

12—Repentance: Finding Our Way Again

Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to ...

- define repentance as the process of turning from sin to God.
- state that the Mystery of Repentance takes us back to the path on our journey to God.
- understand that we need to be focused and engaged on our journey with God so that we do not allow sin to distract us.

For the Catechists

This lesson focuses on our wanting to be forgiven of our sins and our need to repent for those sins. That means that we have to recognize that we have sinned. Regretfully, that is difficult for many people because almost every action is acceptable by today's standards. This lesson asks the students to realize when their relationship with God has been broken. They need to experience a feeling of loss just as the Prodigal Son knew he was lost and needed to go home. Those are the times that they need the Mystery of Repentance.

Also, the lesson focuses on repentance as being more than just recognizing the loss. Repentance requires us to turn to God and to change our way of life so we don't leave a vacuum in our lives for sin to fill. Help the students realize that they need to become disciplined enough to choose activities that follow the Lord even when all their friends are making other choices. In other words, they need to become actively involved in sports, school activities, and church activities rather than sitting at home to avoid sinful situations.

Receiving the Mystery of Repentance is often referred to as going to confession. An explanation of the process of the Mystery of Repentance is explained in this lesson to help students realize they are telling their sins to the physically present priest who is representing Jesus—they are encountering Jesus. Help the students realize that their sin also affects the entire community so the priest is also representing the Body of Christ, the community. In the early Church it was a practice to have common confession before receiving the Eucharist not in order to share our sinfulness, but so that we could support each other and heal each other.

Included at the end of this lesson is a prayer for the Mystery of Repentance. Before teaching this lesson, contact your priest to ask for the appropriate prayer for your jurisdiction. Then, encourage the students to memorize the appropriate prayer and to receive the Mystery of Repentance.

Materials Needed

Opening Prayer: ""We have seen the true Light"

Icon: The Descent into Hades (*Come Bless the Lord* icon packet #13).

Closing Prayer: "A Prayer of St. Ephrem"—in the student book

Pens, pencils, markers and white paper

1. **Opening Prayer**

Chant or recite "We have seen the true Light."

[Find this prayer in the Divine Liturgy books in your church. This prayer is sung after the priest gives the blessing after everyone has received Holy Eucharist.]

2. **Introduction**

Ask each student to make their own list of reasons they had to ask for forgiveness during this past week. Tell them to choose one to share with the class. [Start by offering one of yours—you forgot to get something at the grocery store; you spilled something on someone; you were mean to a friend.]

Ask the students why we usually feel better after we apologize to someone. "Should we feel better after we receive Mystery of Repentance (when we go to confession)? Why?"

3. **Guided Reading**

- Before the reading, review last week's objectives. Then summarize this week's objectives of the lesson on a wall pad or easel pad to use for review next week.
- Have students read text aloud and emphasize the importance of recognizing our sins and asking for forgiveness.

4. **Scriptural Reflection**

- Read Colossians 1:21 -23
- Before reading aloud, have students make the sign of the cross. Remind them that reading Scripture is praying.
- Ask the students to focus on the icon for one minute before the reading.
- Give the students 3 minutes to answer the questions and read the passage again.
- Ask the students to work in groups of 2 and share their answers
- Possible answers:

Jesus had to be crucified for us to be saved to live forever with God.

"Persevere in the faith"; "not shifting from the hope of the gospel"

Background Reading (Union With God)

"The most difficult Mystery today is Repentance, usually called "confession" from its most outstanding feature, the telling of our sins to a priest. It is difficult because it requires great humility and the revealing of our most intimate secrets to another person. This rite has greatly declined in use today, partly in reaction to excesses of the past, where it was used as a weekly washing of sins without any true internal repentance and spiritual progress. This [mystery] is like any other, for it requires faith, here in the form of a sincere desire to turn from sin and to follow Christ. It does not work by magic, but through the love of God accepting His wandering child with the words, 'there is more joy in heaven over one repentance sinner than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to repent' (Luke 15:7)" (*Journey* TM 192).

5. From the Teaching of the Church Fathers

- Ask one student to read the words from The Way of the Ascetics.
- Possible answers:

"He means making bad choices and repenting for them.

Yes. The devil is very active if he attacks people praying all the time.

Help them by asking them to join you with other activities; ask them to think about how their choices are hurting other people; pray for them; pray with them..

6. Liturgical Study

- Read the paragraphs aloud.
- Ask the students to explain everything that occurs during the Mystery of Repentance. (Refer to the last 3 paragraphs.)

7. Closing Prayers

"A Prayer of St. Ephrem"—in the student book

Supplemental Activities:

Review—At the end of the lesson, ask the students what they remember by using one of the following suggestions:

1. Write a guide for the Mystery of Repentance. Ask the students to add questions that make people their age think about all the ways they might have left the path on their journey to God. Go to www.stsophiaukrainian.cc/resources/examinationofconscience or check the internet for Catholic Examination of Conscience resources.

2. Write a 1-minute sermon explaining how we confess to the priest who represents Jesus and the Body of Christ. Explain how our sins affect our community. (Refer to the "Liturgical Study" for details.)

3. Add a section to the Faith Book that was started in an earlier lesson. In this section, include inspirational words, phrases, sentences, and stories that share the way we feel after we received the gift of the Repentance. Write words of encouragement for other penitents.

4. Make a list of people from the Bible who repented. Share their stories as a reminder that we are all sinners.

Background Reading (Repentance)

"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).

Prayer for the Mystery of Repentance

The priest prays for you by saying:

May our Lord God, Jesus Christ, be in you heart and on your lips that you may confess all your sins worthily.

Then blessing you, he says:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

You continue by saying:

I confess to Almighty God, one in the Holy Trinity, to the Theotokos, to all the Saints, and to you, Father, all my sins.

Now mention how long it has been since your last confession and then mention the sins you have committed. Then express sorrow for the sins you have committed, either in your own words or by quietly saying the following prayer:

For these and all my other sins which I cannot remember or call to mind, I am sorry that I have offended God and have angered Him against me. I am sincerely repentant and promise, with the help of God, to better my life. For this I humbly ask of you, Father, salutary penance and absolution.