

Jesus Wants Me to Say "I'm Sorry"

Objective: The students will be able to state that after something bad has happened, they are to say "I'm sorry."

For the Catechist

The lesson is a continuation of the previous one, "Jesus Wants Me to Do Good." In that lesson the children are encouraged to do good and follow Jesus and are introduced to the concept of bad things that happen either "by accident" or "on purpose." These two phrases are used in the present lesson as well. Young children often find themselves trying to figure out why something bad happened. In helping them grasp these concepts, you may want to keep in mind that children live for the moment—they may act without thinking of the consequences. In addition, they may truly not understand why certain things are wrong or bad.

Two points are being made in this lesson. First, by connecting bad and hurtful acts, you are showing the children that bad actions (the term "sin" is introduced in the Grade 1 curriculum) are hurtful. They would not like to be hurt, so they should not hurt others. Second, the children are being taught to say "I'm sorry" in the event of a hurtful or bad action whether or not it was intentional. Keep in mind that children can be encouraged to say "I'm sorry," but they cannot be forced. The students are being taught to have sympathy for others.

The issue of responsibility. Children at this age are both self-centered and action-centered. Their self-centered point of view makes it difficult for them to see themselves as one to blame. An oft-used phrase is "she did it first." Their action-centered lives don't permit time for forethought. They act and react according to their immediate feelings. For these reasons it isn't appropriate to dwell on the matter of responsibility; instead, concentrate on the feeling of sorrow when something bad happens.

Sympathy, or empathy, is important to the development of moral thinking. It is enough to engender these feelings for future lessons on morality.

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "Lord, have mercy."

Introduction: Pantomime and discussion of need to say "I'm sorry" **Need:** book or toy, wadded up piece of paper

Read Text Aloud: Hold text up for students to see as you read each page aloud. After each page, use the questions in the shaded box at the bottom of that page to discuss the lesson with the students.

Activity Tracks:

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

- **Basic:** "The Sorry Young Man"
- **Group:** Pretending: "I'm sorry."
- **Craft:** Forgiveness Poster and "I'm Sorry" Card

Closing: "Lord, have mercy."

Come Bless the Lord Icon:

Packet I:

Packet II: Miracle: Raising of Jairus' Daughter

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

“*Metanoia* or *repentance* is a central theme in Eastern Christian spirituality, for it aptly describes the whole movement on our part toward God, drawn and carried by His grace. It begins with an innerchange of attitude and is expressed in an outer change in behavior, leading to ongoing growth. Repentance never ends: ‘That the rest of our lives may be spent in peace and repentance, let us ask the Lord’ (from *the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*).

“Unfortunately, repentance has received bad press for the most part. All too many Christians view it as something basically negative, to be used only in the case of sin or in times of spiritual fervor, such as at the Great Fast or moments of conversion. Yet Jesus made it central to His message and the way of life He was preparing for us. It was to be a joyful reality. When asked to explain what He meant by ‘repentance,’ He gave the beautiful Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32)” (LLIII 13).

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

“The parable is not some theologian’s explanation of repentance, but rather the very words of the Son of God Himself who calls us to it. In the Parable, Jesus describes repentance as a ‘coming back to life after having been dead,’ a ‘being found after having been lost’ (Lk 15:32). The parable teaches that repentance is a process of returning to our true identity, discovering who we are as children of God and growing in that relationship. Repentance is a healing process. Through it we come to our natural condition (what we are created to be by nature not the ‘natural’ as it is termed in the fallen world).

“Notice that the ‘son’ begins by not understanding his relationship with his Father. He tries to define himself in terms of possessions, relationships and jobs—none of which ultimately satisfy. When he finally begins to repent in a positive sense and return to his father’s home, he still has more repenting to do: he plans to ‘earn’ a relationship with his Father by serving for a while (thus ‘saving’ himself, the danger of ‘perfectionism’ rather than saving repentance). He finally must surrender and let his Father embrace him and draw him back into an authentic, loving relationship in which his identity is restored, his dignity confirmed and his well-being assured.

“Repentance is a life-long movement involving the proper reorientation of our whole being, body, soul and spirit to God. It includes not only a turning away from sin and immorality, but a continually refined re-direction and unification of our whole being toward the very Center of our being, progressively subjecting our material existence to our reason, and our reason to our ‘heart/spirit,’ and our spirit to the Spirit of God. In this sense, even Jesus ‘repented,’ e.g., in the desert temptations, when He oriented Himself toward the best manner of carrying out His mission as Messiah and Savior, or in the Garden of Gethsemane during His Passion, when He oriented Himself toward His Father’s will in the Passion.

