

Shared Shredding; Shared Strength

✖ Noisy but very effective.

A concrete, hands-on activity for identifying where we need God's grace. As a bonus, the set-up is communal, so this prayer exercise witnesses that we are all hopeful sinners seeking strength and mercy together in the Land of OP.

Some ideas for use:

- In conjunction with Chapters 15 and 16 in *On the PATH: Confronting NTHs and Temptations: In the Moment or After the Fact*.
- As preparation for Confession or during the Advent or Lenten season.
- as part of a retreat reconciliation session, but substitute burning of papers for shredding.
- After a [teen-friendly examination of conscience](#). Even better, have your teens make iMovie or slideshow examinations in small groups. Share them/pray them together. Then follow up with this activity.

You'll need:

- A paper shredder
- waste basket
- colored paper and pens for all

Your Intro:

You'll need to lay the groundwork of communal sin and the Body of Christ. We really are all in this together, on the PATH, on the journey home. My holiness is bound up with your holiness; my eternal life is bound up with yours. None of us lives in a cave; all of our lives affect and effect others.

Invite participants to consider the NTHs or temptations that they are beginning to recognize within themselves.

Their work:

Encourage teens to write or draw about their NTHs/temptations. You can give them any or all of these prompts, one at a time:

- Name the Negative Thinking Habit or the temptation you feel has the greatest power over you.
- Identify any individuals or relationships in your life that suffer because of your weakness before this NTH/temptation.
- Describe a particular situation when this NTH/temptation got the best of you.
- Write a prayer...brief but honest...asking for Jesus to help you grow stronger in this area.
- Action plan: Name an action step you can take to avoid this temptation in the future. OR, name an action step you will take to mend a relationship that has been broken by its effects.

Your Intro:

When all reflections are complete, say: “Since we are on this PATH together, bound up in the Body of Christ, we must learn to count and rely on each other to help us master our weaknesses. Where I am weak, your strength can help me. When you want to give up or say, ‘This holiness thing is too hard. God wants too much!’ I am here to help you keep to the PATH and to cheer you on.

Can I have a volunteer to get us started? You don’t need any special skills beyond the ability to operate a paper shredder. (Thank your volunteer; give her a blank paper to practice shredding. Have all clap for her.) Volunteer ‘X’ represents the strength someone else in this room needs. If you are prideful, she represents humility. If you are short tempered, she represents patience. If you are quick to judge, she knows

how to hold her tongue.

Our next volunteer will hand his or her paper to Volunteer X. She will not read it, she'll just shred it. By shredding it she's saying, "Nothing is impossible with God. He put us here to help you. You can master this." Finally she'll offer a hug or a firm handshake. This last step is crucial. It represents all of us saying "We want you to keep to the PATH. We want you to overcome this temptation. We're on your team. You're not alone."

You model:

- I'll go first. I'll give my paper to X (do so).
- She doesn't read it, but immediately shreds it, so I know it's not impossible to beat this temptation and that you are all here to help me (she does)
- Then she hugs me (initiate hug as needed). Now I know that everyone in the room is on my team and looking out for me so I don't become LOST.

Their turn:

Thank X for volunteering and have her sit down. Say, "Since I am feeling stronger because I have all of you on my side, it's my turn to share the strength. Who will come forward with their paper? (Wait for volunteer Y, then go through the steps of handing over, shredding, and hugging) Great! Now it is 'Y's turn to represent all of us, so I can go and sit down. Who will come up next?" and so it goes until all have given over their list, shredded and been hugged.

Be sure that your original Volunteer X comes forward at the end to have her paper shredded and receive her hug.

Close with an act of contrition followed by a spontaneous prayer of thanks that you or a student leads.

