

We Ask God to Forgive Us

Objective: Students will be able to explain that the Mystery of Repentance is our way to receive God's healing grace when we come to Him for forgiveness of our sins.

For the Catechist

God is always loving us even when we are turning away from His love. Children in Grade 3 are ready to learn about this unconditional love that requires their acceptance and willingness to be in God's love. God wants parents to model this unconditional love. He tells us this by giving us the parable of the prodigal son.

The children have learned that sin results from turning away from God. They also learned sin is making mistakes on purpose. Now they will learn that they are the ones who need to return to God's love. They are the ones who must ask God to forgive them. The Church gives the Mystery of Repentance (Confession) to let us ask God to forgive us our sins.

"Anyone who is aware of serious sin is to receive the sacrament of penance as soon as possible; it is strongly recommended to all the Christian faithful that they receive this sacrament frequently especially during the times of fasts and penance observed in their own Church *sui iuris*" (*The Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*).

Formulas for Confession vary; therefore, no lesson in this *God With Us* series includes a format. Help the children practice the formula used in your jurisdiction. Any prayers that they need to remember can be added to the opening and closing prayers for the next few lessons. A prayer page can be made during the craft activity for this lesson.

The Jesus Prayer. Sometimes we forget to say our prayers, but we can learn to say this short prayer many times throughout the day. The Jesus Prayer's rhythm and sound helps us meditate. By saying this prayer we learn to listen to God.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: The Jesus Prayer

Introduction: Discussion of ways we turn away from God
Need: magazine pictures of people doing different activities

Read Text Aloud: Have students volunteer to read.

Activity Tracks:

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

- *Basic:* God's Message
- *Group:* We Must Follow God's Way
- *Craft:* "The Jesus Prayer" Page

Closing: The Jesus Prayer

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord: Christ The Teacher

Teaching Pics:

St. John of the Ladder (GL8)

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

The Image Restored

"To restore the Image in fallen Adam' this is how the Fathers described the purpose of Christ's coming. He restores that Image in us when we are grafted onto the Body of Christ in the mysteries of initiation. When, burdened and tried by sin, we need His healing touch. He meets us in two mysteries of restoration: repentance and holy unction.

"We are encouraged to confess our sins whenever we are conscious of having seriously strayed from the Lord's way. Traditionally we approach the mystery of repentance during the fasting seasons of the Church year and many parishes have penitential services during those times. Some priests are available for confession after vespers or before the Liturgy on the Lord's Day or upon request, depending on their other commitments.

"The Byzantine style of confession stresses that we are confessing to Christ through the medium of the Church. The penitent stands in front of a crucifix, an icon of Christ or the holy gospel book and beside the priest. The penitent confesses his sins, after which he receives spiritual instruction from the priest, who is to act more like a physician than a judge. As the priest recites the prayer of absolution, the penitent bows his head so that the priest may cover him with the end of his epitrachelion. This is a symbolic and tangible sign that God's grace has overshadowed the penitent and restored him to a state of friendship with God" (*DC 90*).

The Jesus Prayer

"The words of the Jesus Prayer are simple enough 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.' It is by repeating the prayer over and over, both aloud and silently, that it gradually becomes part of us. When that happens (and it only does happen after much use), the prayer has penetrated our consciousness and we find it welling up inside us even when we don't consciously set out to say it.

"Because it is so simple, the Jesus Prayer can be said anywhere: while driving, walking, painting the house, cleaning the bathtub. But a person who wishes to seriously develop the practice of the Jesus Prayer will set aside prayer time to do just that. If you are looking to bring this practice to life in your heart, you would begin by setting a certain amount of time aside just for praying the Jesus Prayer, increasing it each day or each week so that it becomes more and more a part of you. Customarily people start by saying the prayer a specific number of times (say, 100) and increasing that number regularly" (*DC 26*).

How to Say the Jesus Prayer

"Another technique to help make this prayer more and more a part of our lives is to synchronize the recitation of the prayer with our breathing. Many people say 'Lord Jesus Christ' when inhaling, then 'Son of God,' when exhaling, 'have mercy on me' when inhaling and 'a sinner' when exhaling. By tying the prayer to our bodily rhythms in this way, the Fathers sought to bring their entire being—body, soul and spirit—together, centering their entire existence on recalling the name of Jesus" (*DC 27*).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Last week we said a prayer and venerated the cross. Let's pray it today again. "We . . ." What should we do while we are saying the words? (Cross ourselves and bow) Let's say the prayer and bow three times. [Say the prayer.] Today we are going to learn another prayer. This one is short so we can say it often. The prayer is called the Jesus Prayer. [Hold up the prayer from the end of this section.] Let's say the words. "Lord. . . ." Let's say this prayer three times. What is the name of this prayer? (The Jesus Prayer)

