

## Looking Ahead

In this chapter, the Holy Spirit invites you to ►



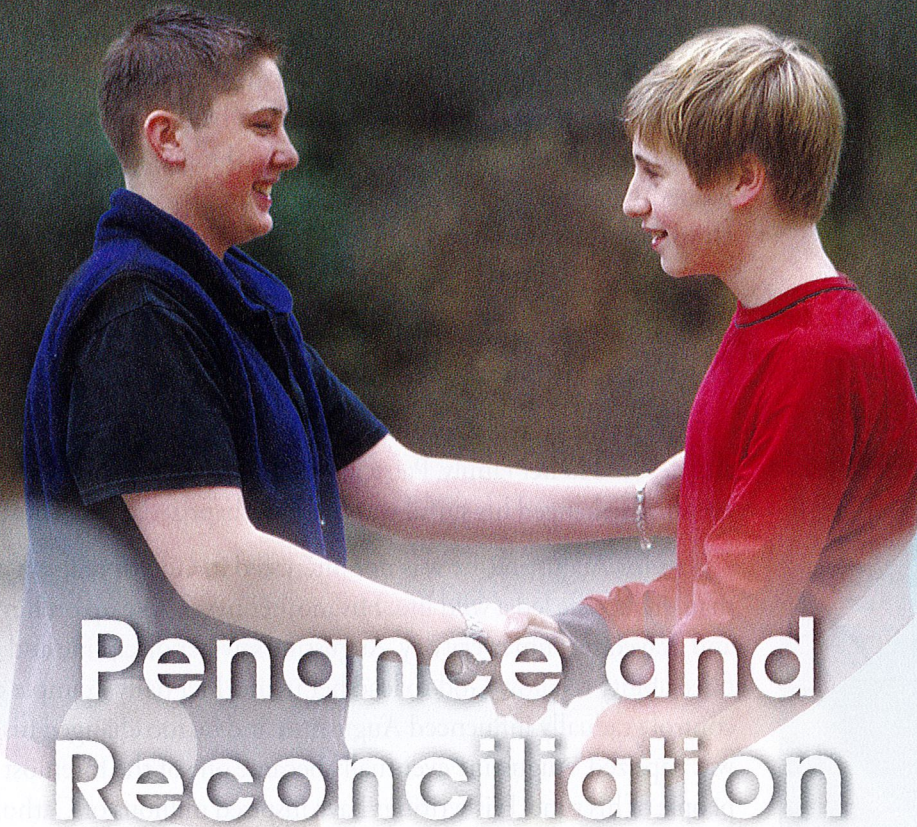
**EXPLORE** the life of a mother whose strength helped her son.



**DISCOVER** the graces of Penance and Reconciliation.



**DECIDE** how you will demonstrate self-control and sacrifice.



# Penance and Reconciliation

**?** How easy is it for you to accept forgiveness? How difficult is it for you to forgive someone? How do you seek forgiveness?

In Luke's account of Jesus pardoning the woman who had sinned, Jesus explains to his disciples that love is a sign that her sins are forgiven:

*“So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” . . . [Jesus] said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

LUKE 7:47, 50

**?** How did the woman show her love and faith in Jesus? What can you do to show love to God and others?



# Disciple Power

## Self-control

Self-control is a Fruit of the Holy Spirit that comes from a steadfast commitment to God. A person with self-control demonstrates that God's will comes first in life. Self-control helps us do what is good and just. When others see self-control in us, we become witnesses for Christ by placing the needs of others before our own and following the will of God the Father, in whom we place our trust.

