

# METANOIA REFLECTION

## SPEAKER PREPARATION MATERIAL

**Speaker:** Priest/Spiritual Director

**Time:** Fourth reflection of Die Day

**Length:** 30 minutes

**Scripture:** Luke 15:20b-24a

**Previous Reflection:** Paschal Mystery

**Following Reflection:** God, A Community of Love (first formal reflection of Rise Day)

### **Setting:**

The participants have been gently welcomed into a loving community, where they are invited to respond authentically. The Growth and Ideals reflection invited them to examine their lives as they move forward. The Bible Enthronement offered a tangible sign of God's abiding presence and evoked a feeling of reverence. The Faith Journey reflection evidenced the credibility of a life of faith lived by a person willing to share the experience. God is no longer someone standing at the outer edge of their awareness. The presence of God has been brought sharply into focus through the Paschal Mystery reflection, the Wheat Letters, and their reflection on incidents of Christ's passion and death. Participants have discovered this sacred space in which to encounter God personally and talk about it openly.

### **Progression:**

Transformation is taking place because of the realization that God is calling them to intimacy and union. Jesus' act of total self-gift on the cross inspires courage and resolve to choose the loving embrace of God. We ask God to remove any obstacles to our full surrender to him.

Participants may be contemplating a very personal, spiritual encounter in the upcoming sacrament of Reconciliation. The goodness they hope for in their lives will be within sight. The hope is that participants hasten to take this path. They are being led to celebrate forgiveness, gratitude, and the sacrament of Reconciliation. From this experience, the participants can experience the father rushing to embrace them as they understand themselves as loved sinners.

### **Purpose:**

This reflection should speak of the joy of having encountered the forgiving love of Jesus.

You, as Spiritual Director, are a pathway of welcome and affirmation for the participants. The reflection should speak to young hearts through carefully selected stories and examples. The Metanoia reflection serves as a personal preparation of their hearts for an authentic, sacramental encounter with their gentle and forgiving Jesus.

**Faith Awareness:**

The participants see they are imperfect but perfectly loved. They are grateful that God loves them so much and so personally. They have a sense that they are embraced fully in the heart of God. The participants' willingness to embrace this process will affect the depth of their individual experiences. It is important to be sensitive to the fact that some participants have not have experienced confession in many years.

**Response:**

Healed and forgiven, we experience the joy of God's grace and abundant mercy.

**Scriptural Insights:**

The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners." (Mt 9:11-13)

I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance. (Luke 15:7)

**Scripture for further reflection:**

Luke 15:11-32 (reflect upon the entire story, without reading the entire story to the participants)

Luke 22:54-62

Matthew 9:11-13

Luke 15:7

Luke 23:39-43

*"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless, until they rest in you"*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Augustine of Hippo (354-430), in Confessions

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## OUTLINE

After reading and praying with the scripture for this reflection, please study the outline carefully. Time constraints may require you to be selective. As you develop your stories and examples, consider the points in bold as most essential to the purpose of your sharing and the continuity of the weekend.

**Scripture:** Make sure to read Luke 15:20b-24a from the enthroned Bible at the point in your reflection where you feel it is most apropos.

*While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.' But his father ordered his servants, 'Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.'* (Luke 15:20b-24a)

**Introduction:** You may share a personal story or brief introduction with the group if it will be effective is a lead-in to your reflection.

### **I. The Greek word "metanoia" means "a change of heart."**

- A. The word has nothing directly to do with sin, but sin does call for change.
- B. For the Christian, metanoia means that we are, for the first time or in an entirely new way, aware of a tremendous love relationship that is being offered, a relationship worth giving up anything that prevents us from possessing it with all our heart.
- C. Metanoia includes falling in love in a new way and experiencing a new direction in life.
- D. The stronger our awareness of the love offered, the easier it is to make the change.

### **II. God's love for us is unconditional.**

- A. Share a personal experience of unconditional love and its meaning to you.
- B. God loves us as we are, whether engaging in good or bad thoughts and behaviors.
- C. Unconditional love is centered on the heart of the one who fails, not on the failure.
- D. God has gifted us with the sense of responsibility and challenges us to high ideals.
- E. Sin is our ability to ignore or reject love that is offered to us, even God's love.

### **III. True intimacy is one of the strongest longings of the human heart—a sense of**

**being seen and cared for by someone who accepts us as we are and yet invites us to become more.**

- A. Revealing the deepest part of our hearts to another and hoping that person will respond in kind is a very delicate and risky matter.
  - 1. Intimacy is not limited to sexual matters.
  - 2. Intimacy of the heart requires more vulnerability than physical intimacy.
- B. Jesus, who knows well the human heart, designed a space in which we can meet heart-to-heart with our God.
- C. Jesus knew that we need to forgive ourselves as well as be forgiven by God.
- D. One of the most intimate acts of faith is found in the encounter that happens during the sacrament of Reconciliation.

**IV. Sin is both a reality and a mystery in human life.**

- A. Sin is not just breaking a rule but a violation of a relationship.
- B. Sin is a form of death—opting for an illusion that harms us and never satisfies.
- C. To be forgiven by someone who loves us is a profound experience.
  - 1. Recount the experience of the prodigal son, imagining his relief and joy.
  - 2. Recall a time you were forgiven by a loved one; what feelings do you remember?

**V. The sacrament of Reconciliation is not a celebration of our failures but of our goodness, which is made whole again.**

- A. Jesus designed this sacrament as a human encounter.
  - 1. Jesus, the Christ, forgives us during the encounter.
  - 2. Jesus designed the heart-to-heart encounter with the priest, his “stand in.”
  - 3. Our dying to sin in the presence of Jesus brings peace, joy, and greater intimacy.
    - a. Only a dearest friend would be trusted with our sorrow and regrets.
    - b. Forgiveness brings us even closer; we are happy, relieved, rejoicing.

- B. God forgives us regardless of our tendency to sin again.
  - a. Even when sick persons have been cured, they may become sick again.
  - b. Share a story of repeating the same bad choice or behavior after forgiveness.
- C. The more we concentrate on our personal relationship with Christ, the greater will be our strength. God's love and trust is always available to us whenever we reach out.
- D. So what is God calling each of us to die to?

**Note:** Whoever gives this reflection should defer to another leader or receive significant assistance from another leader in leading the Reconciliation service, which includes a number of logistical considerations.