

Preparation for the Sacrament of Penance

Parent Session 1

Journey of Repentance, Journey of Faith

Introductions:

- “The family is a factory of hope!”
- “Faith grows where it is lived and shaped by love. That is why our families, our homes, are true domestic churches.”

From Pope Francis’ visit to Philadelphia, 2015

The Story of Jacob

Selections from Genesis Chapters 27-33

Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him, and thought thus to himself, “The time to mourn my father will soon be here. Then I will kill my brother Jacob.” When the words of Esau, her elder son, were repeated to Rebekah, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Look, your brother Esau means to take revenge and kill you. Now, my son, listen to me; go away and take refuge with my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him awhile until your brother’s fury cools, until your brother’s anger against you cools and he forgets what you have done to him.” ...

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. When he had reached a certain place he passed the night there, since the sun had set. Taking one of the stones to be found at that place, he made a pillow and lay down where he was. He had a dream: a ladder was there, standing on the ground with its top reaching to heaven; and there were angels of God going up it and coming down. And the Lord was there, standing over him, saying, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac.

Esau and Jacob were twin brothers, born to Rebekah. Isaac was their father.

Esau was tricked out of his birthright by Jacob, who had also just stolen (with his mother’s help) his father’s blessing meant for his eldest son and heir.

Haran is north of the land of Canaan—it is Rebekah’s ‘home town’ too.

Beersheba is in the southern part of the land of Canaan.

Jacob is the first person in the Bible to have a vision of heaven.

Angel is translated from a Hebrew word that means “messenger”—it describes their mission, not their nature.

I will give to you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants shall be like the specks of dust on the ground; you shall spread to the west and the east, to the north and the south, and all the tribes of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your descendants. Be sure that I am with you; I will keep you safe wherever you go, and bring you back to this land, for I will not desert you before I have done all that I have promised you.” Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Truly, the Lord is in this place and I never knew it!” He was afraid and said, “How awe-inspiring this place is! This is nothing less than a house of God; this is the gate of heaven!” Rising early in the morning, Jacob took the stone he had used for his pillow, and set it up as a monument, pouring oil over the top of it. He named the place Bethel. ...

Jacob made this vow, “If God goes with me and keeps me safe on this journey I am making, if he gives me bread to eat and clothes to wear, and if I return home safely to my father, then the Lord shall be my God.” ...

Jacob lives twenty years with his uncle Laban, working to earn two wives and many flocks of animals. He chooses to return back to his father’s land when he wears out his welcome up north—having done some ‘shady deals’ with his uncle.

Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the countryside of Edom. ... The messengers returned to Jacob and told him, “We went to your brother Esau, and he is already on his way to meet you; there are four hundred men with him.”

Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. He divided the people with him, and the flocks and cattle, into two companies. ...

That same night he rose, and taking his two wives and his two slave girls and his eleven children he crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream and sent all his possessions over too. And Jacob was left alone.

God introduces himself in terms of the covenant he made with Abraham and Isaac, Jacob’s grandfather and father. God is letting Jacob know that the covenant promise will continue through his line.

God’s covenant promise is not just for future prosperity, but for an intimate relationship and companionship now when things are looking bleak.

In the desert regions, a stone placed on end was a very visible marker. Oil (olive oil) was a sign of consecration.

Beth-el in Hebrew literally means ‘house of God.’ It is about 10 miles north of Jerusalem.

Jacob’s pledge is to remain in covenant with God—worshipping God alone and no other deity.

Jacob returns to the land of Canaan from the east side of the Jordan River. He is a very wealthy man and the father of eleven sons (Benjamin is not yet born).

Jacob assumes the 400 men are soldiers preparing for battle.

Jacob is dividing his people and wealth so that some may escape the imminent attack.

The Jabbok is a tributary of the Jordan that flows into it about 30 miles north of the Dead Sea.

<p>And there was one that wrestled with him until daybreak who, seeing that he could not master him, struck him in the socket of his hip, and Jacob’s hip was dislocated as he wrestled with him. He said, “Let me go, for day is breaking.” But Jacob answered, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” He then asked, “What is your name?” “Jacob,” he replied. He said, “Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; because you have been strong against God, you shall prevail against men.” ...</p> <p>Jacob named the place Peniel, “Because I have seen God face to face,” he said, “and I have survived.” The sun rose as he left Peniel, limping because of his hip.</p> <p>Looking up Jacob saw Esau arriving with four hundred men. He bowed to the ground seven times before going up to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him, took him in his arms and held him close and wept.</p>	<p><i>Jacob begins a lonely vigil—a mysterious time of ‘wrestling’ with his past and future.</i></p> <p><i>The angel (or later, the antagonist is identified as God himself) wrestles with Jacob all night long—calling forth all of Jacob’s attention, skill and strength.</i></p> <p><i>God renames him Israel, which in Hebrew literally means “one who wrestles with God and lives”</i></p> <p><i>Jacob is given courage and hope from his encounter, but he is left humbled and wounded—he will face Esau with a different kind of strength.</i></p> <p><i>Esau offers Jacob reconciliation rather than revenge</i></p>
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Reflection Questions:

Jacob had truly done wrong to his brother. As he flees Esau’s wrath, Jacob encounters God. One lesson this story teaches us is that during times when we think all is lost, when we have really ‘messed up,’ that is when God reveals himself to us.

- *Why do you suppose God operates in this fashion?*
- *Has this been something you have experienced?*

Jacob proclaims that “The Lord is in this place and I never knew it!” Often God is present in the unexpected and unlooked-for times/situations/people in our lives.