# THE CHURCH FOLLOWS JESUS

## A Woman of Strength

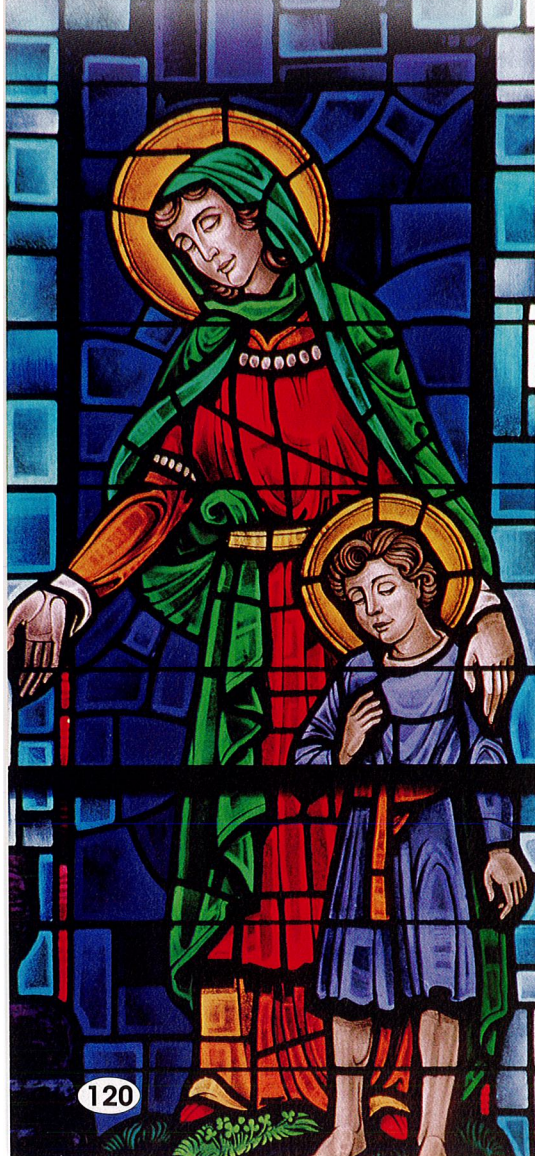
Faith and love are at the center of the life of Saint Monica. As a young girl, Monica was strong-willed and devoted to her Christian faith. Born in Tagaste, North Africa (modern-day Algeria) in A.D. 332, her determination carried over into her adult life. As was customary then, Monica had an arranged marriage with a man named Patricius, who was not a Christian. Together they had three children; one was named Augustine.

As a wife and a mother, Monica had a tough time. Patricius led a sinful and violent lifestyle, and Augustine was a reckless teenager. Despite this, Monica prayed patiently for their conversion.

Under the guidance of Ambrose, Monica remained strong in her faith and devoted to her family. Patricius witnessed his wife's commitment. He eventually changed his sinful ways and was baptized in the Church.

As for Augustine, he was not interested in God or religion as a young man. In fact, he led a wild life. His mother never gave up on him, however, and prayed for him every day. Augustine saw her discipline and grace-filled ability to allow God to lead her in life. Her daily example of self-control gradually influenced Augustine, and he too changed his life and was baptized. Augustine eventually became one of the foremost religious people of his time. His writings have inspired millions of Catholics.

Today many see Saint Monica as an example of a strong African Christian woman. Her faith in God gave her self-control. No matter how frustrating life seemed, she was true to her understanding of God's plan for her. Had it not been for Monica's faith and commitment to her family, the world may not ever have known her or her son. The Church celebrates the life of Saint Monica on her feast day, August 27.



### Activity

Work with a partner. Prepare a skit in which self-control is needed. Write a summary of your idea here and share it with your class.

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# God's Forgiveness

The self-control of Saint Monica shows how understanding God's plan for you can keep you true to the faith and love of God. Some people, however, do not stay true to this love.

When we sin, we turn away from the love of God and of other people. We hurt ourselves, and we need spiritual healing. In the Sacraments of Healing, our relationship with God and with the Church is renewed. Both the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick are Sacraments of Healing. We need the healing given by God, who alone can forgive sins. In his mercy and goodness, God shares his power to forgive sins with the Church, the Body of Christ. He shares this forgiveness through the celebration of the Sacraments.

## Sacraments of Forgiveness

Baptism is the first Sacrament of forgiveness. In Baptism, Original Sin and all personal sins are forgiven. Jesus also gave the Church the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. He said to his disciples,

*"Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained."*  
JOHN 20:22-23

This work of forgiveness is continued through the ministry of bishops and priests.

The Eucharist is also a Sacrament of forgiveness. Sharing in the Eucharist joins us more closely to Christ and to others. **Venial sins** are forgiven. **Mortal sins**, however, must be confessed in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Celebrating Reconciliation and receiving the Eucharist regularly help us deepen our relationship with God and others.

