L A R G E I T D
U O R R N P T E O H T

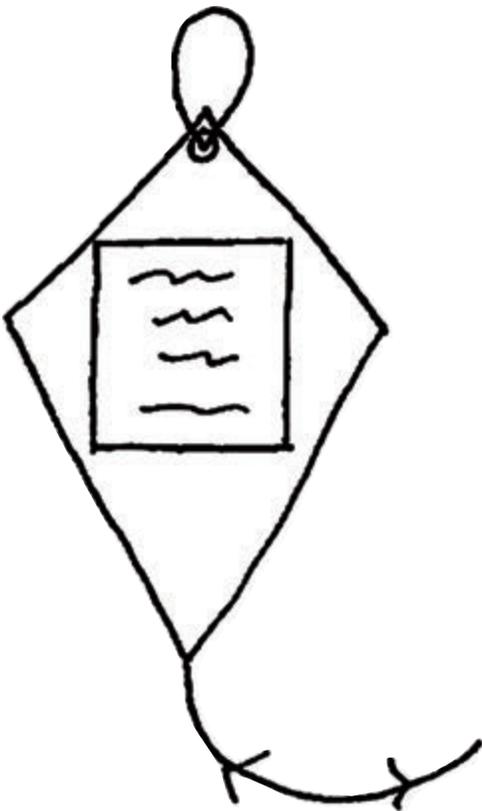
Just like the Prodigal Son,
I will return to the
Father.

Group: Practicing "Forgiveness"

In our lesson today, we learned about asking forgiveness. We learned about the Mystery of Repentance. We also learned that we need to forgive those who have done us wrong. We need to learn to ask forgiveness and to forgive someone. To remember these lessons, let's do some pantomime. I'll read a situation, and two or three of you can enact it.

First, let's enact the Mystery of Repentance. I'll be Father. [Ask for a student to come to the Mystery. Guide the students through the procedure and prayers for the Mystery as celebrated in your parish.]

Next, let's have small groups enact the following situations. After I read them to you, raise your hand if you want to be in that scene: (1) You and your friend both want to pitch in the baseball game. You both race to get the ball on the ground and you knock over your friend. What do you say? What does your friend say? (2) You've made friends with the new kid in school. You've decided that you're best friends and you're playing together. An old friend comes and wants to join the game. You both run away. What do both of you have to do? What does your old friend say? (3) You've taken money from your mother's purse without permission to buy yourself a treat. What must you do? What must your mother do and say? (4) You and two friends are playing a board game, and you've set up the cards so that you will win. You have cheated to win. What must you do?