“However, the Parable also clearly teaches that the movement of repentance cannot take place without the acceptance of a double insight: how good God is (‘It is better to be with my Father in His house’) and how wretched my present situation is (‘Why am I sitting in the pig pen?’). Neither insight in itself is sufficient to move us to repentance. If I am only con-

vinced that my Father is good, then there will be no movement. I will ask Him to send a check to refurbish the pig pen. Many modern people have this insight: God is 'that good, loving, accepting Old Man in heaven who benignly approves everything: I'm okay, you're okay.' On the other hand if I only have the insight of my wretchedness in the pig pen, there will also be no movement. I will stagnate in despair. Both insights are needed and the Father's goodness should be the stronger, so that I do not fear to return to His loving embrace and rediscover who I am. Sure of His love and acceptance, I can admit my wretchedness and seek healing, moving away from the sinful situation and into the welcoming embrace of the Father" (LLIII 13-14).

The Lesson Plan

Opening

Remember last week we said that Jesus wants us to do good. Jesus knows that sometimes we are not able to be good so He gave us a special prayer to say. When we say this prayer, we ask God for His blessings. The words are "Lord, have mercy." Let's gather around the icon corner, put our hands in prayer position, and say "Lord, have mercy."

Introduction

Last week we learned that Jesus wants us to do good, but sometimes that doesn't happen. We make mistakes. Bad things happen. There is something we need to do whenever something bad has happened or whenever we make a mistake. Let's see if we can do some pretending to help you guess what it is. I need a helper. [Choose helper.] Helper, you are sitting here on the playground reading this book (or playing with a toy). Your friend calls you to play so you leave your book. Let's see you sit and read. Can I have a friend call my helper? [Choose a student to call. Make sure your helper leaves the book.] Now I come along and see the book. Hmmm, what a neat book. I guess it doesn't belong to anyone so I can take it. Now my helper turns and sees me taking the book, comes over and says, "That book is mine." Can you say that, helper? [Help student to speak.] "Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't know it was yours. I didn't mean to steal it from you!" Thank you, helper. What were my first words, class? (I'm sorry.) Did I mean to steal the book? (No) Let's try another pretending. I need a new helper. [Choose a student.] Helper, you've made me so mad just now. You won't play with me and now you're walking away. [Instruct helper to walk away.] I'm so mad I'm going to throw this paper at you. [Throw paper and hit student in back. Instruct student to turn around and say "You hit me!"] Yes, I did. [Pause] I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that.

Did I hit my helper by accident or on purpose? (On purpose) What did I have to say? (I'm sorry.) That's right. Whenever something bad happens on purpose or by accident, we should always be sorry.

Reading of Text

Hold text so that children can see the page as you read it to them. Read slowly and draw their attention to the illustrations. After reading each page, use the questions below (given also on the bottom of the student text) to review what you have read.

Page 1

• What are some good things we've learned to do? (Be helpful, show honor, obey)

- *What is happening in the picture? (The boy is taking the helmet from the girl.) We do bad things "by accident" or "on purpose." Tell me one story about doing something bad "by accident." [Allow responses.] Tell me one story about doing something bad "on purpose." [Allow responses.]*

Page 2

- *Did you ever do something bad by accident and say "I'm sorry"? [Allow responses.]*
- *Does Jesus want us to hurt someone? (No) Does Jesus want us to do something bad on purpose? (No)*
- *Jesus wants only good things to happen, as He has taught us. When you do something bad on purpose, you should stop, change what you're doing, and say "I'm sorry."*

Page 3

- *When something bad happens by accident, what should we say? (I'm sorry.)*
- *When we do something bad, we should stop and change what we're doing. What should we say? ("I'm sorry.")*
- *We try our best to follow Jesus so that we do only good things.*

Activity Tracks

Basic: The Sorry Young Man

The basic activity is the fourth page of each student text. It is a paraphrase of the story of the Prodigal Son. Read the title and the story. Then ask the following:

- What did the son want to do? (He wanted to leave home.)
- What did he do with all the money? (He wasted it.)
- Why did he come back to the father? (Because he was sorry)
- What did the father do? (Forgave him)
- You may color the icon. Always remember that God wants us to say we're sorry.

Group: Pretending: "I'm Sorry"

Materials: toy

Everyone has to say "I'm sorry" either for doing something on purpose or by accident. Let's spend some time pretending and learning to say "I'm sorry." We'll think of times when something bad has happened, and then act them out. I'll start. I need a helper. Helper, you've just received this new toy. I'm going to pretend that I really want it, but don't give it to me.

