

**LESSON PLAN**

**SENIOR RELIGION**

**MORALITY COURSE**

Teacher Susan Marie Lindstrom, OSB

Date October 20 - 23, 2009

Subject/ Topic/ Theme Conscience, Sin, and Correction

<b>I. Objectives</b>	
<b>How does this lesson tie in to a unit plan?</b> <i>The unit is on conscience, not as blind obedience, but as informed personal choice. To go against one's conscience is to sin. In the Catholic understanding, sin has both individual and communal aspects.</i>	
<b>What are your objectives for this lesson?</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Students will articulate a personal understanding of sin/punishment</li> <li>2) Students will examine the actions traditionally considered sinful, and the means of correcting them (in the Roman Catholic tradition)</li> <li>3) Students will explore the communal dimension of sin and correction</li> <li>4) Students will apply the concept of mutual correction/obedience to their own (religious) life experiences</li> </ol>	

<b>II. Before you start</b>	
<b>Prerequisite knowledge and skills.</b>	Luther's grievances with the Church, as expressed in <u>The 95 Theses</u> ; Interpreting source material Inference
<b>Assessment (formative and summative)</b>	Written reflection Participation in group discussion Written response to group conversation
<b>Materials-what materials (books, handouts, etc) do you need for this lesson and do you have them?</b>	Handouts for Students: "Excerpts from 95 Theses" "Going to Confession in the Middle Ages" (note: WILL BE REPLACED WITH PRIMARY TEXT ONCE I LOCATE IT) "The Sacrament of Penance" "Consistory cases" (handout from NEH seminar)  Teacher Resources: Bible "Prayers to Begin Class"
<b>Do you need to set up your classroom in any special way for this lesson? If so, describe it.</b>	Day 3& 4: 3 groups of 8, each group an oval

III. The Plan		
Time	Parts	The description of (script for) the lesson, wherein you describe teacher activities and student activities
	<b>Motivation (Opening/ Introduction/ Engagement)</b>	<p>Day 1: start with conversation about the afterlife; what do students believe? think? (all write responses on white board); note similarities in responses</p> <p>Day 2: Why do we have rules? (school, church, home, etc) What happens when we break them?</p> <p>Day 3: Yes or no (students move to designated areas in the room to indicate their opinion; randomly call on folks to “defend” their stance) As children of God, are we responsible in any way for each other’s behavior?</p> <p>Day 4: If you were disciplinarian at BCHS, what would you do to help students keep the peace? (not getting detentions, getting kicked out of class, fighting, etc)</p>
	<b>Development</b>	<p>Day 1 Prayer: Act of Contrition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What determines where we spend eternity? (brief responses)</li> <li>Discussion about sin and atonement, tying it to conscience</li> <li>Reintroduce Luther (they learned about him in Jr year); What were the 95 Theses about?</li> <li>What was Luther’s intent in writing them? On what did they focus?</li> <li>Read excerpts from <u>The 95 Theses</u> (teacher-chosen); Teacher will answer clarifying questions</li> <li>Write a PERSONAL response to Luther (minimum 30 lines written), responding to his ideas about sin, forgiveness, penance and the afterlife (due by end of class or it’s HW)</li> </ol> <p>Day 2 Prayer: Matthew 18: 21 - 35</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review Church teaching about breaking the rules (sinning)</li> <li>In Luther’s time, the priests had set penances that they gave to sins (read “Going to Confession in the Middle Ages” and “The Sacrament of Penance” aloud)</li> <li>entertain reactions to the article; compare with penances they themselves have received</li> <li>small group conversation/report: In our world today, what do you think are the 10 sins that need to be addressed? Give reasons/rationale for each. Try to include mortal and venial sins</li> <li>Report back to large group (white board... commonalties noted)</li> </ol> <p>Day 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer: Matthew 18:15 - 18</li> <li>Continuing with Middle Ages connection, introduce Calvin’s consistory (as an alternate to confession/penance)</li> <li>review possible penalties/means of correction (power point slide or list on the board)</li> <li>form consistory groups (8 members); review 3-4 cases (handout from NEH seminar)</li> <li>large group sharing of “decisions”, followed by official consistory decision</li> <li>HW From the 10 sins you listed yesterday, take any 2 and create a scenario in which that sin is being committed (1 scenario per sin) Flesh out the scene with as much detail as possible. Bring it to class tomorrow</li> </ol> <p>Day 4</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prayer: Matthew 18: 15 - 18</li> <li>Return to consistory groupings; Review the sacrament of Reconciliation as ‘reconnecting’ the sinner to both God and community</li> <li>Students are the consistory for their Church community. First, decide what types of correction/punishment they think might be reasonable for sin in general. Then, each student shares 1 scenario, which the consistory will discuss and for which they will determine some action. (If time permits, they will share a 2<sup>nd</sup> scenario)</li> </ol>
	<b>Closure</b>	<p>Day 1: writing to Luther (We each have our own sense of what it means to sin, be forgiven, etc)\</p> <p>Day 2: Spontaneous prayer of gratitude to the God who forgives (possible use of parts of Ps 51)</p> <p>Day 3: Tie Calvin’s community/mutual obedience back to our own school community</p> <p>Day 4: Wrap-up discussion about what factors determined/influenced decisions about correction and/or punishment</p>