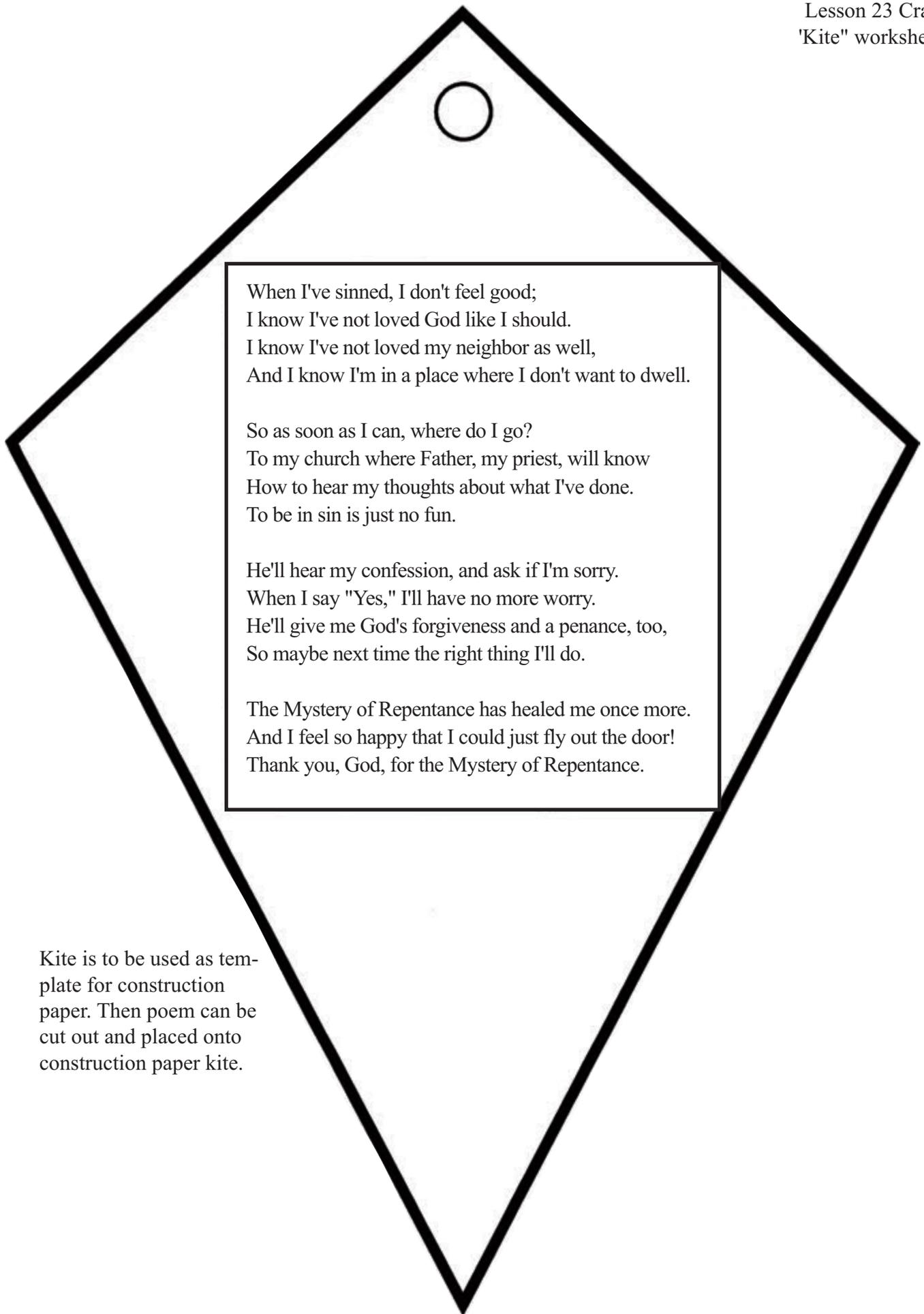
Craft: New Life" Kite

Materials: Construction paper, stapler, 3/8" ribbon (10" per student), yarn for hanging project, Kite worksheet, scissors.

[You may wish to have strips of ribbon cut for the kite tails: one 8" piece and two 4" pieces for tying to the tail. Have sample ready.] *When we celebrate the Mystery of Repentance, it is as if we have our baptismal robe on again. The new life we received in Baptism is ours once again. When you've been forgiven in the Mystery of Repentance, you feel very good inside. Sometimes it is as if a big weight was taken off your shoulders and you can fly.*

To help you remember how good you feel after the Mystery of Repentance, we'll make a kite with a poem on it. [Read poem.] You can hang the kite in your room. First, you'll trace the kite onto construction paper. Then cut out the poem and paste it onto the middle of the kite. Then cut two smaller pieces of ribbons from the big one. We'll staple the big piece on the bottom of the kite, and you can tie the others on the larger piece. Finally, we'll punch a hole at the top, and tie a string so you can hang it in your room.

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



When I've sinned, I don't feel good;
I know I've not loved God like I should.
I know I've not loved my neighbor as well,
And I know I'm in a place where I don't want to dwell.

So as soon as I can, where do I go?
To my church where Father, my priest, will know
How to hear my thoughts about what I've done.
To be in sin is just no fun.

He'll hear my confession, and ask if I'm sorry.
When I say "Yes," I'll have no more worry.
He'll give me God's forgiveness and a penance, too,
So maybe next time the right thing I'll do.

The Mystery of Repentance has healed me once more.
And I feel so happy that I could just fly out the door!
Thank you, God, for the Mystery of Repentance.

Kite is to be used as template for construction paper. Then poem can be cut out and placed onto construction paper kite.

Unit 4 Review

1. *What are two things that unite us to God?*
(Lesson 18: Prayer and fasting)

2. *What is the Greatest Commandment?*
(Lesson 18: Love God with all
your heart and your neighbor as yourself)

3. *What are the first three commandments?*
(Lesson 19:
(1) *I am the Lord, your God, you shall not have strange gods before me.*
(2) *You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain.*
(3) *Keep holy the Lord's Day.*)

4. *What are the next three commandments?*
(Lesson 20: (4) *Honor your father and mother.*
(5) *Do not kill.*
(6) *Do not commit adultery.*)

5. *What are the last four commandments?*
(Lesson 21: (7) *Do not steal.*
(8) *Do not bear false witness.*
(9) *Do not covet your neighbor's wife.*
(10) *Do not covet your neighbor's goods.*)

6. *What does Jesus want us to do when we have sinned?*
(Lesson 22: Repent)

7. *What is the name of the Mystery in which we ask forgiveness?*
(Lesson 23: The Mystery of Repentance)