- *What does this say about Jacob (and about us) that there are places where we don’t look for or expect God?*
- *How has God revealed himself to you in unexpected or unlooked for times/situations/people in your life?*

Jacob vows to worship God if the Lord sees him safely through on his journey.

- *What did Jacob need to experience before he could put his faith and trust in God?*
- *What has helped you put your faith and trust in God?*

Jacob is fearful that his brother has not forgiven him—he anticipates battle.

- *What is your opinion—is Jacob truly sorry for what he did or is he only afraid of the consequences of what he did?*
- *What is it like to think that someone will not forgive you?*

Jacob expects to spend a lonely night preparing to meet his brother, probably a thousand different horrible expectations are beginning to go through his mind—but God had another experience in mind for him!

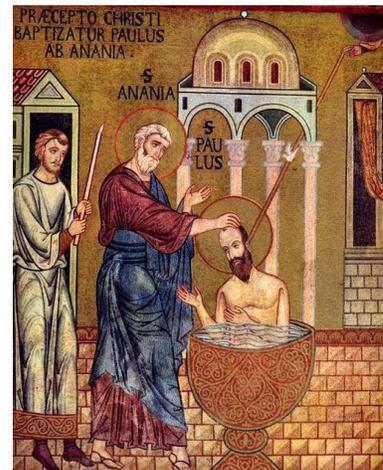
- *How could the wrestling match help Jacob face his brother? What did it prepare him for? What did it change about him?*
- *How has God used adversity and trials in your life to prepare you to receive and accept the good He intends for you?*

Esau runs to meet his brother, embraces him, and weeps. The two brothers are reunited and reconciled.

- *Why might Esau have forgiven his brother—what might have motivated him? What does Jacob do that indicates his desire for forgiveness?*
- *What do you expect to have happen before you can forgive someone? Have you ever forgiven someone when they didn't expect to be forgiven (or hadn't asked for forgiveness)?*

The Church's Vision of Sacraments

- *A meeting place between God & individual*
- *A mysterious encounter with the living Jesus Christ*
- *A continuation of the ministry and mission of Jesus & the apostles*
- *A celebration of the Church—the Body of Christ*
- *A true source of grace*



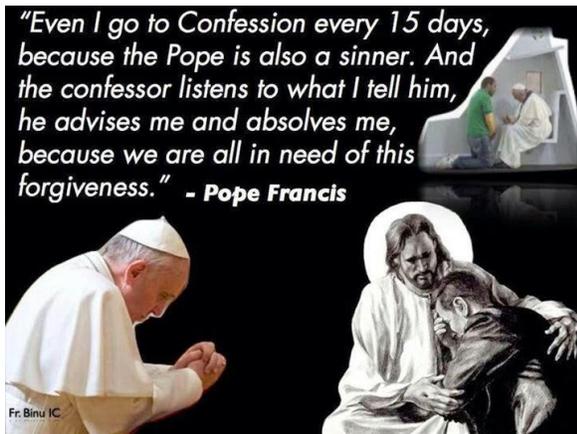
7 Sacraments of the Catholic Church

<i>Sacraments of Initiation</i>	<i>Sacraments of Healing</i>	<i>Sacraments of Vocation</i>
Baptism	Penance (Reconciliation)	Holy Orders
Confirmation	Anointing of the Sick	Matrimony
Eucharist		

“Sacraments are powers that come forth from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are the masterworks of God in the new and everlasting covenant.” (CCC #1116)

What is the Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation)?

- Offers us **spiritual healing** through God’s merciful forgiveness
- We come before God to **confront our sins** and **offer our contrition**
- We **renew the life of grace** given us at Baptism
- In confronting the evil we commit and the good we fail to do, we **celebrate Christ’s victory** over sin and evil
- We **call upon Him** as our Lord & Savior—as the only one who can save us



"Those who approach the Sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins. ... The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship,"

(CCC #1422 & 1468)

Foundations for Receiving the Sacrament

- God’s Creation, Humanity’s Original Sin, God’s Rescue Mission
- Jesus’ Ministry, Mission and Church
- Disciple’s Spiritual Journey and Battle

"The Lord Jesus Christ, physician of our souls and bodies, who forgave the sins of the paralytic and restored him to bodily health, has willed that his Church continue, in the power of the Holy Spirit, his work of healing and salvation, even among her own members. This is the purpose of the two sacraments of healing: the sacrament of Penance and the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick."

(CCC #1421)

Preparation for Sacrament of Penance (Reconciliation)

- Preparation for Sacraments happens in the Parish
- Preparation for the Sacraments involves the parents & family
- Preparation for the Sacrament is a sacred time and opportunity for growth
- When is my child ready? Signs to look for (all at a child's level of maturity)
 - *Familiar with the story of Jesus and the beginnings of a relationship with Him*
 - *Comfortable with God as Father who loves, commands, forgives*
 - *Knowledge of belonging to the Catholic Church*
 - *Knowledge of right and wrong, ability to admit wrongdoing (sin)*
 - *Beginning to offer and receive forgiveness*

What can I do for my Child?

- Support your child's preparation by going through materials sent home, reinforcing the lessons from class
- Continue (or restart!) weekly attendance at Mass, daily prayer in the home, and regular reading of Scripture stories
- Avoid 'downloading' your own fears, discomfort, resistance to your child

What can I do for myself?

- Make use of class time for your own spiritual growth—God wants a deeper relationship with YOU, not just with your child
- Spend time 'updating' and integrating doctrine with your own experiences and situation—seek a mature faith
- Be willing and open to supporting each other as parents—no matter where our children go to school, we are one parish family. The spiritual health of each family blesses and strengthens our parish family

