

FORGIVENESS

(10-15 minutes maximum. No discussion, no poster, no summary sharing. This talk is given by any member of the outside team.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To prepare the residents to receive the sacrament of reconciliation. At the end of this talk the men should have an idea of what the sacrament of reconciliation is. They must be in the right frame of mind to receive it. The need to forgive and be forgiven as part of the process of dying and changing must be clear. The men must understand that they cannot go on in life carrying the burden of sin. They must be convinced that they can overcome any obstacle that prevents them to have a personal relationship with God. Forgiveness is a key step in returning to the Father.

Points to cover in your talk:

1. **SIN.** Sin is not just breaking God's law or doing something wrong; sin is the refusal to keep a loving relationship with ourselves, with others and with God. Sin is an action and also an omission. We sin by doing and by failing to do. Sin is an attitude. Sin is a burden in our life. It is an obstacle to a loving relationship with God. There are many different kinds of obstacles that prevent us from having a personal relationship with God. We are the main obstacle. Do you have any personal experience that can fit into this point?
2. **FORGIVENESS.** Forgiveness is an essential part of dying and changing. There is no true change without forgiveness. One of our human basic needs is to forgive and to be forgiven, better said, to love and to be loved. If we can't give and receive love our life becomes meaningless and we experience a terrible emptiness. We experience loneliness. We need to get rid of the burden of sin. Forgiveness is the great gift we receive when we consciously change our heart (Metanoia-Refer to the talk) and turn back to God. Christ is always ready to forgive. No sin is too great. He will accept us and forgive us (Refer to the Prodigal Son talk). We have to forgive ourselves and forgive others. Do you have any personal experience that can fit into this point? What has forgiveness meant to you?
3. **THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.** Explain that forgiveness comes through the sacrament of reconciliation. Reconciliation means "to restore to friendship". Through the reception of this sacrament we restore our friendship with God. We make peace, we are friends again with God. We bury the hatchet.

When we make peace with God we make peace with ourselves. An enormous weight is lifted out of our conscience. We eliminate all the obstacles that were obstructing our relationship with God.

4. **HOW TO RECEIVE THE SACRAMENT.** For many of the men it has been a long time since the last time they received this sacrament; for others this may be the first time. Before receiving the sacrament they must examine their conscience: What have I done or failed to do to separate myself from God? Do I feel sorry for it (repentance)? Will I do my best to try not to do it again? Any other form of exam of conscience can be suggested. After this tell them to just go in private with the priest and ask him: "Bless me father for I have sinned". Then talk freely with the priest about anything they may feel is bothering them. The priest is bound by a vow of secrecy and he will die first before divulging what he heard. Ask them to relax and pray. Trust the Lord!