



Vincent J. Maloney Catholic Junior High School

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Greetings from Vincent J. Maloney Catholic Junior High School,

Advent is a four-week period of preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth at Christmas. One way we prepare ourselves is that we recognize how we have sinned ... how we have 'missed the mark' in terms of loving God and loving our neighbour. As Christians, we seek reconciliation.

We would like to clearly describe a reconciliation service that will be taking place at our school on Wednesday, December 10th. Throughout the day, students and staff will be gathering in the small gymnasium at St. Albert Catholic High School with Father Mike Dechant and a number of Oblate priests to experience God's healing and forgiveness.

Whenever we do something that hurts another person, reconciliation is necessary to repair any damage to the relationship. Firstly, we are sorry for what we have done (contrition) and we acknowledge our wrongdoing (confession). We make amends in some way by doing something good (penance), and we ask for and receive forgiveness from the one we have hurt (absolution). These same elements are important when we ask for God's forgiveness.

The reconciliation service will include the reading of scripture, an opening reflection, and a ritual using stones and blessed water. This ritual action has great meaning and will be carefully explained to everyone. Students will be asked to examine their hearts and to identify any serious sins, whether it be pride or revenge or envy. Each person will have an opportunity to approach the table on which sits a bowl of blessed and salted holy water surrounded by stones. These rocks symbolize our sinfulness and the hardness of our heart. Students will be asked to take one stone and to place it in the bowl of blessed water, as a symbolic gesture of their desire to let go of this sin and to be healed and cleansed of it.

Later, each individual will retrieve a stone from the bowl and have an opportunity to meet privately with a priest and to confess their sin (confession), leaving their stone a Christ candle. Our Catholic students will be encouraged to follow the formula they have learned in their sacramental preparation for reconciliation. After hearing an individual's confession, the priest will speak the words of absolution (forgiveness). Later, prior to a final blessing, the entire group will together recite the Lord's Prayer as a communal penance. We hope and pray that this reconciliation service will be a grace-filled time for everyone.

Wishing you a blessed Advent