Mission Together

Lent Celebration of the Word: Week One

Introduction for teachers / leaders: Lent lasts for 40 days, echoing the period of time Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his public ministry. It is a time of preparation for the greatest feast in the Church year, Easter, when Jesus rose from the dead. During Lent, Christians devote more time to prayer, charity and sacrifice. Our Lent Celebrations of the Word include the Sunday Gospel (in 2024 these are taken from Year B) and invite children to reflect on Jesus' words and actions. This Celebration of the Word focuses on the Gospel reading for the first Sunday of Lent, when Jesus is sent by the Holy Spirit into the desert.

GATHER: Setting the scene

Please refer to our guide: *How to Pray with Children* missiontogether.org.uk/prayer-resources/

Opening hymn or recorded music

Suggested hymn: *Be still and know.*

Introduction

Print the introduction on page 2 and ask pupils to read.

Sign of the cross and opening prayer

Print the opening prayer on page 2 and ask pupils to read.

WORD: Bible reading (Year B): Mark 1:12-15 GNT adapted

Print the reading on page 2 and ask pupils to read.

Bible reflection

See page 3. We suggest this is delivered by a teacher.

RESPOND: Prayers of intercession

Print the prayers of intercession on page 4 and ask pupils to read.

SENT: Mission Together prayer

Sign of the cross

Closing hymn or recorded music

Our suggestions: *Do not be afraid.*

Follow up activities

Why did Jesus spend 40 days in the desert? - PDF Workbook

Download these and other activities from missiontogether.org.uk/Lent

Mission Together Prayer

May all children
In the world
Share love
Share friendship and live
In the peace
Of God's love
Now and forever. **Amen.**

Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio, the Pope's charity for world mission.
23 Eccleston Square London SW1V 1NU 020 7821 9755 missiontogether.org.uk
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Lent Celebration of the Word: Week One

Introduction

Reader: As we join together to pray, we remember that we are in week one of Lent. Lent is the season when Christians prepare for the great feast of Easter. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and lasts for 40 days.

Reader: In our Gospel reading today, we hear how the Holy Spirit sent Jesus into the desert for 40 days of stillness, silence, and prayer. Let's begin with our opening prayer, then listen to the reading together.

Sign of the cross and opening prayer

Reader: God our Father, hear our prayer and help us this Lent to prepare well for Easter.
Through your Holy Spirit, encourage us to be kind, forgiving, and faithful.
And through your Son's example, teach us how to share your love with the world.
We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Bible reading: from the Gospel of St Mark

Reader: At once the Holy Spirit made Jesus go into the desert, where he stayed for forty days, being tempted by the devil. Wild animals were there also, but angels came and helped him. After John had been put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Good News from God. 'The right time has come,' he said, 'and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!'

The Gospel of the Lord.
R/ Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

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Bible reflection (We suggest this is delivered by a teacher / chaplain)

At the start of our Gospel reading today we hear that the Holy Spirit made Jesus go into the desert, where he stayed for forty days. This might sound like a strange thing for the Holy Spirit to do; to send Jesus into the desert for such a long time! I wonder why the Holy Spirit might have done this?

To help us ponder over why, it would be good to picture a desert in our minds. Maybe you see miles of flat sand with lots of bright, hot sun. Or maybe, like the painting on screen, you imagine rocky sand dunes and a few shrubs and trees. What we don't expect to see in a desert are people or homes, schools or shops.

This means that there is little to distract someone in a desert. And because there are so few distractions, deserts provide lots of opportunity for silence, stillness, and prayer. Coming away from distractions and being silent and still helps us to know how close God is. It helps us to feel God's peace as we share our thoughts and worries with God and listen with our hearts, so that we can discover what God wants us to do and how God wants us to live.

There are many times in the Bible when God sends people into the desert so that they can come away from distractions and listen to God more clearly. The prophets Moses, Elijah, and John the Baptist all spent time alone with God in the desert. But in our Gospel reading today we hear that Jesus wasn't completely alone, wild animals and angels were also with him. The painting on screen shows this too. I'm going to ask you a question, I don't want an answer, but I'd like you to think about it in your head. Do you think the animals look fierce or calm?

