

First Communion Session 4 of 4

Begin with the prayer on the front of your child's printout.

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation we are not simply confessing our sins to the priest. We are confessing them to God. The priest is God's representative, who has the power, in God's name, to forgive our sins. In every sacrament, the priest acts in the name of Jesus. Getting to know Jesus as the Good Shepherd helps the children to understand that the priest, who acts in the name of Christ, will welcome them with love and care.

You may want to remind your child that we have many shepherds in our lives. Parents and teachers are shepherds who risk their lives each day to care for the community; and children themselves are shepherds when they look out for younger children or animals. All people who love and care for others are signs of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for all.

Invite your child to open their Bibles to John 10:1-18 (pages 1675 and 1678)
Then turn to the Featured Story on page on 1676 and 1677 and ask them to see if they can guess what the story is about by just checking out the pictures.

Before you begin reading the actual story, you may want to go over the vocabulary words at the bottom of page 1676. If they want they can underline them in the story as you read it later.

Introduce the Bible story to your child by explaining that where Jesus lived, there were a lot of sheep and a lot of shepherds so people there saw shepherds all the time. They knew it was hard work being a shepherd and taking care of sheep all day and all night too. Today we might compare being a shepherd to a rancher taking care of cattle or even those of us who have pets. Many animals are totally dependent on us for their food, their water, and their well-being. We can't let them down. In this story, Jesus tells us that he will never let us down.

Read the full story on 1675 John 10:1-17

Here are some discussion questions to check for comprehension.

1. Who is the Good Shepherd? (*Jesus*)
2. What does the Good Shepherd do? (*He takes care of the sheep and is willing to die for them*)
3. There is a wolf in this story. What could the wolf do to the sheep? (*He might snatch the sheep and scatter them*)
4. If we are the sheep of Jesus, what do you think the wolf is? (*The wolf is anyone who wants to harm us or to lead us on the wrong path*)

Read together the "Understand it!" portion on page 1677 in your child's Bible. Then move on to the "Live It!" portion. This portion only focuses on verses 1-3 of Psalm 23. The entire Psalm has 6 verses. Find Psalm 23 in your child's Bible and mark it in a way that he/she can find it easily. Explain that when they feel like they might want to remember that God loves them and

will take care of them, they can always pray this Psalm to remind them. I invite you to pray Psalm 23 regularly with your child until they have it memorized so that they always have it handy.

Go over the companion page in your child's materials for this lesson and go through that together. We will be going over this again at the parent meeting in March in even more detail to help him/her feel comfortable with the Sacrament and will even be able to take home the activity to practice more if she/he would like.

Close this lesson with either the full Psalm 23 or the prayer on the back of the worksheets in the "Pray It!" section.

For an optional activity, blow up the balloon included in your packet and draw on the face of a sheep and some floppy sheep ears. With a stick of some kind, let your child see if she/he can get his sheep to a designated area of the house. Reminding them that Jesus is a gentle and loving shepherd, who doesn't force, but gently guides his sheep to get them on the right path.

YouTube video

Baa Baa (He's the Good Shepherd)

<https://youtu.be/PGPQX3vQtU8>


There are 2 different coloring pages, one for your child and one for mom and dad so you can color together!

