

To Sin Is to Turn Away

Objective: Students will be able to define sin as the result of our choosing to turn away from God's way.

For the Catechist

Jesus, who fulfills God's plan of salvation, promised to be with us always. The first fruits of the promise is the Holy Spirit, given first to the apostles and then to all Christians. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we live in Christ. We strive to be faithful to the New Covenant He inaugurated. We know, however, that sometimes we are unfaithful to this covenant. When we violate His covenant, we are unfaithful to God. We call that sin. Our sins are more than acts. Our entire being, both voluntarily and involuntarily, breaks the loving relationship God has extended to us.

Left to ourselves, there would be no hope, but God is loving and kind. His loving kindness is never diminished by our sinfulness. In the sixth century, the ascetic, St. Isaac the Syrian wrote, "Never say that God is just. If He were just, you would be in hell. Rely only on His injustice which is mercy, love, and forgiveness."

Another explanation of sin is given to us by our Church Fathers. They tell us sin is the result of our taking our eyes off Jesus, who is our target. We choose to chart our own course, and we "miss the mark." The Hebrew word for sin graphically means to "miss the mark." The Church Fathers explain that sin stops our movement toward God. Only through repentance are we able to regain our momentum toward Jesus.

Fourth grade students have a well-defined sense of right and wrong - there are rules in games and there are rules in life. Help them to realize that sin is much more than not following the rules. When we sin, we make a choice that separates us from God - God, our loving Father, never separates Himself from us. He patiently waits to be reunited with us through our repentance.

This is the first of three lessons to be used during the Great Fast. When planning the year, have lessons 21, 25, and 22 scheduled before Pascha. These lessons work together to explain our being unfaithful which leads to sin and our need for repentance.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: The Jesus Prayer

Introduction: Discussion of news articles
Need: pictures from the newspaper

Read Text Aloud: Have the students volunteer to read the text aloud or have the students read sections silently.

Activity Tracks:

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

- *Basic:* A Modern Parable
- *Group:* The Beatitudes
- *Craft:* String Art Cross (Part 1)

Closing: Psalm 50/51:3-10

Icon Packets:

Come Bless the Lord:

Christ Pantocrator

Packet II: Parable of the Good Samaritan,
Parable of the Prodigal Son

Teaching Pics

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

God's Plan

"God's plan for us is that we reflect His image and likeness in creation. Unable to do this because of the fall, we look to Christ as the pattern for true humanity in God's image. We achieve union with Him in baptism and attempt to live out that oneness by modelling our lives on His. Only Christ, the image of the Father, is the perfection of God's plan for us because humanity itself is broken, marred by sin" (*STBH* 21).

"The Christian who values his union with God in Christ keeps the commandments, not because they are a law, but because they reflect reality as seen by the One who has given them. Observing the commandments becomes a way of uniting ourselves with the mind and heart of the Lord and becoming one in will with Him" (*STBH* 32).

Sin: Missing the Mark

"People who sin may be compared to an arrow seeking to chart its own course rather than relying on the direction set by the archer. They seek to be their own person, to determine their own truth. Yet this insistence on their individuality is in itself a failure to realize that they are fulfilled, not by setting their own goal and creating their own world, but by living out their true nature in God's image as reflected now in Christ. Sin, then, destroys our humanity in the very act of 'trying to be me'" (*STBH* 28-29).

"The Scriptures teach that there is a basic undercurrent of sin in everyone's life, 'for all have sinned, all have fallen short of the glory of God' (Rom 3:23). At the same time, it teaches that there are distinctions in sins. 'All wrongdoing is sin, but not all sin is deadly' (1 Jn 5:17). We can shoot the arrow so far off course that it is lost in the woods behind the target; or it can come to rest near the target where we can easily retrieve it and try again. Nevertheless, in either case we are off the mark" (*STBH* 32-33).

"In any case, it is the action of taking our eye off the target - the model of Christ - which causes us to miss the mark at which our Creator has aimed us: of sharing in His life that we might mirror His holiness to all the world" (*STBH* 41).