**?** When have you experienced God's mercy and forgiveness?

### FAITH FOCUS

What does the Church teach about forgiveness?

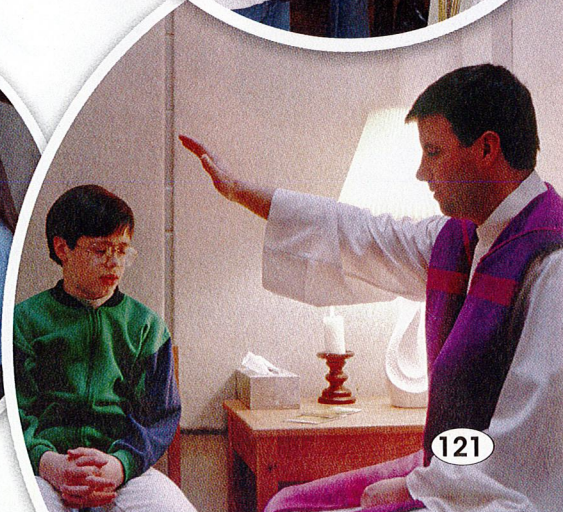
### FAITH VOCABULARY

#### mortal sin

A mortal sin is a serious failure in our love and respect for God, our neighbor, and ourselves. For a sin to be mortal, it must be gravely wrong, we must know it to be gravely wrong, and we must freely choose it.

#### venial sin

A venial sin is less serious than a mortal sin; it is a sin that does not have all three conditions necessary for a sin to be mortal.





## Faith-Filled People

### Mary Magdalene

Some people think that the sinful woman pardoned by Jesus in Luke's account was Mary Magdalene. However, Luke refers to her as the woman whom Jesus cleansed from seven demons (see Luke 8:2). All the Gospel accounts place Mary as one of the first witnesses of Jesus' Resurrection. Mary Magdalene is a witness to God's mercy.

## Reconciling Our Relationships

We can celebrate Penance and Reconciliation whenever we express our need for God's mercy and are sorry for our sins. The Sacrament includes both the priest, who is the minister of the Sacrament, and the penitent, who is seeking reconciliation with God and the Church.

Before confessing our sins to the priest, we first prepare for the Sacrament through an examination of conscience. This is a reflection on our lives in light of the Gospel. It expresses our desire to enter into a deeper relationship with God. When we examine our conscience in this way, we are opening ourselves to God's grace. Reconciliation heals and transforms us into a new life with Christ.

**?** What kinds of questions do you ask yourself when you examine your conscience?

## The Rite of Penance

Another name for the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is Confession. When we meet the priest in Confession, he welcomes us in the name of Jesus and the Church, inviting us to repentance. He may read a story or passage from the Bible, and then individually we confess, or tell the priest our sins, and express our sorrow.

The Church teaches that the penitent must confess to the priest all grave sins committed and not yet confessed. The Church forbids a priest ever to tell anything he hears in Confession. This frees us to be open and honest with God. The Church does not require that venial sins be confessed, but it is strongly recommended.

Next, the priest may suggest ways to grow closer to God. He then asks us to perform an act of penance. This way we can take responsibility for what we have done and atone for the wrong we have committed. This penance might include a prayer, acts of charity, or works of mercy. The priest then asks us to tell God that we are sorry for our sins by praying the Act of Contrition.

On behalf of the Church, the priest then extends his hands over us and says a prayer of absolution. Through absolution by the priest, God heals us and grants pardon for our sins. Since we are sorry and willing to change, the Holy Spirit re-sanctifies us as temples of God. Finally, with the priest, we praise God for his mercy, and the priest encourages us to go in peace as a living sign of God's redeeming love.