Jesus Loves and Cares for Us

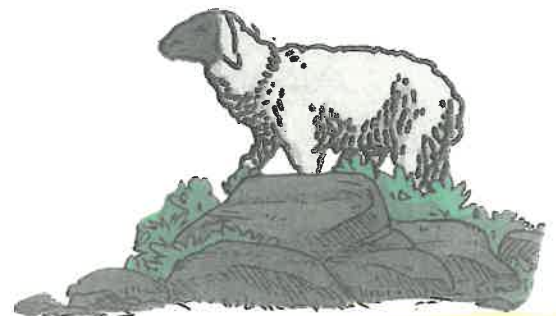
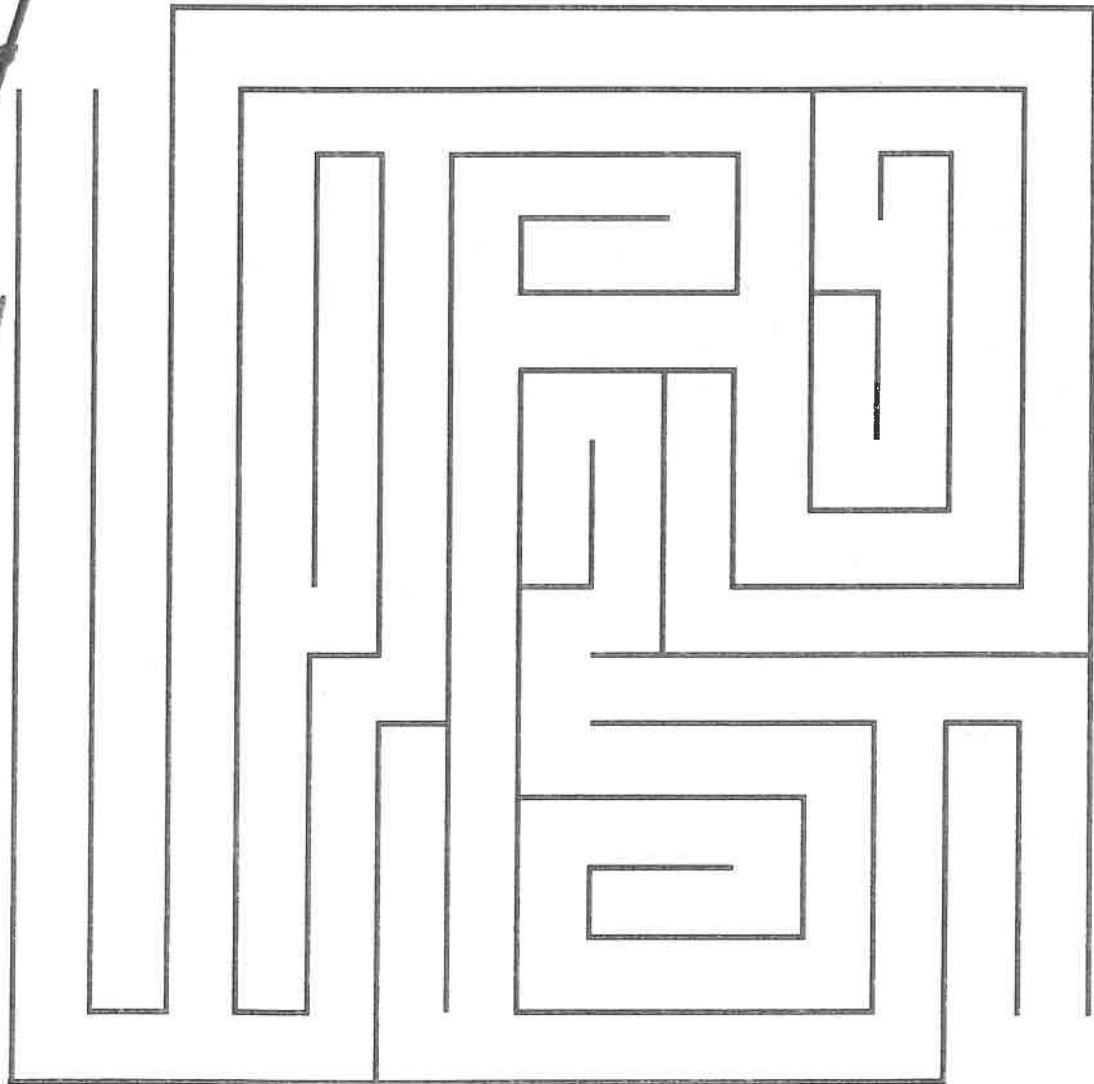


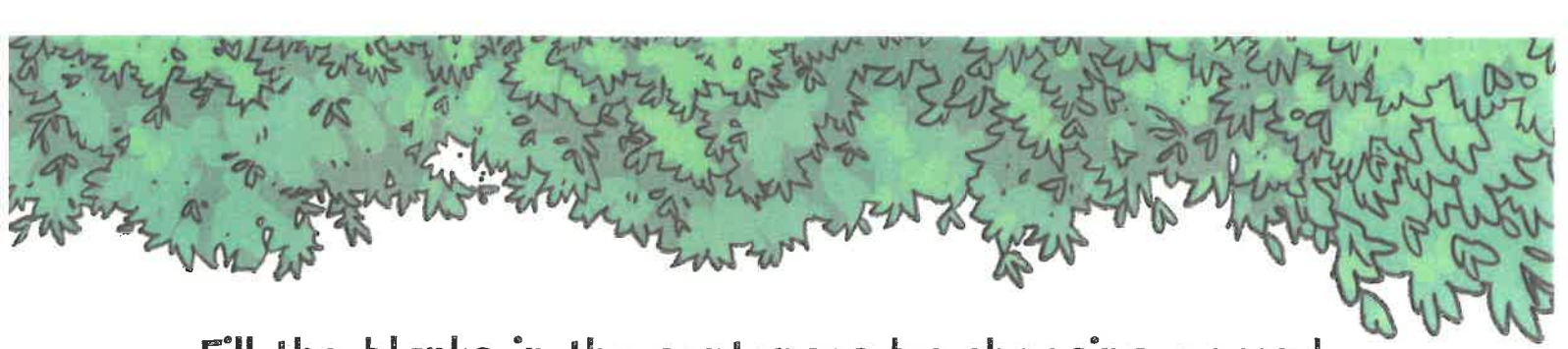
Prayer

Jesus, you love and care for us as a shepherd cares for sheep. You lead us to good things and find us when we go astray. Help us to follow you always. Amen.



The sheep in this picture has gone astray. Help the shepherd find it!





Fill the blanks in the sentences by choosing a word from this list:

possible

penance

Contrition

sin

encouragement

1. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we tell God that we are sorry by saying an Act of _____.
2. We promise not to _____ again.
3. After we confess our sins, the priest may give us some words of advice or _____.
4. The priest gives us a _____, a prayer or good action that shows we will do better.
5. We should do our penance as soon as _____.

