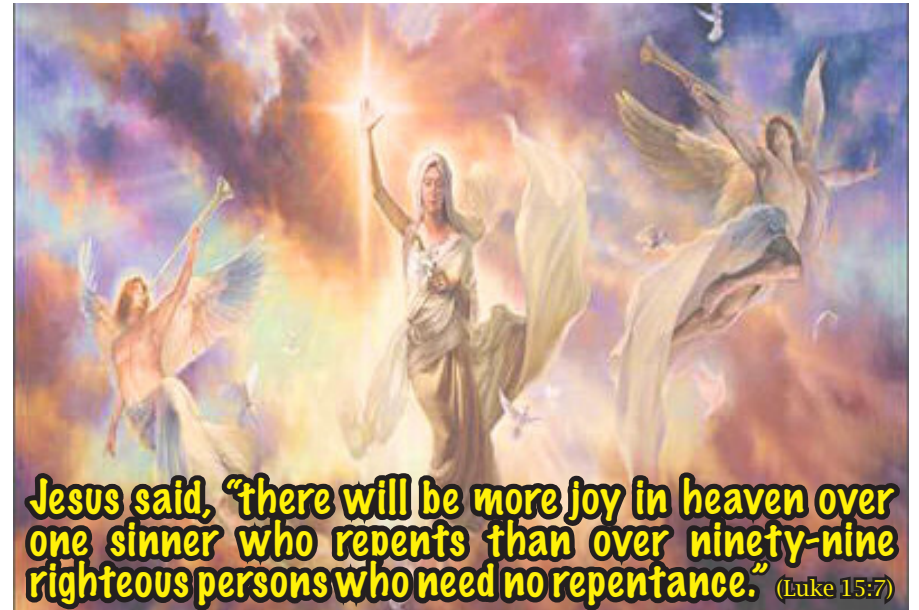


6. The Sacrament of Reconciliation

The priest will **NEVER** tell anyone what we say in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This is called the **SEAL OF THE CONFSSIONAL**



Jesus said, "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)

DO I HAVE TO GO?

These days, most people wait until they are worried about a serious sin before going to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

But some like to go more often.

The Church recommends once a year (around Easter), and then as needed.

A lot of people say that because Reconciliation is such a powerful meeting with Jesus in which we experience his love, forgiveness and healing, we should WANT to go more often.

The words for you to say are on a card where you will kneel (or sit). All you have to do is read out your list of sins when you get to that part.



When you have confessed your sins to God (by reading your list), the priest will speak with you and give you help.

Then he will make a sign of the cross over you as he speaks the words of Jesus, forgiving you and setting you free from your sins, reconciling you to God the Father and his special family, the Church.

After the last prayer, go back to your seat in the church, and read what the priest has given you. This is called your **PENANCE**. It is usually a prayer or a Psalm. Saying your penance is a sign that you are sincere about Reconciliation. It is also a way of thanking God for his love.

When you have read your penance, leave the church, and keep thanking God our Father that, even when we wander away, he never stops loving us. You have come home again, just like the boy in the story Jesus told.



The Sacrament of Reconciliation

We have already learned that
GOD IS LOVE.

We have already learned that
Jesus made us
BROTHERS AND SISTERS
in God's special family.

We have already learned that the
main thing about any family is
THE LOVE WE SHARE.

And so we call the Church
THE COMMUNITY OF LOVE.

But sometimes things go wrong!

Even though we belong to God's special family, we still like to run our own lives, and sometimes we push God away. When we do that we also push our brothers and sisters away, and we end up with **BIG PROBLEMS . . .**

