

**The Sacrament of
Reconciliation**

by

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April 2018

What Is Needed

this document on paper or a screen
four people, each will be asked to read aloud from this document
a space where these four people can comfortably remain for about an hour
four bottles of wine*, filled with as much as these four people can safely drink in an hour
five ingredients for making simple bread
 one and half cup of warm water
 one tablespoon of active dry yeast
 one tablespoon of honey
 one and half teaspoon of salt
 four cups flour
a large bowl
a spoon for mixing
a timer
a surface for kneading dough
an oiled baking sheet or something similar
a knife
an oven
anything else that makes the space more beautiful, comfortable, or welcoming

If any part of this sacrament is harmful,
inappropriate, or inaccessible to those present,
please make whatever changes are necessary.

*A different beverage should be used if anyone present does not drink alcohol.

Begin reading here.

What Will Happen

We will be together for about an hour.

We will make bread.

We will drink wine.

We will help each other on a path to forgiveness.

This sacrament is guided by readers. We are the readers. The person reading now is the first reader. This is probably the person, or one of the people, who invited everyone to this sacrament. The reader will switch throughout the course of this sacrament. Each reader decides who the next reader will be. It is encouraged that everyone reads once before the sacrament is ended. From this point on, all text that looks like this should be read out loud. Text that is in italics and indented is action the reader should perform or guide others to perform.

Look everyone who is present. Take everyone in.

We are all here together.

This sacrament is based on the Roman Catholic sacrament of Reconciliation, also known as Confession. There are significant differences in this sacrament from that older version. These differences come from the following beliefs.

Forgiveness is a form of healing.

Healing is a process and does not happen in an instant.

We choose forgiveness alone, even as others help us along this path.

Forgiveness grows from joy, abundance, and love.

It is not necessary to believe these things to participate in this sacrament.

It is helpful to hold them lightly for the duration of our time together.

There are four sections to this sacrament. There is a bottle of wine for each section.

In order to move on to the next section, we must finish the current bottle of wine together.

First reader opens the first bottle of wine and fills everyone's glass.

First reader continues filling glasses as needed until it's time for the next reader.

Mixing

Whenever people come together, we make something.
As a reminder of that, we make bread.
Some of the oldest words for friend are about sharing bread.

First reader adds one and half cups warm water to the large bowl.

We start with water because everything starts with water.
This water should be about the same temperature as a body.

First reader invites someone to add one tablespoon of active dry yeast to the large bowl.

We add yeast next because bread is alive.
Yeast is one of the oldest life-forms that we know about.
It is a reminder that life comes from life.
It is a beginning.

First reader invites someone else to add one tablespoon of honey.

Honey is more than symbol of sweetness and abundance.
Undiluted, it can be used as a preservative.
In our bread it will feed the yeast.
It sustains.

First reader invites someone else to add one and half teaspoons salt.

Wars have been decided by the possession and flow of salt.
It is one of the few inorganic substances that humans have eaten in abundance for millenia.
Salt is the absence of life.
It is an ending.

First reader sets the bread aside. It will begin to rise during the next section.

Through the foundation of water, we mix these things together.
This is a reminder that everything holds a beginning, a sustaining, and an ending.

One

We root ourselves in joy and love.

We're going to play a game of questions. There are four rounds. For each round, I'll ask a different person to choose a number between one and four at random and then I'll read that question out loud. As many or as few of us who would like to answer may do so. I'll go first.

First reader picks a random number between one and four.

First reader reads the corresponding question.

One, would you rather be able to fly or be invisible?

Two, would you rather only eat sweet things or only eat savory things?

Three, would you rather move to a new city every year or never leave the city where you live?

Four, would you rather never wear clothes again or never be naked again?

First reader invites anyone who wants to answer to respond.

First reader invites someone else to pick a random number between one and four.

First reader reads the corresponding question.

One, if you could live inside any work of fiction, which would you choose?

Two, what is one meal you could eat every day for the rest of your life?

Three, if you could go on a date with any person, living or dead, who would it be?

Four, What is the schedule of your perfect day?

First reader invites anyone who wants to answer to respond.

First reader invites someone else to pick a random number between one and fifteen.

First reader reads the corresponding question.

One, an all-powerful magician offers to solve any one of your biggest problems, if you agree to hurt someone you love, just once. What do you do?

Two, an all-knowing magician will answer any questions you have, but the more you ask the more unhappy you will become. What do you ask?

Three, an all-powerful magician offers happiness that you can buy, the more you spend, the happier you will become, instantly. What do you do?

Four, someone you don't know in another part of the world is in danger, an all-powerful magician offers to save that person's life, if you give up your happiest memory. You won't miss the memory, but it will be gone. What do you do?

First reader invites anyone who wants to answer to respond.

First reader invites someone else to pick a random number between one and fifteen.

First reader reads the corresponding question.

One, what are your favorite things about the people you love the most?

Two, what do you think people like the most about you?

Three, what is something that you really want someone to say to you?

Four, what do you hope people know about you after you're dead?

First reader invites anyone who wants to answer to respond.