Our Eastern Christian Concept of Sin

"Our Eastern Christian concept of sin is not normally cast in a legal model, but rather within a medical paradigm. We need to be healed of our sins God has outlined for us a way of life in which we can express the reality of our nature, living in communion with Him and with others. He has posted signs for our safety (not as a 'test'). When we disobey ('disobey' comes from the Latin dis-obedire, not to listen carefully), we harm ourselves and others. We are punished by our sins, not for them. God is on our side. However, if we do not listen to Him (i.e. obey Him) damage continues to be done. We form an inadequate view of reality and try to live in conformity with it. This is the height of folly; and in the Old Testament, 'folly' is one of the words frequently used for sin" (*LLIII* 62).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Let's pray the Jesus Prayer. Before we begin, let's be silent for a few seconds. The only thoughts we will have will be about Jesus and how much He loves us and forgives us. Then we will say the Jesus prayer that will help us focus on our thoughts about Jesus. We should try to say this prayer many times throughout the day. [Distribute the handouts and begin.]

Introduction

Today I brought in some headlines from recent newspapers. Let's see if we could figure out if these people are living their lives and loving other people the way God asks. [You may use your own or tell them about something you read: people helping someone escape a fire; someone stealing money; someone helping senior citizens; students planning a fundraiser for a class project.]

*Now we are going to figure out what the people who turned away from God's way could do to start living in God's love. [If your class is large, have the students work in groups and choose only one from each group to present to the whole class.] *Who should tell this person to start living differently? Can we help?**

Let's turn to our lesson to learn about other people who turned away from God's way.

To Sin Is to Turn Away



When we listen to the Holy Spirit living within us and telling us to follow the way of Jesus, we can grow in our love of God. Sometimes, though, we refuse to listen to the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we choose to turn away from God's way. We want to do things our own way. We fail to live as God's children.

When we choose to turn away from God's plan, we separate ourselves from Him. We break the covenant, that special relationship we have been called to share with God. When we rely only on ourselves, we become weak and fall. Not being faithful to God is called sin.

Even some of Jesus' friends turned away from Him. Let's turn to the New Testament and read about how Peter turned away from Jesus three times in a row.



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).

Not being faithful to God is called sin.

What is sin? (Not being faithful to God; turning away from God's way) [Have an icon of Jesus in the front of the room. Ask the students to stand up and face the icon and be silent for a few seconds. Then tell them to turn their backs to the icon. Ask:] Did Jesus move? (No) Would you want to pray with your back to Jesus? (No) Now face Jesus. When you have to decide whether something is good or bad, think about what we just did. Are you facing Jesus or are you turning away from Him to do it? Let that help you decide if it is something you should do.

... because he has not been faithful to Jesus.

Why is Peter acting like this? (He is afraid.) What do you think you might have said?

... from Jesus and act in a way that is not Christian.

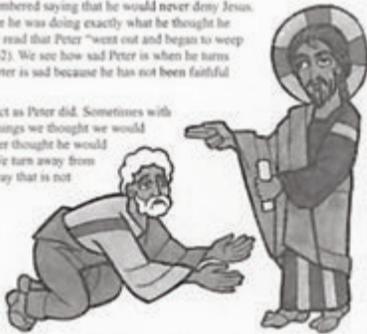
Which friend of Jesus denied Him three times? (Peter) How did Peter feel? (Sad because he broke his relationship with Jesus.) Sometimes we find ourselves doing things we promised Jesus we never would. We have to stop ourselves as Peter did when he heard the rooster. We need to ask Jesus to forgive us.

Let's read **Luke 22:54-65**. Peter denied Jesus three times. Write the answer he gave each time that he was asked if he were a friend of Jesus.

