



Seeds of Faith

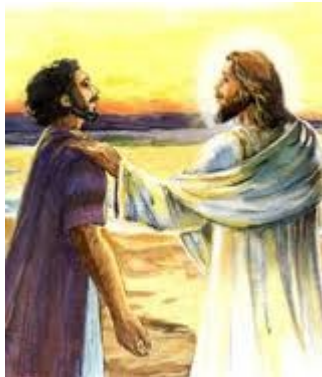
Supporting families

April/May 2016

Family Life

Right through the month of April and into the month of May we continue to celebrate Easter and resurrection so it might seem a strange time to be thinking about the sacrament of Reconciliation—but maybe not. When Jesus dies on the cross it looks like everything has fallen apart. Everything that the disciples had hoped for and expected seems to have come to nothing. Worse than that most of the disciples had run away and deserted Jesus. Peter had stayed around—at a distance—and then, when he was in danger of being caught he denied three times that he even knew Jesus. Imagine how you would feel if someone you love had died before you have had chance to say sorry for some row or misunderstanding between you. Even think of how it feels when someone leaves the house, goes to work or school or just goes to bed with a row still hanging in the air. So imagine then how the disciples were feeling.

But then Easter happens! (And remember we celebrate Easter right up to Pentecost, so that is for fifty days! And then we continue to celebrate it every Sunday!). Easter is a wonderful new beginning. When Jesus rises from the dead we know that nothing can come between us and the love of God any more. Even death cannot break our bond with God. In the Gospel stories after Easter Sunday we see the disciples being offered a powerful experience of reconciliation. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus who had lost all hope and had given up on Jesus meet him on the road and find their relationship with him is renewed. They race back to Jerusalem quite happy to tell everyone “We were wrong, we shouldn’t have given up hope, he is alive!” Thomas who refuses to believe the experience of the other apostles meets Jesus himself in the upper room and his cynicism crumbles. Peter who denied Jesus three times is asked three times by the risen Jesus “Do you love me?” and is able to reply “Yes Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you.” In meeting Jesus each one finds that their relationship is restored, their hope rebuilt, past weaknesses and wrongs are forgiven and they are sent out to share the good news. Think of how you feel when you sort out a row, when you forgive someone or receive forgiveness. Think about how it feels to move from anger and sharp words to being wrapped up in a hug. This is reconciliation. And don’t you find that it gives you new energy, a new desire to keep things right? This is what is offered to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And because of Jesus, because of his death and resurrection there is nothing, nothing at all, that God refuses to forgive. In this Year of Mercy that is a wonderful thing to remember!



Praying as a family



Why not take some time as a family to think about the sacrament of Reconciliation. You might like to read the story where Jesus asks “Peter do you love me?” from chapter 21 of John’s gospel.

Then take a few moments to think quietly:

- How have we shown our love for each other and how have we fallen short in our love for each other?
- How have we made space and time in our lives for God and how have we pushed God out of our lives?
- How have we shown our concern for the people around us and how have we been so wrapped up in ourselves that we forgot about other people?
- How have we shown our care and concern for the world we live in and how have we harmed creation through a lack of care?
- What are the changes we want to make?
- Ask God’s Holy Spirit to help each one of you be more and more the person God created you to be, full of goodness and love.
- You might like to use this type of prayer as preparation before you go to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation in your local parish.

Gospels for April and May

Only three of these gospels offer a story. How can we help children to engage when there is no story to start from? The key is to be found in our faith that Jesus is still speaking to his friends today, especially when we hear his words at Mass. Can we perhaps make a little game of listening for what Jesus will say on Sunday? Would it be bribery to promise a little treat or reward for recognising / recalling even just one line or phrase from the words that Jesus says? After all, there is great reward to be found in treasuring the word of Jesus: ‘If anyone loves me they will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we shall come to them and make our home with them.’ (John 14:23) It could be a bonus then to ponder what we think Jesus’ word might *mean* for us, and to recall it through the week.