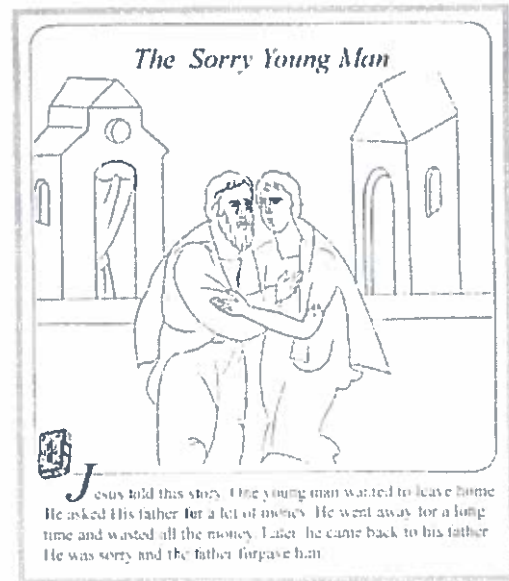
Scene 1: "You have new toy! I'd like to play with it. Let me have it! [Have helper say "No, not now." Then say loudly] You're mean and awful! I'll never play with you again!"

Now, was it right for me to yell at my friend for not giving me the toy? (No) What do I need to do? (Say you're sorry.) Okay, here goes. "I'm very sorry for having yelled at you. Please forgive me." What should my friend say? (I forgive you.)

I need a new helper now. [Give helper the toy.] I'm going to fight with you over this toy and finally win—you'll lose the toy.

Scene 2: "What a neat toy! Let me see it. [Grab toy.] Wow, I wish it were mine."

Now, was it right for me to grab the toy? (No) What do



*I need to do? (Say you're sorry and return the toy.)
"I'm sorry for grabbing your toy. [Give toy back.]
Please forgive me." What should my friend say?
(I forgive you.)*

[Let children think of other situations. Include "by accident" events to enact to practice saying "I'm sorry."]

Craft: Forgiveness Poster and "I'm Sorry Card"

Materials: Forgiveness worksheet enlarged 1.55 % onto 11" x 17" paper, markers, index card and paper clip

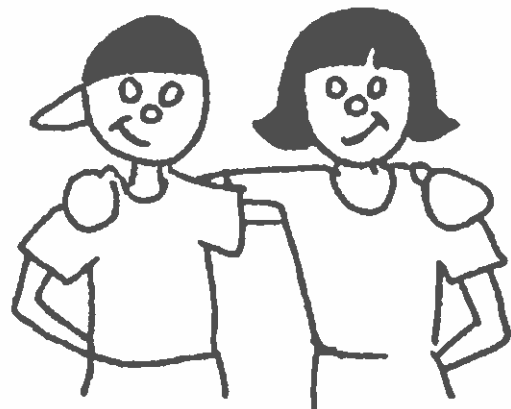
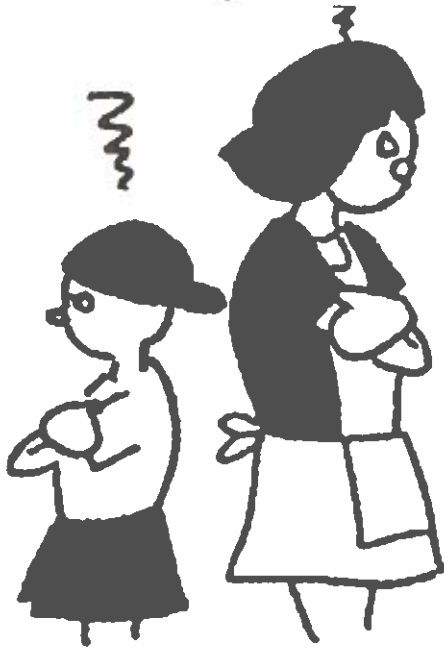
Our lesson today was very important. We learned that everyone makes mistakes and needs to say, "I'm sorry." When someone says to us "I'm sorry," we need to say "I forgive you." Here is a poster project you can take home to help remind you of our lesson. [Show example.] What do you think each picture is showing? (Child angry at mother; mother angry at child; child and mother forgiving one another. Children fighting; children forgiving one another.) Let's read the words. [Read poster.] This can remind you of what you need to do when you've done something wrong. It can also remind you to forgive someone who has done wrong to you. You can color the pictures and trace over the important phrase: "I'm sorry," and "I forgive you." Attached to the poster is a card. On the card are two words. Can you read them? ("I'm sorry.") Keep the card attached to the poster in your room, and it's ready for you to hand to a brother or sister, mom or dad when you've done something you're sorry for. [Have the children make their own "I'm sorry" card from the index card. Clip them to the posters.]



Closing

Let's put our hands in prayer position and stand quietly for a moment. Think about one thing you did for which you said "I'm sorry." Now let's learn to ask God to forgive us. Let's ask for His forgiveness by saying, "Lord, have mercy." [Have students say "Lord, have mercy."] This prayer also asks God to bless us. Let's say it again, "Lord, have mercy."

Everyone makes mistakes. When I make
a mistake, Jesus wants me to say
"I'm sorry."



When someone says "I'm sorry," Jesus
wants me to forgive them. I say
"I forgive you."