

Like Clay in God's Hands...

Children's Reconciliation Ritual Non- Sacramental

Please note: While this simple ritual does not include Sacramental Reconciliation, such as the Second Rite of Penance, (see Children's menu selection for this), it can be easily adapted to do so. While it is prepared for large communities, it can readily be used in more informal intimate settings with small groups.

Briefing Before the Liturgy: The Liturgy Coordinator welcomes and briefs the community (see below), and invites all to stand and join in the singing of the Gathering Hymn:

Procession and Gathering Hymn:

As the Gathering hymn is sung, the processional cross, lectionary, and clay are processed in to the sacred space, which is draped in purple cloth.

Gathering Hymn: WE COME TO ASK FORGIVENESS (Hi God 3)

Presider: Welcome to our Reconciliation liturgy. During the season of Lent we take time to reflect on how we live our lives; on how we treat others by our actions and words. Sometimes we do not live as we should and we are sorry for the times we fail to do good. Today we gather as God's children to see how God's love shapes us, like the potter shapes the clay, and brings about in us all that is good and beautiful. We pray today that we will trust more in the way of God as we open our hearts to reconcile ourselves with one another and with our loving God. We begin our gathering in the name of the Father... (Sign of the Cross)

Opening Prayer

Presider: Let us pray. God of love, you are always ready to forgive when we come to you sorry for our failings. You want us to come back to you when we turn away and do wrong. Help us to know we can begin once again and grow into better people. Give us the strength to choose what is good and right. We pray this in Jesus' name.

All: Amen.

First Reading: Jeremiah 18. *The Potter & Clay...*

A slow reflective narration of the reading accompanies a potter moulding the clay by hand into a large pot-like vessel. (*This needs to be rehearsed before the liturgy with the potter and the narrator, in such a way that the potter's action and the narrated text are in dialogue, flowing in and out of each other's spaces and silences, rather than a rigid, literal exchange*). Ensure the clay and the action of the potter is visible to all, in a central position.

When the narrator finishes, she/he repeats in a reflective tone, “**Can I not do to you what the Potter does to the clay....**” PAUSE ‘**For you are like clay in my hands...**’ At this point, gradually bring up the mantra **FASHIONED AND FORMED (Holy Ground)**, as the potter continues working with the clay. The narrator steps to the side and watches the potter. Allow the potter a few minutes to finish the vessel and when she/he has finished it, have the potter hold the vessel high for all to gaze upon, then place it in the sacred space. Gradually fade down the mantra as the potter and narrator bow to the sacred space and return to their seats.

Psalm: **A TRUSTING PSALM (As One Voice Vol.1)**

Gospel Acclamation:

Glory and Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

You are the potter and we are the clay, the work of your hands.

Glory and Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: Luke 11: 33- 36 *The Parable of the Lamp...*

Homily Suggestions:

Use the rich imagery of these two readings to reflect on what is possible when we entrust ourselves to God – the beauty that shines forth in us. Having developed this thread, conclude by having someone come forward with a large lit candle and place it in the clay vessel in the sacred space. When this has been done, allow a minute or two for silent reflection and then lead the community in a simple examination of conscience. Begin to bring up some appropriate instrumental music here and let it play throughout the examination of conscience – something that is unobtrusive, intimate and reflective.

Examination of Conscience (All Kneel)

Presider: **When have we said no to God’s way of love, in the way we have treated others?**

As this is said, two children dressed in black, assume a mime freeze depicting anger and hostility, rejection.

PAUSE

Presider: **When have we said no to God’s love in us, in the way we do not care for ourselves**

As this is said, one child dressed in black, assumes a mime freeze depicting someone locked in on themselves.

PAUSE

Presider: **When have we made choices that lead us from God’s way**

As this is said, four children dressed in black, assume a mime freeze depicting selfishness, greed, lack of care and respect

PAUSE

Presider: Let us each search our hearts in silence for all that stops us from choosing God's way in our lives.

PAUSE

Presider: Let us be seated now and sing of God's love

Hymn: **NOTHING CAN TAKE US AWAY (As One Voice For Kids)**

Penitential Rite: (All Stand)

Presider:

Jesus, you are love. We are sorry, Jesus, when our words and actions are unloving and hurtful to others. Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Presider: Jesus you forgive. We are sorry, Jesus, when we cannot find forgiveness for others in our hearts. Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Presider: Jesus you heal us. We are sorry, Jesus, when we are not open to your healing touch. Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Presider: May our God of mercy, forgive us our failings and lead us to be one with each other.