Excerpts from THE 95 THESES by Martin Luther

1. When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent" (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.
2. This word cannot be understood as referring to the sacrament of penance, that is, confession and satisfaction, as administered by the clergy.
4. The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self (that is, true inner repentance), namely till our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.
16. Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ the same as despair, fear, and assurance of salvation.
17. It seems as though for the souls in purgatory fear should necessarily decrease and love increase.
18. Furthermore, it does not seem proved, either by reason or by Scripture, that souls in purgatory are outside the state of merit, that is, unable to grow in love.
36. Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt (even without indulgence letters)
37. Any true Christian, whether living or dead, participates in all the blessings of Christ and the church; and this is granted him by God (even without indulgence letters)
43. Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences.
44. Because love grows by works of love, man thereby becomes better. Man does not, however, become better by means of indulgences but is merely freed from penalties.
46. Christians are to be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they must reserve enough for their family needs (and by no means squander it on indulgences)
62. The true treasure of the church is the most holy gospel of the glory and grace of God.
65. Therefore the treasures of the gospel are nets with which one formerly fished for men of wealth.
68. They [indulgences] are nevertheless in truth the most insignificant graces when compared with the grace of God and the piety of the cross.
94. Christians should be exhorted to be diligent in following Christ, their Head, through penalties, death and hell.
95. And thus be confident of entering into heaven through many tribulations rather than through the false security of peace (Acts 14:22).

## Excerpts from "Going to Confession in the Middle Ages" by Susan Carroll-Clark

Most people, even non-Catholics, know what going to confession involves. One travels to a church, in a corner of which is situated a confessional booth. In the booth sits a priest. The penitent enters the other side of the booth and says "Bless me Father, for I have sinned. It has been three months since my last confession." He or she cannot see the priest, and vice versa. The priest listens to the confession and assigns an appropriate penance. Because the Catholic Church is so old, we sometimes assume this is the way confessions have always been done. But while some aspects of confession have not changed, others have radically.

In the early days of the Church, before it was officially adopted as the religion of the Roman Empire, Christians, as members of a small, obscure, and persecuted sect held themselves to extremely high moral standards. Quite nasty rumours about what Christians did in their "secret rituals" were in circulation; Church leaders responded by trying to ensure that Christians were beyond moral reproach as much as possible. Public confession of sins was part of this (although private confession followed by public penance gained acceptance after the official conversion of Rome). The penalties for even minor sins at this point were fairly significant: Penitents were required to kneel outside the church, wearing sackcloth and ashes, during Mass and were not allowed to participate in the Eucharist. Gradually, they would be allowed to return inside, first into the back of the church, then to their usual places but abstaining from the Eucharist, then finally, to full privileges. For major, or "deadly" sins, the length of this penance could number in years, and one could only be absolved once of such a sin before one was excommunicated (1).

Gradually, however, this system of harsh penance declined, partially because of the widespread acceptance of Christianity, and partially because many of the newly-converted Germanic peoples preferred a much less ascetic version of the faith. The act of confession ceased to be done publicly, and unlimited confession of "deadly" sins (by now solidifying as pride, wrath, envy, lust, sloth, avarice, and gluttony, though sometimes an eighth sin, dejection, was added) was now permitted, provided that the confessor did the appropriate penance. Around the sixth century the first penitentials appeared. These were guides written for clergy involved in hearing confessions, and consisted at this point in lists of various sins and the appropriate penance for each (2).

The Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 marks an important point in the history of penance, because this council for the first time made yearly confession mandatory for all Christians. Before this point, regular confession was encouraged (especially before participating in the Eucharist) but not required. Though Christians were encouraged to confess more often, it became customary to make the yearly confession during Lent, in order that one become "purified" in time for Easter. Confessing at this time also fit in with the general character of the Lenten season of fasting.