Introduction

What is the name of the holy season we are in now? (The Great Fast) How many days is it? (40) Let's count our footsteps on the floor and put up our next guidepost. On the fourth Sunday we remember St. John of the Ladder) [Have the students walk on the steps or count them on the wall—wherever you have them pasted.] Let's stop at each sign and read the name of that Sunday. One, two . . . First Sunday (Sunday of Orthodoxy). What did we do on that Sunday? (Carried icons in church—[if that is the tradition in your jurisdiction]) Eight, nine . . . Second Sunday. Fifteen, sixteen . . . Third Sunday (Veneration of the Holy Cross). How do we venerate the Holy Cross? (We bow and kiss it.) Twenty two, twenty three . . . St. John of the Ladder. Let's put up the sign for this Sunday. We are more than halfway there on our journey to Pascha. What are we supposed to do during these 40 days? (Pray, fast, and share with those less fortunate)

I have some pictures to show you today. Let's see if we can tell who is acting the way God wants. How does God want us to act? (He wants us to help people the way He helps us.) [Use appropriate pictures from magazines or newspapers.] Do you do any of the things the people are doing on the pictures?

Last week we learned that we sin when we turn away from God's love. Even when we turn away, God still loves us.

Let's turn to our books to learn how much God wants us to turn to His love.

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We Ask God to Forgive Us

Throughout the Great Fast, we want to stay close to God. We want to be prepared to celebrate Pascha. One way we can be ready is by asking God to forgive us for the many times we turned away from His love. God wants us to know how to recognize the times we sin. He also wants us to know how to be sorry for our sins and to ask for forgiveness.

Whenever we want to learn how to behave the way God wants, we look to Jesus. Jesus shows us how to live God's way. Jesus also teaches us how we should live by telling us parables. Parables are Bible stories that teach a lesson. Today we are going to read about the parable that Jesus told about a young man and his father.



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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).

How do we know our parents love us always? What are some ways they show us? God shows us He loves us always too. What are some good things God gives us every day? What should we do when we turn away from our parents' love and from God's love? (Ask for forgiveness) Let's look at the picture on the first page of this lesson. What are the father and son doing? Let's read about them.

... that Jesus told about a young man and his father. *What is a parable? (A Bible story that teaches a lesson) What is a sin? (We sin when we turn away from God's love.) This parable tells us about a son who turns away from his father's love.*



A man had two sons. The younger one asked his father for his share of the money. He went to the city and spent all his money on good times.

Soon he had no money left. The only job he could get was to feed the pigs. Some days he was so hungry he wanted to eat the pigs' food. He remembered that his father's workers had plenty to eat. He decided to go back to his father's house. He planned to say, "I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."

He started walking to his father's house. His father saw him coming and was so happy. He ran out to meet him and hugged and kissed his son. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son."

The father said to his servants: "Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fatted calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found."

The other son came home from working in the fields and heard about the party. He was angry because his father never gave a party for him. He said, "Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends. But when your son returns who swallowed up your property, for him you slaughter the fatted calf."

The father answered, "My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found."

(Luke 15:11-32)

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He was lost and has been found.

Do you think God greets us that nicely every time we turn back to Him? (Yes) Why is the brother angry? Would you be angry? Why shouldn't he be? (He never experienced the hardships of his brother. He was always in his father's love and protection.)

... when we come to Him for forgiveness of our sins.

Why should we go to Confession during the Great Fast?

(To ask God to forgive us as we journey toward Pascha)

[Check with your priest for the requirements for the yearly

confession according to the Church laws.] *Should we try*

to go to Confession more often? Why? (To ask God to forgive us)

What is the name of the Mystery that gives us

God's healing grace? (The Mystery of Repentance)

Why did Jesus tell us the story of the prodigal son? (To

see how the father is waiting for the son to return) Is God

waiting for us to be with Him always? (Yes)

Let's review: *What is sin? (Turning away from God's love)*

What is the Mystery of Repentance? (Our way to receive

God's healing grace when we come to Him for forgiveness

of our sins.)

God wants us to return to Him just as the prodigal son returned to his father. We return to God's love by asking Him to forgive us our sins. We ask for forgiveness when we go to Confession. Before we go to Confession, we think about the times we did something wrong and the times we did not help someone who needed our help. We think about our sins and ask God to forgive us. When we go to Confession, we receive the Mystery of Repentance.

