

THE GOOD NEWS WEEKLY
 Second Sunday of Easter
 (Divine Mercy Sunday) (B)
 John 20:19-31 • April 11, 2021

a CHANGE of HEART

Have you ever heard somebody ask, "Why do we have to confess our sins to a priest? Why can't we go directly to God?" Have you ever wondered that yourself? Today's gospel gives us an answer to this persistent question.

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus gave his disciples the power to forgive sins; priests share that power, acting in the person of Christ. The priest is also the representative for the whole Church community: the Body of Christ. When we sin, we hurt the whole Church community—much like when someone starts a fight at a party and it ruins everyone's fun—so, through the priest, we are reconciled to God and to all the members of the Body of Christ.

We **can** confess our sins directly to God, of course, and we should do so often! It's a good practice to review our actions (examine our consciences) each day and to express sorrow (confess) to God for any



wrongs we've done. We are asked to confess to a priest only if we know we have seriously sinned and deliberately locked God out of our hearts.

When we have a change of heart (open our hearts to God), there is rejoicing in heaven. God embraces us with forgiveness and love and peace. It's not that God doesn't forgive us when we confess our sins privately. God is *always* there for us; we are *always* forgiven. But in receiving the beautiful sacrament of reconciliation, we are healed of the damages of our sins. We are reconciled to the community of believers and are guided in the ways of Christian living.

GOSPEL THEME
 Blessed are all who have not seen the Risen Lord, but believe.



A gift from Jesus

With the sacrament of reconciliation comes a very special gift from Jesus. Solve the rebus to see what that gift is.



Written by Francine M. O'Connor. Art by Chris Sharp. © 2021 Liguori Publications, Liguori, MO 63057-9999. Imprimatur: Most Rev. Robert J. Hermann, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus, Archdiocese of St. Louis. Printed in USA. All rights reserved. It is a violation of copyright law to reproduce all or part of this material without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications, Liguori.org
 Answer to A Gift From Jesus: PEACE

LOCKED HEARTS



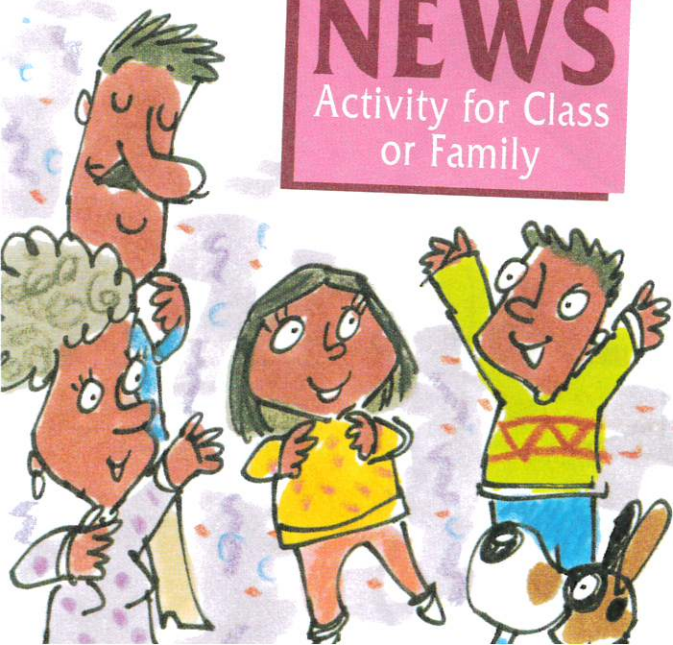
Jesus entered the locked room to be there for his disciples. Thomas wasn't with them, and refused to believe until he could see Jesus for himself. Jesus came back for him. Locks don't stop Jesus — they only stop us from recognizing the Risen Lord who comes to us.

Forgiveness

Jason is the youngest of three children. Jason is jealous of his older brother and sister because they get to do things he can't do, like go to rock concerts. He thinks he is treated unfairly.

Jason takes money from his brother's wallet when no one is watching. Once he told lies to his mother about his sister and got her into trouble. Jason doesn't like himself when he does such things, but he doesn't seem to be able not to. He doesn't go to Mass anymore because he thinks he's "bad." He thinks God will never forgive him.

SHARING
the
GOOD NEWS
Activity for Class or Family



Love

Marcia is the only child of wealthy parents. She can get anything she wants just by pouting. Marcia has every new tape and video, two closets full of the latest fashions, and her own telephone. But Marcia has no friends. She is very selfish — and very lonely.

Marcia thinks nobody likes her, not even God. That's why she hates going to Mass. The homily always seems to be about loving your neighbor, sharing your riches, and doing good. Marcia doesn't know how to do those things.

Peace

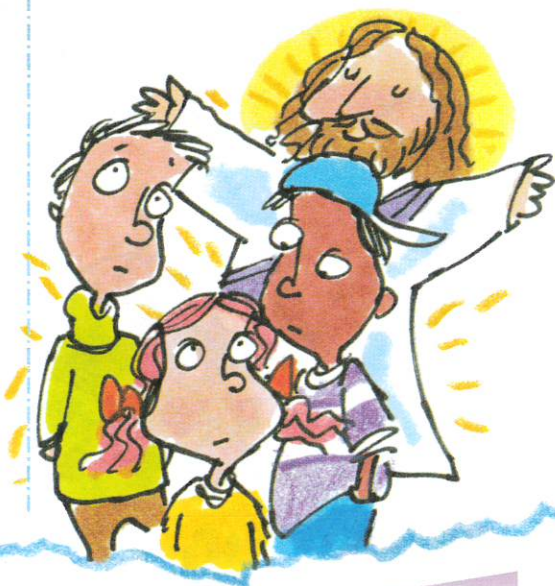
Two years ago, Keith's father died of cancer. When his dad first got sick, Keith prayed he would get better. His prayers were not answered, he says. His dad got sicker and sicker, and then he died. Keith says he is never going to church again, because if there even is a God, God is mean. Actually, he doubts God exists.

Sometimes Keith wishes he could believe in God. He really wants to understand why his dad had to die. He really wants peace.

Reconciliation

Like Thomas, for their own personal reasons these three people have locked God out of their hearts. But there is a key that will open their hearts to recognize that God is there for them. With this key, they can find the forgiveness and love and peace of Christ. Our Church calls it a sacrament — the sacrament of reconciliation.

All of us need the reassurance that God lives and is with us — when we are jealous and vindictive...selfish and materialistic...even unbelieving. Have you used **your** key lately? — The Wonderful Sacrament of Reconciliation!



A CELEBRATION of RECONCILIATION

(based on Psalm 118)

Leader: Let's tell the Lord how thankful we are, because God is kind and always merciful. Let Israel shout:

All: God is always merciful!

Leader: We confess that we sometimes argue and fail to listen to one another. Let the house of Aaron shout:

All: God is always merciful!

Leader: We hurt ourselves and we hurt one another, but the Lord is always on our side. Let all believers shout:

All: God is always merciful!

Leader: We praise the Lord for hearing our prayers and saving us. The stone that the builders tossed aside has become the most important stone of all — the cornerstone. The Lord has done this, and it is amazing and wonderful to behold. This day belongs to the Lord. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

All: God is always merciful!