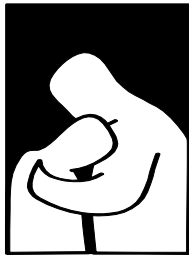


### Thoughts on Reconciliation

- Acknowledging our failings before God and each other is difficult! But forgiveness is the path to real freedom, the freedom that Jesus won for us. That's why the Church values the Sacrament of Reconciliation so highly.
- By learning to say 'sorry' at home, a child begins to understand the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Catholic approach to reconciliation is deeply communal. For us, sin is never a private affair. When one member of the body of Christ hurts, the whole body suffers. By receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation we offer a public sign to our brothers and sisters in Christ that we are committed to restoring our unity lost through sin.



## Reconciliation

### Reflection

When Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son, he was doing so against the backdrop of Jewish traditions which included similar kinds of stories and storytelling.

In Hebrew, *teshuvah* means 'repentance' (from the word *shuva*, 'return').

When we think of repenting, of 'returning' to God, it can all seem like hard work! At times the journey 'home' to God seems so far that we hesitate to even start. Yet we are not the only one covering the distance: **God sets out to meet us.** A poignant story comes down to us through Jewish tradition:

*"A king had a son who had gone astray from his father a journey of 100 days. His friends said to him, 'Return to your father'; he said: 'I cannot.' Then his father sent word to say, 'Return as far as you can, and I will come to you the rest of the way.' So God says, 'Return to me, and I will return to you' (Mal.3:7)"* [Pesikta Raba].

What a wonderful story to bear in mind as we ponder the Christian Gospels:

... the image of the father running to meet the prodigal son.  
 ...the image of Lazarus being 'unbound' and 'set free'.  
 ...the woman saved from being stoned for her sin.

Reconciliation is meant to be a homecoming. It is not a punishing ordeal. It's healing. Freeing. Liberating. Joyfilled.

In what part of my life do I need to experience that freedom? What part is broken, hurting, resistant, proud, unloving? We pause to look at these dark sides, so that we may be restored to fullness of life.

Let's think about that, as we prepare to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