## The Graces of Penance and Reconciliation

Celebrating Penance and Reconciliation heals you spiritually. The grace of this Sacrament is reconciliation. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation:

- restores and strengthens the life of grace with God, which sin has caused us to lose or weaken
- renews our relationship with the Body of Christ, the Church
- frees us from eternal separation from God
- gives us the gift of peace and forgiveness, and the grace to follow Jesus Christ faithfully—even in the face of difficulties

Jesus teaches that there is punishment connected with sin. In the Gospel, he tells his disciples that when he comes again, he will separate the good from the wicked. To the evil ones he will say,

*“Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. . . I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, a stranger and you gave me no welcome, naked and you gave me no clothing, ill and in prison, and you did not care for me.”*      MATTHEW 25:41, 43

Punishment for sin is one of the consequences of our sinful acts. That punishment may be eternal or it may be temporary. Through prayers, good works, and indulgences, the faithful can obtain remission, or release, from this temporary punishment caused by sin. The baptized members of the Church can do this for us and for the souls in Purgatory. When we stray from God through sin, he calls us back with his mercy into his loving embrace within the Church.

### Activity

Inventory the unnecessary material things in your life—those things you could really live without. Compare your list with others and discuss how having too much can distract us from what is most important in life and lead us far from God.

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## Catholics Believe



### Forgiveness

Only God forgives sins. Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church. Giving the Apostles his own power to forgive sins, the Lord also gives them the authority to reconcile sinners with the Church. Reconciliation with the Church is inseparable from reconciliation with God (CCC 1441-1446).



# I FOLLOW JESUS

Jesus gave the Church the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation so that we could have a way to seek and celebrate God's forgiveness for our sins. You can prepare to celebrate this Sacrament by examining your conscience. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you take an honest look at your words and actions so that you can have better control of them and ask for God's forgiveness.

## EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Work with a partner. Refer to the lists of Ten Commandments, Beatitudes, and Works of Mercy in the back of your textbook. From these references and from your knowledge of what God asks you to do, make a list of five questions that Christians should ask themselves in order to evaluate their daily words and actions. Record your questions below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## MY FAITH CHOICE

This coming week, I will show my commitment to God through Works of Mercy and love. I will

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Pray, "Lord, let me be a witness for Christ through self-control and sacrifice. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

# Chapter Review

Complete the sentences with the missing words.

1. The first Sacrament of forgiveness is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ sins must be confessed in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.
3. Through the \_\_\_\_\_ received in Penance and Reconciliation, our relationship with God and the Church is restored and renewed.
4. In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, we receive the \_\_\_\_\_ needed from God, who alone can forgive sins.
5. Through \_\_\_\_\_ by a priest, God heals us and grants pardon for our sins.

## ▶ TO HELP YOU REMEMBER

1. The Sacraments of Healing include both the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.
2. The Rite of Penance has a movement of conversion that includes repentance, confession, and absolution.
3. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation is the Sacrament through which we receive God's forgiveness for the sins that we commit after we have been baptized.

# The Act of Contrition

*In the Rite of Penance before we receive absolution, the priest asks us to express our sorrow for our sins with the Act of Contrition. Take a moment of silence to examine your conscience using the questions you wrote for today's activity. Then pray together the Act of Contrition.*

**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.**



# With My Family

## This Week ...

In **Chapter 11**, "Penance and Reconciliation," your child learned:

- ▶ God shares his power to forgive sins with the Church through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.
- ▶ Through Reconciliation, we receive forgiveness for the sins committed after Baptism.
- ▶ Confession of sins, contrition (or sorrow), penance, and absolution are always part of the Rite of Penance.
- ▶ Discipline and self-control demonstrate our commitment to God.

**For more** about related teachings of the Church, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1420–1498 and the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, pages 233–247.

## Sharing God's Word

**Read** together John 20:21–23. Emphasize that Jesus gave the Church the power to forgive sins.

## We Live as Disciples


**The Christian home** and family form a school of discipleship. Choose one of the following activities to do as a family, or design a similar activity of your own:

- ▶ When your family has strife in your relationships, practice the movement of conversion: seek repentance, identify the harm done, express contrition and forgiveness, and pray for God's grace to renew the relationship.

- ▶ During mealtime or bedtime prayers, occasionally include the prayer of the penitent: "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

## Our Spiritual Journey

**Living a life** more pleasing to God includes seeking his forgiveness and mercy. Conditioning our hearts to accept God's mercy often involves sacrifice and putting the needs of others before our own. This is possible by practicing self-control. How can you, as a family, practice self-control so that sacrifice is a priority?



For more ideas on ways that your family can live as disciples of Jesus, visit

[www.BeMyDisciples.com](http://www.BeMyDisciples.com)