

3

■ Spiritual

Learning intention To celebrate the joy and happiness of living in friendship with God and others.

Introduction and content

Pope Francis reminds us that God lovingly touches all the stages of life through seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders and Marriage. They are drawn from the love that Jesus has for all of us as shown in his Life, Passion, Death, and Resurrection. This love is shared with us by the Holy Spirit. Each is an occasion of the in-breaking of God into our lives, a moment of divine presence and grace an 'outward sign of an inward gift'. Just as Christ is fully human and divine, so the sacraments have a human and divine aspect. The sacraments are about God's loving involvement in our lives. As our liturgy tells us, our God "always walks with us on the journey of life." (cf. *Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs*).

*The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify people,
to build up the Body of Christ, and, finally, to worship God.'*

(Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)

As there is a particular focus in this unit on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the following perspectives are offered:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that this Sacrament has four names or titles which accentuate different elements. It is the Sacrament of Penance because it is through us we bring to the Church the steps of conversion we make with God's grace or help. It is the Sacrament of Confession since in the Sacrament we 'confess' our sinfulness and 'confess' or proclaim God's mercy. It is the Sacrament of Forgiveness since by the priest's sacramental absolution we receive pardon and peace. It is the Sacrament of Reconciliation because it reunites or reconciles us with God (CCC# 1423-1424).

Pope Francis has continually emphasized the infinite mercy of a God who never tires of reaching out to us. The Holy Father has put forth the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a gift that permits each one of us to encounter the mercy of God in a personal and profound way.

"The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a Sacrament of healing. When I go to confession it is in order to be healed, to heal my soul, to heal my heart and to be healed of some wrongdoing. The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation flows directly from the Paschal Mystery. In fact, on the evening of Easter the Lord appeared to the disciples who were locked in the Upper Room, and after addressing them with the greeting, 'Peace be with you!', he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven' (John 20:21-23).