From quite early in its history, parallels between the relationship between doctor and patient and that between priest and penitent had been drawn. A parish priest officially had charge of the *cura animarum*, or the care of souls. The similarity between the Latin word *cura* and our English word "cure" is not incidental. Just as a doctor cared for the body of his patient, the priest cared for his soul. Hearing confessions was the main way in which the priest exercised the *cura animarum*. Sin was seen as a disease of the soul, and just as the contemporary medical theory of the four humours advised curing an ailment with its opposite, deadly sins could likewise be expiated by assigning penance involving the corresponding cardinal virtue.

To aid the priest, manuals of confession and treatises on penance began to be written quite early in the Church's history. By the thirteenth century, they had become detailed guides designed to help priests in diagnosing their patient's "ailment", and a supporting body of related practical literature helped them to put confession into its proper context in the Church. A look at the structure of one penitential, the *Templum Dei* of Robert Grosseteste, will demonstrate this.

Grosseteste opens the work with an architectural metaphor: Christians are the twofold temple of God, which is a metaphor with roots in the Bible. This sort of metaphor was extremely popular in medieval practical texts and could also serve as an aid to memory. The physical temple is the body--the lower parts the seat of power and growth, the middle parts the seat of activity, and the upper regions the seat of reason. Each division is associated with a cardinal virtue (in turn, temperance, courage, prudence) and a person of the Trinity (Holy Spirit, Father, Son). The spiritual temple is likewise divided. The foundation is Faith, the walls are Hope, and the roof Love--the three "theological virtues" (more on these in a moment). Just as the roof protects one from the elements, so does this roof --with the aid of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments--protect one from the deadly sins, as well as from evil astrological influences (4).

This temple structure is intended to give the priest a solid base from which to conduct confessions. Before delving into the specifics of various sins, Grosseteste provides a chart which associates each major sin (seen here as *infirmitas*, or illness) with one of the Seven Petitions of the Lord's Prayer (the patient's plea for help), one of the Beatitudes (how the patient should prepare himself for receipt of the medicine), the medicine itself (major precepts of the church), the restoration to health (the cardinal virtues) and the resulting inner joy (the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit) and outer joy (seven of the beatitudes--external virtues).

The bulk of the work is taken up by the "examinations" of the seven Virtues. Unlike some authors, such as Hugh of St. Victor and Simon de Hinton, Grosseteste views the seven deadly sins as primarily contrary to the Virtue of Love or Charity, rather than correlated with each Virtue (5). For this examination, he provides what can only be described as "flow charts" showing each of the vices--pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lechery--and which sins fall under these headings (for instance, sins of greed include simony, sacrilege, usury, fraud, theft, ambition, and avarice, each of which are defined). He also treats the other two "theological virtues"--faith and hope--quite extensively. The examination of faith is concerned mostly with the Seven Sacraments (baptism, confirmation, penance, the Eucharist, marriage, holy orders, and extreme unction) and other works of faith, as well as circumstances under which one can be

excommunicated. The examination of Hope is fairly straightforward, concerned mostly with determining whether one has too little (desperation) or too much (presumption) of this virtue. The section on the remaining virtues--the "cardinal" virtues of fortitude, prudence, justice, and temperance--is fairly short. Grosseteste concludes the work with discussions on the correct performance of the sacraments. This may seem odd in a work on penance, but according to Simon de Hinton, the sacraments are the cure for venial sins--those minor sins which do not require specific confession; as well, each of the sacraments acts against one of the deadly sins (the most obvious example is the use of marriage against lechery)(6).

Since Grosseteste's model is not only penance, but the larger issue of maintaining the "Temple of God", he is more concerned with the priest's end of the business. What was required of the "patient"? Simon de Hinton details three stages in penance: contrition (being sorry for the sin), confession (confessing it to a priest, acting as God's intermediary), and satisfaction (doing the assigned penance). All three parts were vital. The greater the contrition, says Simon de Hinton, the greater the chance the penance will be performed successfully, the greater chance that the sin will not be repeated, and the greater chance that the sin will be completely washed away. In any case, he says, "God knows" the true state of one's heart (7). Penance is meaningless without it; God does not give time off in Purgatory for good acting. The priest was instructed thus to insure that the confessor was contrite before proceeding. How this actually occurred probably varied widely. It is often wrongly assumed that because the penitentials contained long lists of detailed sins that confessors simply went down the list, in the process planting all kinds of ideas of new sins in the heads of layfolk. This is likely not the case; to do so would be akin to a doctor paging through a treatise on medicine, bringing up every possible disease and its symptoms, perhaps alarming the patient in the process. Remember also that the Church wished to discourage sin, not encourage it. More likely, the penitent told the priest where he thought he had erred, and the priest then attempted to classify the sin and devise a "cure". I believe these manuals were intended as reference works. The more important and basic portions were likely committed to memory, while the work could be pulled off the shelf in more difficult cases.

