

## A Parish Mission on Reconciliation with *Forgiven*

***“I feel that the Holy Spirit puts these programs on my heart. The Holy Spirit is working; he is out to save everyone who wants to be saved.”***

**Joan Henry and Susan Stallbaumer**

Co-Directors of Parish Evangelization  
Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Kansas

Longtime spiritual friends Joan Henry and Susan Stallbaumer are co-directors of the Parish Evangelization team at Sts. Peter and Paul in Seneca, Kansas, a town that lies roughly two hours northwest of Kansas City by car.

“The sacraments are very amazing to me, but I struggle with some of them,” said Stallbaumer, who converted to Catholicism 20 years ago.

One such sacrament is Reconciliation, a struggle that puts Stallbaumer in the same camp as plenty of cradle Catholics.

Aware that his parishioners needed catechesis regarding the healing sacrament, Sts. Peter and Paul’s pastor, Father Arul Carasala, had been planting the seeds for a parishwide emphasis on Reconciliation. Henry discovered the *Forgiven* series on [formed.org](http://formed.org), and their pastor asked Stallbaumer if the 25-member Parish Evangelization team would present *Forgiven* to the parish.

Stallbaumer agreed and began praying about how to structure the format.

“As I prayed about this, God revealed that it needed to be more than a class,” Stallbaumer said.



**“The professionals unpack a lot of theology, and I feel comfortable bringing it into a conversation. I couldn’t do what I do without the videos on FORMED.”**



Joan  
Henry



Susan  
Stallbaumer

The parish held its Reconciliation mission in the church during January and February of 2021. Between 30 and 50 people attended each week, with more joining via livestream. Each evening began with prayer. One of the parish's talented singers provided musical selections throughout the mission. In-person and online attendees watched a *Forgiven* video each week, and the evening ended with a parishioner's personal testimony.

"It was very well received," Stallbaumer said.

At the end of each session, attendees had the opportunity to go to confession, and over the four weeks, more people were going, Stallbaumer said. After the mission concluded, Henry said, their pastor felt that attendance for confession increased.

Henry recalled that during the mission she ran into a woman at the grocery store who told her that she hadn't been to confession in 30 years.

"There's a tremendous grace in that sacrament that we don't always realize," Henry said. "Do we understand that it's really Jesus who's forgiving our sins?"

Sts. Peter and Paul has had a FORMED subscription since 2018. The *Forgiven* series "is a tool to engage the people," Stallbaumer said. "It gives you that head knowledge but also that personal encounter through the stories and workbooks in the series."

"You have people on the videos saying that this is their life's work," Henry said, "but they're also talking out of their personal experience."

For people who feel "that their sins are so bad or so numerous," Stallbaumer said, "the personal stories allow for that personal part that speaks to the heart. We are inspired through each other's 'broken' stories."

"The Catholic faith is so deep and rich," Henry said. "As children, we don't have the capacity to take in what's there."

And even if people are well-schooled in theology, there's a second component.

"People might have been educated in their heads," Stallbaumer said, but they have "to bring it to their hearts and have that in-depth relationship with Jesus."

Stallbaumer said that the Parish Evangelization team tries to bring people to those sacred encounters.

"We can only be the vessels; we have to leave the rest up to God," she said.



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