Forgiveness is a form of healing.

We will move on, when we have finished our wine.

First reader pours out the remaining wine until it has all been drunk.

It's fine if this takes a while.

Enjoy each other's company.

Once the bottle is done, first reader passes the text to the second reader.

Kneading

*Second reader opens the second bottle of wine and fills everyone's glass.
Second reader continues filling glasses as needed until it's time for the next reader.*

The yeast in our bread has been at work waking up and beginning to breathe. Now it's time to give our bread content and form. As you add flour to the mix, think about what gives your life content and form. How do you fill your days?

*Second reader guides each person in adding flour to the mixture in the bowl.
Second reader then mixes the four together to make dough.
When the dough is consistent enough, the second reader turns it out of the bowl onto the table.*

We are going to knead this dough. Folks may want to wash hands at this point, myself included. Kneading bread is what creates the gluten protein structures that give bread strength and shape. The harder you knead the bread, the stronger this structure.

*The second reader kneads the bread.
Second reader decides when they are done and passes it to the next person to knead.
Everyone should have a chance to knead the bread.
Once this is done, second reader should put the dough back in the bowl.
It needs time to rise again.
It's fine if folks want to wash their hands again.*

Second reader sets the oven to four hundred degrees fahrenheit.

Two

Now we are going to think about some questions, to assess the form and content of our own lives in this moment.

Everyone look at your hands.
Think about all the things that your hands have done in the last month.

Pause.

Would anyone like to share one thing that their hands have done?

*Each person can choose to share or not.
Second reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

Everyone look around at each other.
Now come back to yourself.
In the last month, what have you thought about the most?

Pause.

Would anyone like to share one thing that they have thought about the most?

*Each person can choose to share or not.
Second reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

Everyone close your eyes.
Who do you need to forgive?

Pause.

Hold that person in your heart tonight.

Pause.

Would anyone like to say the name of this person?

*Each person can choose to share or not.
Second reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

Everyone take a deep breath.
What are the things that you need forgiveness for having done or not done?

Pause.

Pick one of those things to hold in your heart tonight.

Pause.

Would anyone like to share?

*Each person can choose to share or not.
Second reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

Please continue to hold these things in your heart.
Who do you need to forgive?
For what do you need forgiveness?

Forgiveness is a form of healing.
Healing is a process and does not happen in an instant.
We will move on, when we have finished our wine.

*Second reader pours out the remaining wine until it has all been drunk.
It's fine if this takes a while.
Enjoy each other's company.*

Once the bottle is done, second reader passes the text to the third reader.

Baking

Third reader opens the third bottle of wine and fills everyone's glass.

Third reader continues filling glasses as needed until it's time for the next reader.

Does anyone want to shape this dough into a loaf?

In order to cook through, it should be long and narrow, about as thick as my wrist.

Third reader helps whoever volunteers shape the loaf on the baking sheet.

If no one wants to shape the loaf, third reader should do it.

It helps to have some oil already on the baking sheet.

When we bake bread, the yeast inside goes into overdrive, exhaling more and more carbon dioxide. This causes the dough to expand even more rapidly. It helps to cut slits in the top of the bread to control this expansion.

Third reader cuts slits in the top of the dough using a knife.

Finally, the heat gets so great inside the dough that the yeast dies. At the same time, the gluten protein bonds that we began to form while kneading, straighten out and bond to each other. They form a firm matrix that gives bread its shape.

Third reader puts the bread in the oven, and sets a timer for fifteen minutes.

When the timer goes off in the next section, the third reader should stop what is happening and take the bread out of the oven.

Three

We have the opportunity to be vulnerable with one another.
In order to be vulnerable, we must be aware of our pain and our shame.
When we hide our pain and shame, we lose the potential for healing.
We must be courageous.

When is it difficult to be vulnerable?
What part of myself is difficult to love?

*Each person can choose to share or not.
Third reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

The Myth of Bread

A long time ago on the edge of the Earth, lived a family of four.
Back then, people were not the only ones who danced and talked.
Everything in the world was still deciding its place.
Every night, before they went to sleep, the family left a basket outside their door.
Every morning, the basket was filled with a dense, flat bread.
This was before people know how to feed themselves.

In the night, Water came out to dance with two dear friends called Salt and Flour.
The three danced around each other, weaving themselves together.
They turned and folded and warmed until they made enough bread to sustain the family for another day. The dance was exhausting, but the three were hard working.
They had agreed to care for the family, who could barely care for themselves.

Honey also lived nearby, on the edge of the Earth.
Honey was gentle, sweet, and loved the sunshine, but had a very curious nature.
Honey wondered what happened when the sun went down.
One night, Honey stayed awake and watched.
Water, Salt, and Flour arrived and began their dance.
Honey saw Water, Salt and Flour exhaust themselves, working tirelessly through the night.
By the end of the dance, Water was full of silt; Flour had begun to turn; and Salt had no more flavor. But they made the bread to sustain the family for another day.
Honey watched as each of the three trudged home to rest for the next night.