Family Page



Background Focus

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are not simply confessing our sins to the priest. We are confessing them to God. The priest is God's representative, who has the power, in God's name, to forgive our sins. In every sacrament, the priest acts in the name of Jesus. Getting to know Jesus as the Good Shepherd helps the children to understand that the priest, who acts in the name of Christ, will welcome them with love and care.

You may want to remind your child that we have many shepherds in our lives. Parents and teachers are shepherds; police and firefighters are shepherds who risk their lives each day to care for the community; your child is a shepherd when he or she looks out for younger children or cares for animals. All of these people who love and care for others are signs of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for all.



Family Strategies

A family is a kind of flock. A flock sticks together and shares both good times and bad. Be sure to plan fun family times for your flock on a regular basis. Make Family Night a routine, and involve the children in planning the activities. As they grow, they will make their own friends and pursue their own activities. Yet they will also know that they have a secure base that is always ready to welcome them home.



Family Activities

- Visit a farm or petting zoo that cares for sheep and lambs. It is always helpful to have hands-on experience of the symbols that Jesus uses in the Gospel. You may also want to watch the YouTube video "The Baa Baa Song (He's the Good Shepherd)" (2:06).
- Find images of the Good Shepherd in your church. If there are none, find images of the Good Shepherd on the Internet, and download them and display them at home.
- Read together the Featured Story from page 1676 of *The Catholic Children's Bible*, "Jesus Is the Good Shepherd" (John 10:1-18). You may also want to read Psalm 23 ("The Lord Is Our Shepherd") aloud with your family. Other "shepherd" verses to read together are Isaiah 40:10-11, Jeremiah 31:10, and Ezekiel 34:11-15.

Pray It!

Pray this prayer together as a family, beginning and ending with the Sign of the Cross.

Jesus, Good Shepherd, you call us by name and you lead us in right paths. Keep us near you as you guide us through our lives. We ask this in your name, Lord Jesus. Amen.



Chapter 6: Jesus Loves and Cares for Us



Introduction

Do you know what a shepherd is? A shepherd is someone who cares for sheep. A shepherd feeds the sheep and takes care of them. A shepherd makes sure the sheep are always safe. Who are the shepherds in your life? Who takes care of you and keeps you safe?

We call Jesus the Good Shepherd. If Jesus is the Shepherd, then who are the sheep? We are! The whole Church is the flock of Jesus. He takes care of each of us and all of us.

Scripture Story: Jesus Is the Good Shepherd

Let's listen to what Jesus says about being our Shepherd:

[Jesus said] "I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and

does not care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them." (John 10:11-15)

The Good Shepherd in this story is Jesus. Jesus takes good care of us.

Will Jesus run away when danger comes? No! He will stay with us and help us. And who is the wolf? The wolf is anyone who might harm us or lead us to do wrong. Jesus will chase the wolf away and stay with us. If we lose our way, the Good Shepherd will find us. The Good Shepherd gives his own life to save his sheep.

The Priest Is God's Shepherd

We have many shepherds in our lives. We have many people who take care of us. We have parents, teachers, maybe grandparents, and other caregivers.

The priest who hears our confession in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is also a shepherd. He welcomes us with love and care. When we confess our sins to the priest, we are confessing

them to God. The priest is God's representative, God's shepherd. The priest will listen carefully to our confession and guide us on the right path. He will help us to follow Jesus. He will forgive us in the name of Jesus.

God's Treasure of Forgiveness

Let's review the steps in the Sacrament of Reconciliation that we have learned so far:

- The priest greets us, and we make the Sign of the Cross with him.
- The priest may read a passage from Sacred Scripture.

The next thing we do is confess our sins. Then, after that, the priest may give us some words of advice or encouragement. He will then give us a **penance**. A penance is a prayer or good action that shows that we will do better. Doing a penance shows, in a small way, that we want to make up for what we have done.

Sometimes a penance is a prayer to pray. Sometimes it is an action to do. Sometimes it is a kind act to help someone we have hurt in some way. It is important to do our penance as soon as possible.

The priest will then invite us to pray an **Act of Contrition**. The Act of Contrition is a prayer that tells God we are sorry and will not sin again. Here is one Act of Contrition you can say:

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do
good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love
above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy. Amen.

The word *contrition* means "having true sorrow for sin and a desire to avoid sin in the future." This is how we return to God and mend our relationship with him. This is the process of conversion and repentance.

Our Act of Contrition in the Sacrament of Reconciliation tells God that we are sorry for our sins. In the Sacrament, we can say the Act of Contrition by heart or we can read it from a card. We should practice ahead of time so that we understand its words and can say it with our whole heart.

God wants us to be honest and sincere when we ask for forgiveness. That is why these four things are necessary for the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be complete:

1. We must have true sorrow for our sins (contrition).
2. We must be honest in confessing our sins to the priest.
3. We must do our assigned penance and do our best to make up for the sin.
4. We receive the priest's absolution.

Things to Remember

- Jesus loves and cares for us as a good shepherd cares for his sheep.
- Jesus seeks us out when we lose our way because of our sin. We can return to him through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- The priest is God's representative and forgives us in the name of Jesus.
- We express our sorrow for having sinned by praying an Act of Contrition during the Sacrament of Reconciliation.