

First Sunday of Lent, Year B
18 February 2024
Mark 1:12-15

Catechist Background

Mark's Gospel does not go into as much detail of Jesus' time in the desert as the other Gospel accounts. Like the Israelites under Moses who were in the desert for forty years, Jesus was tempted, but unlike them, Jesus triumphs over temptation. This time precedes his public ministry, and appears to be an important preparation time for it. Early hearers of Mark's Gospel would have been reminded of Moses—the bringer of the Jewish Law—and Elijah—the prophet *par excellence*—who also spent forty days in the desert. In today's first reading, we hear how the world was given a new start through Noah's action in building the ark. Jesus, the culmination of both the Jewish Law and the prophets, brings a new start to the world both in history and today. As we begin Lent, we should remember Jesus' invitation to change our lives and believe in the Good News, that the Kingdom of God is close at hand. The word 'repent' at one time simply meant 're-think', but now it implies recognising your wrongdoings and feeling sorrow for them. Repenting is thus the first stage of changing our lives so that we can be more focused on God.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, you will need a television remote control.

As you gather, remind the children that it is Lent; ask if they have noticed any changes in the church (for instance, the colour of the vestments the priest is wearing, or the decorations in the church). Some, but probably not all, may have received ashes on Ash Wednesday; it would be good to discuss this and explain that Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. Lent is a time when we have the opportunity to prepare for the celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You are with us in our need, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You welcome us back to you, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: Your Kingdom is close at hand, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God, during this season of Lent, help us to understand Jesus' death and resurrection in our lives. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What happened to Jesus in the desert? What type of things might have tempted him? What type of things tempt children your age today?
- What did Jesus tell the people when he returned to Galilee?
- What does it mean to repent? How can we change our lives to be closer to God?
- Why is God's Kingdom 'Good News'?

Response

In the desert, Jesus had the chance to prepare for doing the very important work that we know about from the Gospels. We have the chance to use this time now to prepare to celebrate Jesus' teachings, as well as his death and resurrection. Talk about ways we can use this time to grow closer to God.

[N.B. Sometimes children—and even adults—focus too much on 'giving something up' for Lent, and not on the fact that if we have given something up, it should be so that we have more 'space' for God in our hearts. Particularly if your Children's Liturgy group has many older children, it would be worth mentioning this in the context of today's Gospel. For example, food or fame or anything else are not *bad* things in themselves, as all good things come from God. However, if we start to treat those things as if they are more important than God they become sinful for us.]

Ask for a volunteer. Explain that one leader will tell the child things s/he should to do to grow closer to God (e.g. pray, be kind to others, ask someone to play with them, help their mum and dad, etc.), while another leader will say neutral or unhelpful things (e.g. 'those crisps look nice', 'I'd like to watch tv', or 'that's not fair!'). The leaders should stand on each side of the child and speak in the same volume. When finished, ask if it was easy to listen to the ways to grow closer to God. Give the child the remote control and ask if they would like to turn off the noisy distractions. Explain that Lent can be like this, a time to concentrate on what is really important and better understand how God wants us to live.

We Believe

Relating to the Creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God, the Father, whose Kingdom is near?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who brings us a fresh start in him?
- Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who helps us to repent and grow closer to God?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the Gospel reading by saying, 'Jesus brings us the Good News of God's Kingdom, and we bring our needs to him...'

Leader: We pray for the Church, that we will use this time of Lent to renew our purpose. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for governments of the world, especially in countries where there is fighting and war. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who are living with the effects of natural disasters, like floods and earthquakes. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anyone we know who is sad for any reason. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God, help us to show people that you are close by, through our loving and kind actions. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.