Grosseteste spends little time discussing what specific penances should be assigned for each sin. This is not unusual. Penitentials by this time were much less concerned with assigning specific penalties to specific sins, much more with identifying the types of sin and the type of "cure" needed. Much more was left to the discretion of the priest to assign an appropriate penance based on what he knew about the person confessing. Charts such as that given by Grosseteste would give a guide to general types of "medicine" for each sin, but there was no set penance for, say, homicide. Grosseteste's charts would reveal that this falls under the deadly sin of wrath, whose cure is patience; which results in hope--its opposite virtue. The priest then took this more general knowledge and then took into account the circumstances of the sin. For example, it was generally believed that the four humours governed human behaviour, and that people tended to be of a particular humour. It was considered to be a greater sin to "act out of character"--for instance, for a person of melancholic humour to get angry and kill someone. The priest, knowing this, might assign a more severe penance to this person than to one he knew to be choleric in nature. He would also know if one were a "repeat offender" with a particular sin as well. This is why it was considered so important to confess to one's "own" priest--and probably why many people tried to avoid it by confessing to the nearest traveling Dominican. The observant will note that it was considered important that the priest and confessor know each other--quite different from today's anonymous confessional. However, the "confessional seal"--the assurance that anything said in confession was between God, the priest, and the confessor only, and that the priest was bound by oath not to reveal anything said therein--was just as applicable then as it is today.

Penance by this time was much more widely varied and depended not only on the priest assigning it, but also on who the person confessing was. Many may remember that Henry II was forced to do public penance on his knees for his part in the murder of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Taking a crusaders' vow became a popular form of penance for the knightly class in the twelfth century and for all classes in the thirteenth century; pilgrimages to holy shrines were also popular. Less drastic forms of penance included fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. Making sure that the penance matched the means of the confessor and was not impossible to complete was part of the priest's job.

The thirteenth century also saw the rise of indulgences. In order to raise money for the work of the Church (including building projects), the Pope authorized certain agents to sell indulgences for sin. Though the practice soon got out of hand, there was nothing uncanonical about the idea--in exchange for almsgiving (long a form of penance), the Pope summarily reduced one's allotted penance for a certain period of time (often forty days). By the sixteenth century, however, the practice of indulgence selling had become corrupt, and for Martin Luther, was a symptom of the disease he believed infected the whole Church. The Reformation would produce a new view of confession for Protestants. No longer was it necessary, in their view, to go through the intermediary of a priest; one could confess silently directly to God, and perform whatever penance he or she felt was appropriate. To insure that their members continued to confess at least part of their sins regularly, statements of confession (said by the congregation in unison) were introduced into Protestant liturgy.

As you can see, the form of confession changed greatly over the centuries, though the basic ideas remained fairly consistent. For the medieval Catholic Christian, confession would have been his or her most intimate contact with the Church--and by far the most difficult and personal. I have not said much about *why* medieval Christians went to confession, but it is clear by the number of cases of people going on assigned -- or even voluntary -- pilgrimages or fasts that many clearly believed in the healing effects of penance on one's soul and that confessing made one "right with God". Hopefully, this short discourse has allowed you to understand the medieval mind just a bit better.

## Sources:

Brett, E.T. *Humbert of Romans: His Life and Views of Thirteenth-Century Society*. Studies and Texts 67 .Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984.

Grosseteste, Robert. *Templum Dei*. J. Goering and F.A.C. Mantello, eds. Toronto Medieval Latin Texts 14. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984

McNeill, J.T. and Gamer, H.M., eds. *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York 1990).

Walz, P. A. "The 'Exceptiones' from the 'Summa' of Simon of Hinton. *Angelicum* 13 (1936) 283-368.

### **Endnotes**

(1)McNeill and Gamer, 4-22.

(2) A number of these are excerpted in McNeill and Gamer.

(3)Brett, 24 ff.

(4) Grosseteste, 12.

(5) Grosseteste, 46 (Ch. IX.1)

(6) Walz, 358.

(7) Walz, 381.