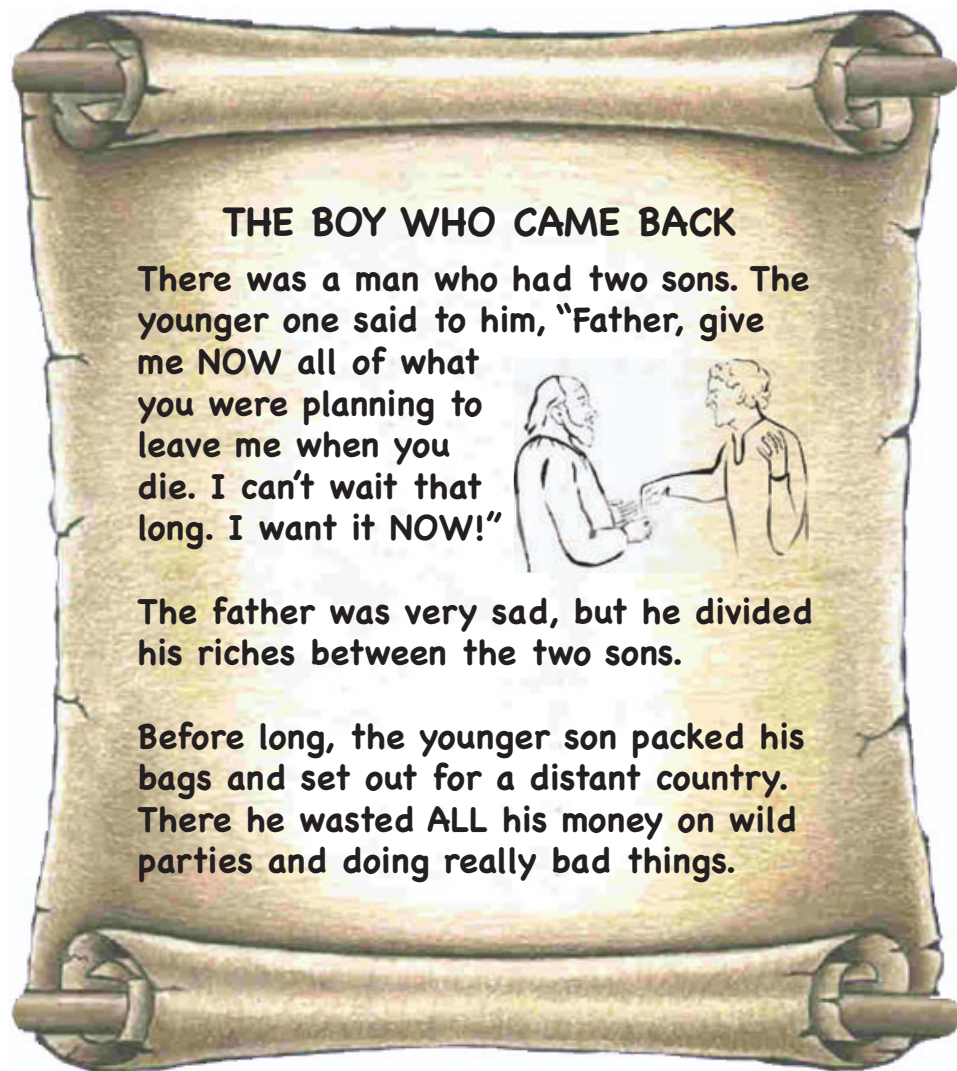
- (1) in our friendship with God
- (2) in our friendships with others
- (3) in the damage we do to ourselves



But there is something that Jesus wants us to remember.

**No matter how many things have gone wrong for us,
and no matter how bad we have been,
GOD STILL LOVES US.**

In fact, Jesus told a story to help us understand this (see Luke 15).



by taking or spending money without permission?
by being wasteful with food my parents give me?

Have I failed to love others?

by being too angry with them or by fighting with them?
by being jealous of them?
by talking unkindly about them?
by being judgmental towards them?
by being hard and unkind to younger children?
by not sharing my things?
by trying to hurt others when they hurt me?
by taking something that does not belong to me?
by causing damage to other peoples' things?
by telling lies?
by cheating or copying at school?



Have I given way to myself?

by being greedy?
by complaining about my food?
by being lazy?
by being sulky?
by being impure in thought, word or deed?



What is the sin I do most often? I will mention this, and continue to seek God's help.

2. Pray for a while, telling God that you are sorry for the distance that has come between you and him because of your sins. Then determine - with his help - to do better from now on.

B. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET TO CHURCH

1. Go to a seat in the church and say a last prayer to God. (You might have to wait for the priest to finish with someone else.)
2. Then go and kneel down at the special desk next to the priest, or into the special Reconciliation Room, depending on how things are done in your church.

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

Many people of all ages would like to meet Jesus in this wonderful Sacrament of Reconciliation. But they have never been before, and they worry about not knowing what to do. So here is a simple outline:

A. GETTING READY TO GO TO CONFESSION

(It is best to do this at home, maybe the night before. But we can do it in the church if we give ourselves enough time.)

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, to show you your sins.

Sometimes we are going to meet Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation because of a **BIG** sin we have done that has come between us and God. We already know about *that one*. But there are usually other things connected with it, and we should confess them, too.

It is a good idea to write down a **list** of these sins to take with us.

Some people find that going through questions like the ones below really helps them. You don't *have* to, especially if you are sure that you are ready for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

But just in case they are helpful, here are the questions.

Have I failed to show love for God?

- # by not praying every day?
- # by not trying to go to Mass on Sundays and Holy days?
- # by not paying attention at Mass
- # by not reading the Bible
- # by acting as if I don't care about God?



Have I failed to show love to my parents and teachers?

- # by not obeying them?
- # by being disrespectful and making fun of them?