1. But he denied it saying, "**Woman, I do not know him.**" _____ (Luke 22:57).
2. "You too are one of them", but Peter answered, "**My friend, I am not.**" _____ (Luke 22:58).
3. But Peter said, "**My friend, I do not know what you are talking about**" _____ (Luke 22:60).

Then Peter remembered saying that he would never deny Jesus. He could not believe he was doing exactly what he thought he would never do. We read that Peter "went out and began to weep bitterly" (Luke 22:62). We see how sad Peter is when he turns away from Jesus. Peter is sad because he has not been faithful to Jesus.

Sometimes we act as Peter did. Sometimes with our friends we do things we thought we would never do just as Peter thought he would never deny Jesus. We turn away from Jesus and act in a way that is not Christian.



God wants us to show our love for everyone - even ourselves.

What is the name of the beginning of the sermon that tells us how to show our love for God and each other? (The Beatitudes) God wants us to love always as He does. What does He promise us in return? (The Kingdom of Heaven; we will be with Him always) There should be nothing more that we could possibly want.

Jesus taught us how to live by telling parables. During this season of the Great Fast, you should plan to read some of the parables from the New Testament on your own to spend more time with Jesus. Always remember to sit quietly for a few moments before you begin reading. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand Jesus' words

Words to Remember: [Read the words together, and use them to introduce, summarize, and/or review the lesson.]

Activity Tracks

Basic: A Modern Parable

[This worksheet is in the student text.]

Let's read the instructions that also tell us about a section of our New Testament. Please remember this page in your New Testament so that you can find and read some of the parables on your own. Today we are going to try something new at the end of this activity. We will try writing a modern version of one of Jesus' parables. [If time permits, ask the students to read theirs aloud.]

We know that Jesus wants us to treat everyone with love, but at times we choose to be mean. Some of us laugh at people and make them feel bad. Some days we do not listen to our parents and fight with our brothers and sisters. Those are the times we are not faithful to God. We choose to turn away from God's way that asks us to love everyone as He loves us.

God never stops loving us even when we turn away from His way. In the Lord's Prayer that Jesus gave us, we pray to God to ask Him to help us follow His will. We also ask God to forgive us as we forgive others. That means we have to forgive other people the times they hurt us if we want God to forgive us.

In the New Commandment, Jesus tells us, "Love one another as I have loved You" (John 13:34). When we live this way, we are "blessed," as Jesus told us in the Beatitudes. When we are not living this way, we are being unfaithful to the New Covenant. We are turning away from God's way.

That means we sin when we do not do things for other people. God wants us to help all people, even strangers, rather than choose to ignore them. God wants us to share what we have rather than store it and not use it. In the New Testament we read many parables that tell us how we are to live in God's love always. We also read about many people who turned away from God. From these stories we learn how to be faithful to the New Commandment.

Another way we turn away from God is by hurting ourselves. When we do something that will hurt our mind and body, we are not loving ourselves. God wants us to show our love for everyone—even ourselves.

Words to Remember
Sin: turning away from God's way; not being faithful to God.

106

A Modern Parable

I. Jesus told us parables to show us how to live, and in His stories are people from the time that He lived. Try to write a modern day version of one of Jesus' parables. Turn to page 410 in your New Testament to find a listing of the principal parables of Jesus. Two of the more familiar ones are the Good Samaritan (Samaritan, The Good) and the Prodigal Son (Son, The Prodigal). After each one is the scriptural citation that tells you where to turn to read the parable. Choose one of the parables, find the reading in the New Testament, read the passage, and think about what it is saying to you today. Then, answer the following questions for one:

What is the name of the parable? The Good Samaritan

Write the scriptural citation that identifies where it can be found? Luke 10:29-37

Who are the people in this story? The person robbed, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan, the Innkeeper

Who in the story is showing us how to live according to God's way? The Samaritan

What does this person do that shows us how to live? He takes care of a stranger

II. Write a short story that can show someone today acting the way Jesus shows us is the right way in this parable. You can call your story a modern parable.