Honey went to find Yeast and tell them all about the dance of the three that happens in the night. Yeast was strange, unpredictable, and cautious of all things, as life is at the start.
Yeast could hardly believe what Honey was saying.
That night Honey and Yeast went back to watch.
As the dance began, Honey and Yeast began to mimic Water, Flour and Salt.
They turned and folded and warmed themselves.
They danced faster and faster, wrapping themselves around each other and expanding in an uncontrollable fit of joy and passion. They didn't notice they had slipped out from their hiding spot until they saw Salt, Flour, and Water looming over them, watching them dance.

“What are you doing here?” Water asked.

“We want to dance with you,” Honey replied.

Water, Salt and Flour scoffed, “We know how to dance. You know nothing about feeding a family. Besides, what can a little Honey and Yeast do?”

Yeast ran away.

Honey followed behind, but was determined to change their minds.

The next night, Honey returned without Yeast.

When the dance began, Honey came close.

Honey let a little sweetness reach the three. Intrigued, they turned toward Honey.

Honey smiled and joined them in the dance, without warning or invitation.

Honey enveloped Flour, glided through Water, and played with Salt.

As they turned and folded and warmed themselves, Water, Salt, and Flour found that they couldn't avoid the truth: Honey was gentle and sweet.

As the dance ended, each of them was a little less exhausted than the night before.

Honey's youth, care, and thick sweetness invigorated them.

Each thanked Honey and apologized for their short-sightedness.

Honey ran to tell Yeast.

“Come with me,” Honey said. “They see now. They will let you in.”

“No,” replied Yeast. “They will only laugh at me. You are sweet and gentle, of course they love you. I am strange and unpredictable. What if I ruin everything?”

“Then we will know more about you tomorrow than we do today,” said Honey.

That night Honey and Yeast returned.

Water, Flour, and Salt stood at the ready. Honey joined them.

Yeast watched, nervous and embarrassed. What good could Yeast do?

Water began to dance. Salt jumped in, and Flour followed close behind. Honey turned to Yeast.

“Here, borrow a little of my sweetness, to help you join the dance.”

Yeast did, and it felt good.

Honey's sweetness filled Yeast and Yeast began to grow, letting go of fear. Yeast dove and slid, turned and folded, wove themselves deep into the dance.

And then Yeast grew some more, bringing new life.

Yeast laughed. This was fun!

Honey, Water, Salt, and Flour joined in, and everyone was laughing as they danced.

Yeast asked them to slow down, to take time for every moment.

As they warmed themselves, no one was greater or more essential than the other: ancient Water, grounding Salt, steady Flour, gentle Honey, and passionate Yeast.

When the dance was ended, none were tired. They each were ready for another day of making.

When the family woke, they found bread more delicious than any they had before.

The family broke the bread in four pieces and shared it among themselves.
As they ate they could feel something waking up inside their bellies.

When is it difficult to be vulnerable?
What part of myself is difficult to love?

*Each person can choose to share or not.
Third reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

Healing is a process.
Healing is the manifestation of forgiveness and vulnerability.
You're invited now to hold hands and be present with the people next to you.

*Third reader leaves time for people to be present with one another.
Third reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

What is a thing you need to hear from someone right now?

Pause.

Would anyone like to share?
You are invited to respond affirmatively to anyone who shares.

*Each person can choose to share or not.
Third reader gets consent from the group to move on.*

Forgiveness is a form of healing.
Healing is a process and does not happen in an instant.
We choose forgiveness alone, even as others help us along this path.
We will move on, when we have finished our wine.

*Third reader pours the remaining wine until it has all been drunk.
It's fine if this takes a while.
Enjoy each other's company.*

Once the bottle is done, third reader passes the text to the fourth reader.

Breaking

Fourth reader opens the fourth bottle of wine and fills everyone's glass.

Fourth reader fills everyone's glass as needed until the sacrament has ended.

One of the deepest symbols of trust that we have is to share food together, to break bread. We made this bread together. Let's eat it together. Everyone should break off a piece, and then we'll eat our first bite together.

Fourth reader breaks off some bread to eat.

Fourth reader passes the bread to another person, who does the same.

Everyone should have a piece of bread at this point.

Everyone should eat their bread throughout the next part.

Four

Think about the two things you were asked to hold in your heart.

One of them is someone that you need to forgive.

One of them is something that you need forgiveness for having done or not done.

Hold those things close to you now.

Think about the shape of them, the weight of them.

Pause.

What is one thing you can do to take a step towards forgiveness in these two things?

It is most helpful for these things to be clear, finite, and physical actions.

Pause.

As a little, temporary community, let's help each other.

If you want, share what you are going to do.

Each person can choose to share or not.

Fourth reader gets consent from the group to move on.

Forgiveness is a form of healing.

Healing is a process and does not happen in an instant.

We choose forgiveness alone, even as others help us along this path.

Forgiveness grows from joy, abundance, and love.

The sacrament is ended when we have finished this wine.

Fourth reader pours out the remaining wine until it has all been drunk.

It's fine if this takes a while.

Enjoy each other's company.

Once the bottle is done, the sacrament has ended.