



FIRST HOLY COMMUNION PROGRAMME

UNIT 9



Jesus Forgives Us

AIMS

- To reflect on the story of the Prodigal Son and its messages.
- To understand that God is always ready to forgive our sins every time we show we are sorry and want to repent.
- To recognize that forgiveness brings happiness and peace.

KEY WORDS

- SELFISH - SORRY
- RECONCILIATION
- CONFESSION

INTRODUCTION

Narrate the story of the prodigal son as found in the Gospel of St Luke (see Lk 15: 11-31). A DVD, PowerPoint or similar could be used as an aid. Ask a few questions to make sure that children understood the main points of the story.

RESOURCES

- The story of the prodigal son.
- Flashcards with key words shown above.
- Worksheet 9

MAIN

- Open a discussion about how the younger son felt **before** he left home. Why did he leave the house? He wanted to be happy all by himself. He did not think about his old father or his brother or servants. Here show the word "SELFISH" and discuss ways how the younger son was a selfish person. How did he feel when he was away from home? When he spent all his money he lost his happiness. He was selfish and ended up in a miserable life. We are like that son when we SIN (show flashcard). We are selfish and ignore God's wishes.
- Discuss what happened **after** the younger son lost his happiness. He found a job feeding the pigs. Then he started to reflect and think about his fortune. He noticed that even the servants were better off. So he felt SORRY for what he had done (how flashcard). How do we know that he was really sorry? He **went back** to his father and asked him for forgiveness. He wanted to change his life.
- Talk about the last part of the story. Why was his father waiting for him? He loved him even when he was away and so he kept on waiting for him all the time he was away. What did the son say to his father? He confessed what he had done. He sinned against his father but then he said to him that he wanted to "**reconcile**", to make friends again with his father. His father forgave him. He wanted to celebrate - have a party for him and gave him wonderful gifts: a robe, a ring and new sandals. He regained happiness. When the son returned to his father he was happy again.
- Are we ever like the Prodigal son? Ask children to talk about their experiences which made them and others unhappy. God is like that father in the story who forgave his son. God does the same with us, if we show him we are sorry. When can we do this? We can do this anytime in our prayers, at mass but especially in the SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (show flashcard). In CONFESSION (stress that sometimes we call this the SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION because in it we confess - we tell Jesus what our sins are) Jesus forgives us and shares his peace with us when we sincerely tell him that we are sorry. Who forgives us in Jesus' name? The **priest** is there in Jesus' name. Who gave him the authority to forgive sins? Jesus himself gave him the authority.
- Time permitting, the story of Zacchaeus can be read (see side b of Worksheet 9). Show how the Sacrament of Reconciliation is very much like the meeting of Jesus with Zacchaeus or the meeting of the Father welcoming his prodigal son back.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Keep a few moments of silence. Invite the children to think of something for which they are really sorry. A few may wish to share their thoughts.

Together recite the Sorry Prayer.

Introduce and sing the hymn "Peace is flowing like a river" or a similar one to highlight the peace that the Sacrament of Reconciliation gives.

NOTES

ACTIVITY

Encourage the children to remember God's forgiving love in their night prayers. Pray the Act of Contrition daily (and learn it by heart). Also encourage them to learn other prayers like the Our Father, Hail Mary, the Glory Be and the prayer to the Guardian Angel.

Give out Worksheet 9 and briefly talk about the tasks children have to complete at home.