(from [nicolaa5.tripod.com/articles/confess.html](http://nicolaa5.tripod.com/articles/confess.html))

## The Sacrament of Penance (From the *Catholic Encyclopedia*)

To give some [idea](#) of the ancient [discipline](#), the penalties attached to graver crimes are cited here from the English and [Irish Penitentials](#). For [stealing](#), Cummian prescribes that a [layman](#) shall do one year of penance; a [cleric](#), two; a [subdeacon](#) three; a [deacon](#), four; a [priest](#), five; a [bishop](#), six. For [murder](#) or [perjury](#), the penance lasted three, five, six, seven, ten or twelve years according to the criminal's rank. [Theodore](#) commands that if any one [leave the Catholic Church](#), join the [heretics](#), and [induce others to do the same](#), he shall, in case he repent, do penance for twelve years. For the [perjurer](#) who swears by the [Church](#), the Gospel, or the [relics](#) of the [saints](#), Egbert prescribes seven or eleven years of penance. [Usury](#) entailed three years; [infanticide](#), fifteen; [idolatry](#) or [demon-worship](#), ten. Violations of the [sixth commandment](#) were punished with great severity; the penance varied, according to the nature of the [sin](#), from three to fifteen years, the extreme penalty being prescribed for [incest](#), i.e., fifteen to twenty-five years. **Whatever its duration, the penance included [fasting on bread and water](#), either for the whole period or for a specified portion.** Those who could not [fast](#) were [obliged](#) instead to recite daily a certain number of [psalms](#), to give [alms](#), take the discipline (scourging) or perform some other penitential exercise as determined by the confessor.

## Penitential Redemptions (From the *Catholic Encyclopedia*)

Penitential redemptions are the substitution of exercises (especially alms-deeds), either easier or extending over a shorter period, for works of penance imposed according to the penitential canons. These redemptions allow an alleviation, or a shortening of the time of penance; they thus resemble an indulgence, and have a place in the history of indulgences. Among the Anglo-Saxons and the Irish, as manifested by their penitential books, the fundamental idea was reparation in proportion to the number and gravity of the sins, as it were a *weregild* paid to God and the Church. The confessor imposed a certain number of penitential acts, prayers, fasts, flagellations, alms-deeds etc., extending over a more or less considerable period; hence arose quite naturally the desire to condense the penance into a shorter time. The priest might fix them in each case, but the penitential books show that there actually was a sort of scale in current use. Three things were considered in determining the new works: the penances already imposed, the difficulty of the penitent's accomplishing them, and finally his material condition, especially in the case of alms-deeds. Thus one unable to fast could replace fasting by the Psalter (fifty psalms); an alms of twenty *solidi* (for the poor, ten *solidi* or even less) replaced fasts of seven weeks (*a carina*). A penance of a week, a quarantine, or a year might be accomplished in a short time by accumulating psalters, genuflections, *palmatœ* (blows on the breast with the palm of the hand), or by condensing two days of slight into one of severe fasting. These substitutions assumed numerous combinations, and the Irish canons (Wasserschleben, "Die Bussordnungen", Halle, 1851, 193) show nine methods of accomplishing a year's penance in a short time. It was even attempted to have the penance performed by others (cf. "Leges" or "Pœnitentiale" of Eadger in Hardouin, "Concilia", VI, i, 659 sq.), but these substitutions, accessible only to the great, were a contradiction of penance and were severely condemned (cf. Conc. of Clovesho of 747, cans. xxvi-xxvii). The redemptions considered in the penitential books had only practical and not official value; however, they were officially adopted by several councils. Thus the Council of Tribur of 895 (can. lvi), in determining the penance for a homicide, authorizes the redemption (while travelling or at war) of the fast on Tuesday, Thursday, or Saturday by paying a *denier*, or by caring for three poor. Eventually these redemptions were offered indiscriminately to all, especially at the Council of Clermont of 1095 (can. ii), when the crusade was suggested as a ransom from all penance. This was the modern indulgence, save that in the case of an indulgence the penance to be redeemed has not been imposed on individuals, but to the proposed work is attached by ecclesiastical authority a reduction of penitential satisfaction. (See INDULGENCES.)

WASSERSCHLEBEN, op. cit.; SCHMITZ, *Die Bussbücher u. Bussdisciplin*

### **Act of Contrition**

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.

In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,

I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.

I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In His Name.

My God have mercy.

OR

I confess to Almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have sinned through my own fault,

in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.

And I ask Blessed Mary and all the saints

and you, my brothers and sisters,

to pray for me to the Lord our God.

### **Matthew 18: 21 - 35**

Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants.

When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan.

When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?'

Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart."

### **Matthew 18: 15 - 18**

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that 'every fact may be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. Amen, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.