The Mystery of Repentance is our way to receive God's healing grace when we come to Him for forgiveness of our sins. Our Church also gives us the Prayer for Forgiveness that we can say to tell God we are sorry for our sins. The Mystery of Repentance helps us prepare to celebrate Pascha.

The Church also gives us many other prayers to ask God to forgive our sins. One of these prayers is called the Jesus Prayer. We can say this short prayer often throughout the day to help us think about God always.

We learned that when we pray, we talk and listen to God. God wants us to ask for forgiveness for our sins. God also wants us to listen to Him and believe we are forgiven. God wants us to grow closer to Him as we prepare for Pascha.

The Church gives us the Mystery of Repentance. It is our way to receive God's healing grace when we come to Him for forgiveness of our sins.

Words to Remember:
Prodigal Son: The son who wasted his father's money. He came home and asked his father to forgive him. The father celebrated because "He was lost and is found."
The Jesus Prayer: A prayer that asks Jesus to have mercy on us.
Mystery of Repentance: Our way to receive God's healing grace when we come to Him for forgiveness of our sins.

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Activity Tracks

Basic: God's Message

[This worksheet is in the student text.]

We are learning many prayers to ask God for forgiveness.

Let's unscramble the letters to read what God tells us

about sin.

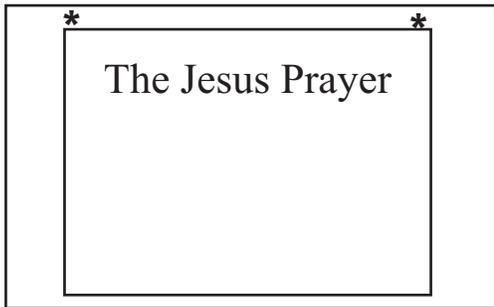
Our Prayer to God
Unscramble the letters of each word to read the message.

<u>WHEN</u> HWEN	<u>WE</u> EW	<u>REFUSE</u> REFSUE	<u>LOVE</u> EOLV
<u>WE</u> EW	<u>TURN</u> NTRU	<u>FROM</u> FMOR	<u>GOD</u> DGO
<u>THIS</u> HSTI	<u>IS</u> SI	<u>SIN</u> NSI	<u>IN</u> NI
<u>BEING</u> BGEIN	<u>SELFISH</u> SLEFSIH	<u>AND</u> NDA	
<u>WANTING</u> WNATNIG	<u>OUR</u> ROU	<u>OWN</u> WNO	<u>WAY</u> YWA
<u>WE</u> EW	<u>THINK</u> THKNI	<u>ONLY</u> OYLN	<u>OF</u> FO
<u>OURSELVES</u> ORUSLEVSE	<u>AND</u> DNA	<u>REFUSE</u> RESFUE	
<u>LOVE</u> ELVO	<u>WE</u> EW	<u>SIN</u> NSI	

Group: We Must Follow God's Way

Materials: Pictures from magazines and a ball

We started class by looking at pictures of people doing many different activities. Now we are going to play a game using pictures from magazines. We are going to identify what they are doing. Let's form a circle. Pass the ball whatever way you want. I'm going to ask one of you to have your back turned; and when you say stop, the person who has the ball has to take a picture from the pile and tell us what the person is doing. Then all of us will say the Jesus Prayer. Why should we say the Jesus Prayer? (We are asking God to forgive us and to be with us at all times.) We should say this prayer many times throughout the day because this prayer asks God to be with us to help us follow Him always.



Craft: "The Jesus Prayer" Page

Materials: "The Jesus Prayer" prayer page according to each translations, heavier white paper or construction paper (1/2 sheet per student), hole punch, markers, stickers or stars, scissors, and glue

[Have sample ready to show children.] *We said "The Jesus Prayer" at the beginning of our class today. Today we are going to make another page to add to our prayer book.*

Paste the words on a half sheet of construction paper. You can draw pictures around the words, or you can add the stars or stickers I have here. Punch two holes to match the ones on the prayer cover. Untie the yarn on your prayer book cover and add this new page. Now pull the yarn through the holes and tie.

Closing

Let's say the words. "Lord..." Let's say this prayer three times. What is the name of this prayer? (The Jesus Prayer) We call it that because we are calling on Jesus by name.

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Son of God,

have mercy on me,

a sinner.

Melkite
Greek
Catholic
Church

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Son of God,

have mercy on me,

a sinner.

Romanian
Greek
Catholic
Diocese of
Canton

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Son of God,

have mercy on me,

a sinner.

Ruthenian
Byzantine
Catholic
Metro-
politan
Province

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Son of God,

have mercy on me,

a sinner.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Diocese of
St.
Josaphat

The Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Son of God,

have mercy on me,

a sinner.

Ukrainian
Catholic
Synod