

God Always Forgives



BACKGROUND NOTES

As children prepare for the sacrament of reconciliation, you should remind them often that they, too, can offer reconciliation to others. They can offer one another peace and forgiveness anytime, anywhere. This service reminds them of the importance of saying they are sorry for their sins, not just in confession, but in all the activities of their lives.

For the optional activity, have available a bowl of holy water and a small sprig of evergreen.

GATHERING PRAYER

Leader We gather together as God's children. Let us remember that God is full of gentleness and compassion for us. God knows us as we are, our good points and our weak ones. God strengthens us to do good, but also forgives us when we fail.

Reader One For the times that we forget that we are brothers and sisters who should respect one another and help one another, Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Reader Two For the times that we act selfishly, putting our own concerns before those of others, Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

Reader Three For the times we have hurt one another with our angry words or actions, Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Leader No matter what we have done, Jesus offers us the chance to try again. Saint Paul, one of his early followers, was responsible for the deaths of many Christians before he had a change of heart. Listen to what the Bible says about Paul, who was first known by the name Saul.

Reader Four A reading adapted from the Acts of the Apostles (8:1-3; 9:3-6)
Saul approved of the murder of Stephen the deacon, and he tried to destroy the church. He went from house to house where Christians lived and dragged the believers out, both men and women, and threw them into jail.

Leader Jesus forgave Paul's stubborn pride and his hardheartedness and gave him another chance. Listen now to how Jesus converted Paul.

Reader Five On his way to Damascus, as Paul got near to the city, a light from the sky suddenly flashed all around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him: "Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" he asked. "I am Jesus, whom you persecute," the voice said. Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, but he could not see a thing. He was blind.
The Word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Leader After several days, God told Ananias, a holy man in Damascus, to cure Paul's blindness and baptize him. Ananias said to Paul: 'Jesus himself sent me, the one whom you saw on the road as you were coming here. He sent me so that you might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' After that Paul became one of the most faithful and energetic of Jesus' followers.

If Jesus could forgive Paul's sins, he certainly will forgive ours.

Let us now talk to Jesus about our need for his love and forgiveness because of the harm we have done to others. Close your eyes and picture Jesus sitting in your living room at home. Go sit beside him and talk to him about something that might be bothering you. Ask him to forgive you for any wrong you may have done this day.

(Allow two or three minutes for silent prayer.)

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Invite children to stand in a circle. Ask one child to carry the bowl of water as you hold the sprig of evergreen. Move from child to child and lightly sprinkle each with the holy water. As you do so, say the following blessing: "_____, let this water remind you that Jesus forgives you just as he forgave Paul." When you have sprinkled each child, continue as below.

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader Let us now resolve to love and forgive one another, as Jesus forgave Paul. Let us offer one another this greeting: The peace of Christ be with you.

All And also with you.