All: Amen.

Blessing With Holy Water:

Each class or group will be lightly sprinkled with scented holy water (add a few drops of fragrant oil) . Two representatives from each class come forward to the sacred space (in junior classes, adults or older children will need to assist with this). One is handed a bowl of water, the other a sprig of greenery. Slowly, the pair walk around their class group, sprinkling them as they go. Where the situation allows, have the two who are blessing, move in amongst the children blessing each child and saying to each: '**Jesus offers you peace and forgiveness**, (name) _____'. Each child crosses themselves with the sign of cross.

The mantra ***GOD IS LOVE (Praise & Blessing)*** is sung throughout this blessing. The bowls and sprigs are returned to the sacred space after all have been blessed.

Prayer of the Faithful:

Presider: Confident in your tender, listening heart, we turn to you, O God, in prayer.

Reader: We pray for reconciliation and peace between all peoples and all countries in our world. Hear us, loving God.

All: Healing God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for the families of all here, that we can learn from Jesus to love, respect and value one another. Hear us, loving God.

All: Healing God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for our school community, that it may be a place of forgiveness and healing for all who come here. Hear us, loving God.

All: Healing God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for those who cannot forgive others who have hurt them, that the compassionate heart of Jesus may touch their hearts. Hear us, loving God.

All: Healing God, hear our prayer.

Reader: We pray for people who find it hard to forgive themselves. May they come to experience how precious they are in your eyes. Hear us, loving God.

All: Healing God, hear our prayer.

Presider: Healing God, hear the prayers we pray in Jesus' name and keep us close to your loving heart.

All: Amen.

Sign of Peace:

Presider: May the peace and love of Jesus be with you!

All: And also with you.

Presider: As we try to love and forgive one another, let us offer each other a sign of peace.

Final Prayer:

Presider: God of great love, your love shapes us and forms us as the clay is shaped in the hands of the potter. Help us to be open to all the good and the beauty that your Spirit can fill us with, so that we may give your love and peace to others. We ask this in the name of Jesus who loves us.

All: Amen.

Presider: Let us go joyfully in the love of our forgiving God!

All: Thanks be to God.

Final Hymn: GO NOW IN PEACE (Praise & Blessings)

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Duration of the liturgy: Approximately 40 minutes

Props and Resources:

- Processional Cross
- Lectionary/Bible
- Small table
- Large lump of clay
- Wooden tray or board for clay (small bowl of water for potter)
- Purple cloth
- Bowls of water – one for each class or group
- Sprigs of greenery for sprinkling

People Required:

- Cross Bearer
- Lectionary Bearer
- Reader/s for Penitential Rite
- Potter
- Readers for Scripture Readings (2)
- Readers for Prayer of the Faithful (5)
- Carrier from each class for bowl of water
- Person for each class to sprinkle with sprig

Music:

- **We Come To Ask Forgiveness** (Carey Landry – Hi God 3)
- **A Trusting Psalm** (Kevin Bates – As One Voice Vol.1)
- **Fashioned and Formed** (Monica Brown – Holy Ground)
- **Nothing Can Take Us Away** (M. Millward & D. Halloran – As One Voice For Kids)
- **God Is Love** (Monica Brown – Praise & Blessings)
- **Go Now In Peace** (Monica Brown – Praise & Blessings)

Specific Notes:

- **Liturgical Co-ordinator** - This person should not be the same person as the Presider. The Liturgical Co-ordinator's role is to oversee and coordinate the liturgy, instruct the community and ensure everything is in place and all involved in any way, are briefed, rehearsed, where necessary, and comfortable.
- **Briefing before the ritual** – The Liturgical Co-ordinator (LC) welcomes the community and explains the procedure for the blessing of holy water, urging the children to be as reflective and prayerful as possible.

It would be helpful if teachers did some preparation work on this in their classrooms before the liturgy.

- **Potter** – If you are unable to get a potter, anyone who is familiar with, and comfortable in working clay can do this – it is not about a perfect vessel so much as the relationship between the clay and the hands and mind of the potter. The potter will need to prepare the clay before the liturgy, since time will be limited. The narrator and the potter will need to pace this so that it flows but is not rushed, nor too long. A time frame of about 5 – 7 minutes would be appropriate.