10 April	John 21:1-19	Jesus appears by the lakeshore
17 April	John 10:27-30	My sheep hear my voice
24 April	John 13:31-35	Love one another
1 May	John 14:23-29	The Spirit will remind you of my words
8 May	Luke 24:46-53	The Ascension story
15 May	John 20:19-23	The Spirit will come as Advocate
22 May	John 16:12-15	I still have many things to say
29 May	Luke 9:11-17	Five loaves and two fish





Sacred Space

For the rest of April keep the theme of resurrection and new life in your Sacred Space.

Then in May we think about Mary the mother of Jesus. You could have a May altar in your home. If you don't have a good

picture or statue of Mary you could look for one on the internet. You could add some fresh flowers too and you might like to pray a decade of the rosary together as a family. We have been talking in this issue about reconciliation. Think of how often we turn to our mothers to help us sort our a row or misunderstanding. We know that our mother wants the best for us all and wants to help heal any hurt that has been caused. Mary the mother of Jesus is our mother too so if you find reconciliation difficult ask her to help you find the words and the courage that you need.

Stepping Stones on the Journey of Faith



- We believe that God is a God of love who has created us to do our best in the world to love God and each other.
- We believe that we are each created in the image and likeness of God
- We know that sometimes we fall short of the goodness we are capable of.
- We understand that we live in relationship with God, each other and the earth on which we live
- We know that when we fall short of goodness that we damage the relationship we have with God, others and the earth.
- We believe that the sacrament of Reconciliation offers us God's grace through the action of the priest. This grace brings us forgiveness, healing and strength for a new beginning.



O my God,
I thank you for loving me.
I am sorry for all my sins,
for not loving others
and not loving you.
Help me to live like Jesus
and not sin again.
Amen

When our children are prepared at school and in the parish for the sacrament of Reconciliation the focus is very much on how they are called to live out of the goodness God has created in them. In the past perhaps the focus was on how bad we were and unfortunately for some people the sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession was experienced as a harsh and difficult thing which left people feeling bad about themselves. But if we look at how Jesus dealt with people we know that he was a gentle and good shepherd. Yes, he did challenge people sometimes and he did ask people to turn their lives around and not sin any more but he did not tell anyone that they could not be forgiven or suggest that they should carry their guilt around like a heavy sack. The sacrament of Reconciliation is a sacrament of love, reminding us how deeply God loves us. It is one of the sacraments of healing in the church—the other one being the anointing of the sick. So when we celebrate reconciliation lets make it just that, a celebration - of love and hope and new beginnings.

God always
forgives

Pope Francis tells a story about God's forgiveness. About twenty years ago when he was a bishop in Buenos Aires, Argentina he was hearing confessions in the Cathedral. When he was getting ready to leave he saw an old lady. "Good evening Nona" he addressed her. Nona means Grandmother and it is how all the elderly ladies are addressed in Argentina as a sign of respect and affection. "Do you want to go to confession?" he asked and when the lady said yes he replied that maybe she hadn't sinned and had nothing to confess. However the lady reminded him that we all sin—even elderly people! So Bishop Borgoglio—as he was then—said to her "But what if God does not forgive?" The elderly lady told him that God always forgives and that if God did not forgive the world would no longer exist. As Pope Francis says "Let us not forget this word: God never tires of forgiving us, but we sometimes tire of asking Him to forgive us."

Imagine that you are holding a nice white dandelion - now blow it! Watch all the spores (the little white fluffy bits) drifting up into the air and away on the breeze. Now imagine trying to gather up all those little spores again, chasing them over the hedges and fences. Can you catch them all?



When we say something negative or nasty about people it is a little like blowing the dandelion. What we say travels on to other people who, hearing it, may pass it on to someone else.

If we use facebook or twitter or any other social media then the dandelion effect is really increased and it is like a massive storm wind blowing our words out to others. So it is worth remembering the dandelion before we speak or tweet or post a negative comment!