

Reconciliation service

for young people

This service has a global justice theme, so works well after a session or retreat on justice, during Advent or Lent.

What you will need:

- Script for readers
- Acts of contrition, printed out (or use the reflection cards at the end of this document)
- Small pieces of paper (one per person) in shapes or colours that match your theme
- Pens (one per person)
- Laptop and projector
- PowerPoint of The Beatitudes from CAFOD's website (find via search function at the foot of the Secondary resources page, using filters: Worship, Catholic social teaching, Prayer)
- 'Great generation' postcards – order free from shop.cafod.org.uk
- Bowls of water, towels and volunteers to direct and help
- An empty basket for used pieces of paper
- Quiet, background music.
- Volunteers to hand out cards at the end

Room set-up:

Create a focal point in the room. For example, a large world map or globe (A1 Peters projection maps are available to buy from shop.cafod.org.uk); a selection of images of people from around the world; simple facts or statistics about poverty and injustice; candles; a bowl of water; something visual representing hearts of stone and hearts of flesh. Be creative!

If the Sacrament of Reconciliation is available, set up a space where conversations cannot be overheard but not so isolated as to risk safeguarding practices.

Order of service

(As people settle, fade out the music)

Leader: Welcome to our service of reconciliation.

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

Reader 1: Loving Father,

We come to you with all our potential

but having done wrong, in our actions and inactions.

You wipe clean the slate and show us that we can start afresh.

You rejoice to forgive us when we turn to you.

Help us to forgive ourselves and others.

Help us not to hold grudges but to move forward with peace.

Teach us to reach out to those in need and speak out against injustice,

To build a world of equality and fairness, in our own lives and for all people.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reader 2: The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

(You could project the PowerPoint of illustrated images during this reading.)

A reading from the Gospel of Saint Matthew.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

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

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

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

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

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Reader 3: Our world can sometimes seem a very unjust place, where people with the loudest voices get the most attention. But Jesus describes a world turned on its head. A world where suffering people, the meek and those who act with justice, mercy and courage are blessed.

Today is a chance for each of us to reflect on which type of world we are building.

Let’s look at the Gospel reading again and think about our own actions and inactions. It is a chance to let God show us the parts of our lives where we need forgiveness and healing.

(Show the PowerPoint again during this examination of conscience)

Reader 4: *(Could use two readers. Pause for a slow count of ten after each reflection point)*

- **Blessed are the poor in spirit** – am I poor in spirit? Do I value God’s everyday gifts: light and life, food and water, creation? Do I always want more?
- **Blessed are those who mourn** – do I reach out to those who are feeling down, or am I too wrapped up in my own concerns?
- **Blessed are the meek** – do I think it is more important to shout and get my own way?
- **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness** – do I stand up for justice and protect those who are treated badly? Do I avoid actions that harm the earth and its poorest people?
- **Blessed are the merciful** – have I forgiven the people who hurt me? Or do I hold grudges? Do I welcome outsiders, with the same mercy I would like shown to me? Or do I ignore them?
- **Blessed are the pure in heart** – am I pure in heart, trying to see God in the world around me? Where is my focus?
- **Blessed are the peacemakers** - do I try to make peace between friends who have fallen out? Or do I pour fuel on the fire and encourage them to ignore each other or to fight?
- **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake** – if someone criticises me for doing something good, how do I react?
- **Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account** – how often have I stood up for my faith? Or for what is right? Am I afraid to stand out from the crowd?

God our Father, you know me through and through. Help me to see myself as you see me and always to trust in your mercy. Amen.

Reader 5: During some quiet music, if you wish to, write words on your paper or to draw symbols representing what you are sorry for. This is just for you. Nobody else will see it.

Quiet music for a minute or two

Reader 6: Now that we have thought about what we are sorry for, it is time to ask for God's forgiveness.

If a priest is available.

Reader 6: It's important we are quiet to help each other prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Quiet music will be played. Please wait patiently until everyone is finished.

If the priest would rather you explain the process of individual Reconciliation:

If you have not received the Sacrament of Reconciliation for some time, this is a reminder of what happens. After a Sign of the cross, the priest will ask you what you'd like to be forgiven for. He gives you a penance, something to do as a sign that you want to make up for what you have done wrong. He will ask you to pray an act of contrition - this is printed out for you. Finally, the priest will say the prayer of absolution, ending with the Sign of the cross.

Otherwise, use this symbolic action.

Reader 6: You are invited to come forward, as directed by the volunteers. Tear up your piece of paper and place it in the empty basket while silently asking for God's forgiveness. Then dip your hands in one of the bowls of water and dry them on a towel.

(You could put a copy of Ezekiel 36:25 by the bowl and ask people to focus on the words as they wash, or get different voices to slowly repeat Ezekiel 36:25-27: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you....")

Reader 7: Let us offer each other a Sign of peace.

Sign of peace

As you leave the hall, please take a postcard from the volunteers. You are invited to write on it your own commitment - something you will do to help make the world a better place from today onwards - and to keep the postcard as a reminder.

Leader: Lord, we are ready for a new start.
Fill our hearts and our minds with your love and your spirit
So that we can make good choices
and build a new world of justice and peace,
in our own lives and for all people,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Final blessing led by the priest, if available.

Leader: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Preparing for Reconciliation

Do I reach out to those who are feeling down, or am I too wrapped up in my own concerns?



Do I stand up for justice and protect those who are treated badly? Do I avoid actions that harm the earth and its poorest people?



Am I pure in heart, trying to see God in the world around me? Where's my focus?



How often have I stood up for my faith? Or for what is right? Am I afraid to stand out from the crowd?



Am I poor in spirit? Do I value God's everyday gifts: light and life, food, water, creation? Do I always want more?

Do I think it is more important to shout and get my own way?



Have I forgiven people who have hurt me? Or do I hold grudges? Do I welcome outsiders, with the same mercy I'd like shown to me, or do I ignore them?

Do I try to make peace between friends who have fallen out? Or do I encourage them to ignore each other or to fight?

If someone criticises me for doing something good, how do I react?



Matthew 5:1-12

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

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Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

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Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

God our Father, you know me through and through. Help me to see myself as you see me and always to trust in your mercy. Amen.

What happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?

- Sign of the cross
- The priest asks what you'd like to be forgiven
- He gives you a penance, something to do as a sign that you want to make up for what you have done wrong
- He asks you to pray an Act of contrition - you can use one of those printed here.
- The priest says the prayer of absolution, ending with the Sign of the cross.

Acts of contrition

O my God, because you are so good, I am very sorry that I have sinned against you, and with the help of your grace, I will not sin again.
Amen.

or

Lord God, in your goodness have mercy on me; do not look on my sins but take away all my guilt. Create in me a new, clean heart and renew me with a new way of thinking.
Amen

Acts of Contrition taken from Rite of Penance © 1974, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL).