



Archdiocese of Liverpool

Family Catechesis for Lent 2017

***'Journey with Jesus: The desert wilderness leads to the Easter garden'***

This is a resource for parishes and schools to explore the Lenten wilderness with Jesus, and the gospel readings for Year A. It is an exploration of Lent for children of all ages and their families. It is also a display for all ages to encourage prayerful reflection. The display may be set up in the parish or the school.

This resource follows Lent through *the landscape of the gospel readings* for Year A: from the Temptation in the desert, to the Mountain of the Transfiguration, to the woman at the well (water), to the healing of the blind man (mud), to the tomb of Lazarus, to Palm Sunday in Jerusalem. This is a visual journey involving sand, rocks, twigs, water, mud, palms, etc.

A display draws parents and children to a Lenten focal point in the same way a Nativity draws families and children. The Lenten wilderness contrasts with the lush Easter garden and the beautiful flowers of the Easter season. Each step along the desert wilderness includes: sand, rocks, a children's liturgy focus, and scripture quotes and/or symbols from the scripture. The dryness of Lent helps us to understand our need for God's mercy and forgiveness. Our spiritual dryness during Lent needs the refreshment of scripture, the sacraments, and finally, the lush green of Easter.

You can add to the display every week or set it out in the beginning of Lent. There is great flexibility in creating the display, and linking it with parish and school. The Lenten wilderness could be linked to Family Catechesis or to a parish Reconciliation service. The engagement of Children's Liturgy of the Word with the Lenten wilderness may be weekly, once or not at all. It may simply be a focus at school, during children's liturgy and in the church.

The desert sand, branches and stones of the Lenten display are the base of the entire Lenten wilderness, to be added to each week and reflecting the gospel readings. The display can be as large or as small as your space allows.

Remember that Lent is also a time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation (either in a service or during regular times.) You may want to remind your families '...if you have not already begun a regular Reconciliation schedule, this is a reminder that you are especially welcome during Lent ...'

Desert Wilderness → Mountain → Water/Well → Mud & healing → Tomb

(Temptation) (Transfiguration) (Woman at Well) (Blind man) (Lazarus)

→ Palm Sunday/Entry into Jerusalem/Holy Week

### **First Sunday of Lent - Desert Wilderness: Matthew 4:1-11**

Sand covering a piece tan coloured cloth or sand covering a tan cloth lining a baby pool or container. The sand could meander through a path to symbolise the Lenten journey. A 'sandy' coloured and textured cloth such as hessian may work just as well. Dry branches and rocks of varying sizes can add interest to the desert landscape. Other themes that might be included from the words of Jesus are:

*'Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'*

*'You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'*

*'You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.'*

Children's Liturgy of the Word participation:

- leave a scripture quote on the display
- each child adds a rock to the display – (we are living rocks, all different, we build up the church. The rocks could have children's names on them).

### **Second Sunday of Lent – Mountain of the Transfiguration: Matthew 17:1-9**

Jesus'... *'face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light...suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.'*

Elements to include might be a high mountain, a white cloth, and a bright light.

Children's Liturgy of the Word participation:

- leave a scripture quote on display
- build up the mountain or leave an illustration the Transfiguration

### **Third Sunday of Lent - Woman at the well: John 4:5-15;19-26;39-42 (shorter form)**

*'...anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again...'*

*'I who am speaking to you (am the Messiah),' said Jesus 'I am he.'*

Elements to include might be a miniature well and a bucket, or a bowl of water. Links to Baptism might include a candle, holy water in a dish to bless you.

Children's Liturgy of the Word participation:

- Leave a scripture quote on display
- Leave an illustration of the woman at the well and Jesus
- Bless yourself in holy water, add pebbles to the well. Jesus wants to refresh us with water in our Lenten wilderness

***Fourth Sunday of Lent - Healing of the blind man: John 9:1;6-9;13-17;34-38 (shorter form)***

*'As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man...and he came away with his sight restored.'*

*'Do you believe in the Son of Man?... He is speaking to you.'*

*'Lord, I believe.'*

Elements to include might be a dish of 'mud', a small bowl of water and a basket to leave an intention written on paper

Children's Liturgy of the Word participation:

- Leave a scripture quote on display, especially 'Lord, I believe.'
- How makes our belief 'muddy' – how do we fail to see God's love around us? Add a prayer to 'see God's love clearly' on a small piece of paper to leave in a basket.
- Footsteps with names on each one and 'Lord, I believe.'

***Fifth Sunday of Lent - Lazarus: John 11:3-7;17;20-27;33-45 (shorter form)***

*'This sickness will not end in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.'*

*'I am the Resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live...'*

*'Lazarus, here! Come out!'*

Elements to include might be a rock tomb (to look into), with a stone outside and a light inside, strips of cloth and a shroud.

Children's Liturgy of the Word participation:

- Leave a scripture quote on display by the tomb
- Jesus asks us twice to believe in him and to walk with him during Holy Week. Make or illustrate a cross to bring home. Or take away seeds to plant in preparation for the Easter garden.

***Palm Sunday:***

The display could end with palms placed on the ground to welcome Jesus into Jerusalem and also palms around a triumphal arch. This could be the final element of the Lenten wilderness.

Children's Liturgy of the Word participation:

- Reflection: I walked along with Jesus during Lent. Am I ready for Holy Week?

***Preparation for Easter:***

- During Holy Week you may like to add wheat and grapes for Holy Thursday and a display of Calvary hill, wood and thorns for Good Friday.
- Making an Easter garden with rocks, soil, moss, flowers and plants, an empty miniature 'tomb', cross, candle is another family friendly idea for Family Catechesis. Families can make individual Easter gardens to take home be encouraged to make Easter gardens at home from found objects.

***Feedback:***

If you have used or adapted this resource please send your feedback and photographs. This helps other parishes and schools to use the resource in the future! It also shares your good ideas and successes with others.

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