By the time he had used up his money, there was a food shortage in that country. Lots of people were starving to death, and he realized he had nothing left. He was hungry. Very hungry. He was desperate.

So he begged for a job, and got one feeding pigs. He was so hungry and so poor that he was jealous of the pigs! THEY at least had slops to eat. He had nothing. He would gladly have eaten the pig food; but no one gave him anything.



What a mess he had made of his life!

After a while he started thinking. In fact he came to himself. He smiled as he thought about home and his father's love.

He remembered how his father's hired servants always had food enough and to spare. He knew that if he stayed where he was he would die!

He knew what he must do. He said to himself, "I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you. I have been so bad. I have hurt you so much. I don't expect you to have me back as your son. But let me come home, and let me be one of your hired servants.'"

So, he got up and trudged all the way back home. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

The son began his speech: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I



When Jesus rose from the dead, **he gave the apostles the ability to continue HIS work of freeing people from their sins. That is part of the GOOD NEWS!**

Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (John 20:23).



Those words Jesus spoke are very important. In fact, in the Anglican Church they are said whenever a man becomes a priest, to remind him that this way of helping people has been passed on to him.

So, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, when the priest says "**I absolve you**" it is really JESUS in all his love and power saying "**I absolve you**", bringing us his forgiveness and healing. Jesus uses the priest's hands and voice as the outward signs of this special meeting.

"Absolve" means
"to forgive and set free from sin."

Many people call the Sacrament of RECONCILIATION
"GOING TO CONFESSION."

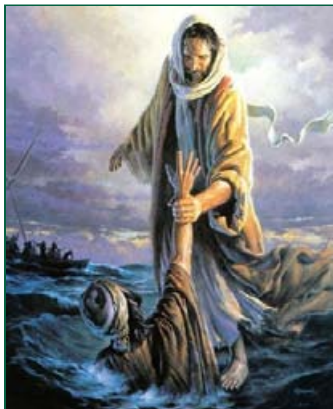
This is how Jesus helps us to be reconciled with God our Father and with each other.

Like that boy, we have to admit that we did the **WRONG** thing, that we have sinned. And then we ask God to forgive us.

A lot of the time it is enough just to pray (as we do at the start of Mass) that God will forgive us for when we have not loved him or each other.

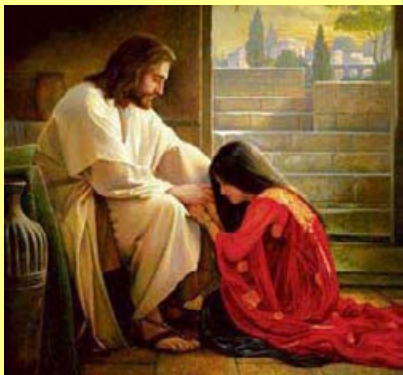
But there is a special **meeting with Jesus** we can have when our sins are really serious, and when we know that we have wandered a long way from God. It is called:

the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Sometimes we are so overpowered by what we have done wrong that we feel as if we are sinking under the waves of sin and guilt. Then, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation we cry out to Jesus, and he comes to rescue us.

There are other times when our meeting with Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is more to do with healing hurts deep within that are the result of our sin.



In the Bible we read that Jesus gave lots of people a new start by forgiving them their sins. He gives *us* a new start when we meet him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

am no longer worthy to be called your son."

But that's as far as he got. The father was so excited and so happy. He said to his servants, "Hurry! Bring the best robe we have, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry. Let us have a great party, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."



And the party began.

The father was so happy. He said again, "this my son was dead, and now is alive."

Jesus told us that story to help us understand how much God loves us. God is the Father who longs for us to come home.



When we go astray, like the boy in the story, we do things that make us ashamed. We try hard not to think about them. We keep pushing God into the background, and our sins start to pile up. Most of all, we hurt the people we love.

We try to forget about our sins, but they still bother us deep down inside.

In the Bible we see how Jesus went around healing sick people. We also see him forgiving people who were crushed by their burden of sin and guilt. He lifted the heavy burden from their shoulders.

They felt as if they had been set free.

They knew they had become friends with God again.

A long word for that is **reconciliation**.

Reconciliation

means

becoming friends again

Jesus forgives us, and brings us back to the Father's house. It's the reason he came into the world. He gives us a new beginning.



We NEVER have to worry about being too bad. God will ALWAYS accept us back. He is our Father, and he longs for us to come home.

So . . . what do we do???

Like the boy in the story, we have to think about how far we have strayed, and about the mess we have started to make in our life. Also about how we have hurt others, especially those who love us.

Then - again like the boy in the story - we think about the Father's love, and how good it would be to go home.