The painter has painted the animals bowing gently in front of Jesus. Even the lion at Jesus' feet has his head calmly lowered. This is unusual, we usually think of wild animals as fierce and scary. We'd all be frightened if a wild lion was this close to us!

Feeling afraid can be very distracting. It can make us panic and take decisions that are not helpful. It can stop us from focusing on what is good. God doesn't want fear to come in the way of our friendship with him or with others. That's why in the desert, God sends his angels to help Jesus. This brings about a sense of peace that even the wild animals feel.

Lent lasts 40 days, the same amount of time Jesus spent in the desert. During Lent we too are asked to spend some time away from distractions, to be silent and still, so we can draw close to God and feel God's peace. I wonder how and where you could do that this Lent?

Lent is also a time to pray for other people and for the needs of the world. Let us do that now as we join in our prayers of intercession.

Prayers of intercession

Reader: The response to 'Lord in your mercy' is: **Hear our prayer.**

Reader: We pray that we might grow closer to you Lord, this Lent. May we do our best to spend more time with you in stillness, silence, and prayer; so we can feel your peace and love and share these gifts with others.

Lord, in your mercy...

Reader: We pray for those who feel afraid. Protect them as you protected Jesus in the desert and send angels into their lives to help them find peace.

Lord, in your mercy…

Reader: We pray for the children overseas whom Mission Together helps: those who are poor, hungry, sad, or scared. May they find hope in your love and may we always be ready to help them.

Lord, in your mercy...

Reader: In silence, let us now spend a few moments sharing the prayers in our heart with God our Father.

Let us now say the Mission Together prayer.

May all children
In the world
Share love
Share friendship and live
In the peace
Of God's love,
Now and forever. Amen.

Sign of the cross

Closing hymn or recorded music: *Do not be afraid*

Fundraising Ideas

Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio – the Catholic Church's official children's charity for overseas mission. Thanks to children in England and Wales, we can provide life-changing aid around the world in whatever form it's needed. That could be a new school, feeding programme, or a generator for a children's home. Mission Together helps all children, regardless of background or beliefs. That's how we show the all-embracing nature of the Catholic Church and the true meaning of 'mission'.

Fundraising is a brilliant way to involve everyone in raising money for Mission Together. Below are a few seasonal ideas but you can find other ways to get involved throughout the year by visiting our webpage https://missiontogether.org.uk/fundraising-ideas/

Please ***share your fundraising events*** with us @MissioUK, adding the hashtag #missiontogether

Ideas for Spring term

Sponsored give something up: encourage pupils to give something up for Lent and either donate the money they save or get sponsored to do it. Alternatively, children can offer to take on extra chores or responsibilities in Lent for a donation to Mission Together.

Springtime scavenger hunt: This is a great outdoor activity. Print off some sheets with spring-time things to spot e.g. Snowdrops or crocus, tree buds, birdsong and birds nesting, cherry blossom. You can tailor the items to whatever suits your space and environment. Charge pupils to enter. Either get pupils to tick the items off or take pictures to prove they've found them. Every complete scavenger sheet is placed in a hat, with the pulled out winner receiving a prize.

Egg hunt: hide small chocolate eggs around your school or playground. Charge pupils to join in for a massive Easter egg hunt! To maximise your fundraising, why not ask all pupils to donate some eggs so you don't need to spend money to buy them?

Spring flower sale: everyone loves the first signs of spring after winter! Why not pot some spring bulbs – snowdrops, mini daffodils, crocuses and hyacinths to sell as Easter gifts.

Lent through a lens: Challenge pupils to capture images of springtime. Charge for entry and provide a prize for the winner(s). You could even introduce different categories e.g. wildlife, nature, people. You could even have a category for grown up competitors!

Easter bonnet competition: charge pupils to enter a competition for the best Easter bonnet. Prizes for the most fabulous fashionista creations! Alternatively you could get everyone involved in egg painting or Easter cake designs, and sell them after for extra fundraising!