107

Group: The Beatitudes

Materials: Poster board, "Beatitudes" worksheet, dark markers, scissors, glue

What is the New Commandment? (Love one another as I have loved you.) This year we have been learning how much God wants us to love. Today we are going to look to the Beatitudes to think about how they tell us to love.

After we cut out and paste the Beatitudes on our poster board, we are going to write questions underneath each one. These questions will make us ask if we are really showing the love God asks of us. [You could have the students write questions on note cards and tape them to the poster.] Let's think of some questions for the first one: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Do I thank God for all he has given to me? Am I a show-off?) The following explanations will help with the questions: poor in spirit—content with whatever one has and dependent on God

mourn—being sorry for one's sins and for the sufferings of others

meek—humble and gentle

righteousness—doing what is right

merciful—kind to others

clean of heart—having integrity in one's stand before God, not divided. We do not try to hide anything from God.

Craft: String Art Cross (Part 1)

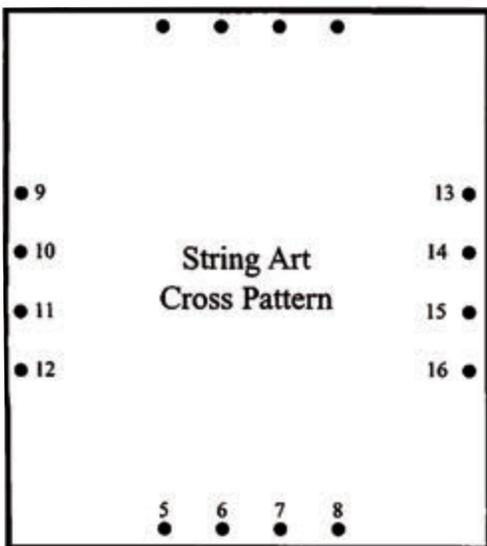
Materials: "String Art" worksheet

[Have sample ready to show children.] *Follow the instructions on the worksheet at the end of this lesson.*

Closing:

Today we are going to pray verses 3-10 from Psalm 50/51, a psalm that asks God to forgive us.

[Add this to your booklets if you are making them.]



Sin

Turning away from God's way;
not being faithful to God.

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
Metropolitan
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

Psalm 50/51:3-10

Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
in your abundant compassion blot out my offense.

Wash away all my guilt;
from my sin cleanse me.

For I know my offense;
my sin is always before me.

Against you alone have I sinned;
I have done such evil in your sight
That you are just in your sentence,
blameless when you condemn.

True, I was born guilty,
a sinner, even as my mother conceived me.

Still, you insist on sincerity of heart;
in my inmost being teach me wisdom.
Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;
wash me, make me whiter than snow.

Let me hear sounds of joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

Psalm 50/51:3-10

Have mercy on me, God, in your goodness;
in your abundant compassion blot out my offense.

Wash away all my guilt;
from my sin cleanse me.

For I know my offense;
my sin is always before me.

Against you alone have I sinned;
I have done such evil in your sight
That you are just in your sentence,
blameless when you condemn.

True, I was born guilty,
a sinner, even as my mother conceived me.

Still, you insist on sincerity of heart;
in my inmost being teach me wisdom.
Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;
wash me, make me whiter than snow.

Let me hear sounds of joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the land.*

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be satisfied.*

*Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the clean of heart,
for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of
righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter
every kind of evil against you because of me.*

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven

"String Art Cross" Worksheet

Materials:

Two pieces of corrugated cardboard (10" x 10") for each cross
(cardboard boxes are excellent)

Construction paper

16 small nails (5/8" linoleum nails) per cross
Yarn

Preparing the board:

Tape two 10" x 10" pieces of corrugated cardboard together.

Glue or tape a piece of construction paper on the cardboards.

Using the pattern on the next page, center the pattern on top of the prepared cardboard and set the nails into the cardboard.

After all 16 nails have been placed, remove the pattern simply by pulling it away from the cardboard. (Each student needs his or her own pattern.)

