

Liturgy of the Word with Children
First Sunday of Lent, Year A
22 February 2026
Matthew 4:1-11

Catechist Background

'The desert' for the people of Jesus' day was a lonely wilderness, full of danger. Bandits lurked in desert areas, and people believed demons lived out there too. Jesus' forty-day stay into the desert calls to mind the forty years spent in the desert by the Israelites after they left Egypt. Whereas the Israelites failed many times in their wanderings, Jesus remained faithful to God's plan for him and didn't give in to the temptation to use his powers and position to satisfy his own ends. Jesus overcame temptations by relying on God's Word, although it should be noted that even the Devil can and did use Scripture, quoting it out of context and interpreting it falsely.

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.

Setting the Scene

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

As you gather:

- tell the children we are now starting a season in the Church with a special name
 - Do you know what it is called? (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; if so explain that Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent and we receive the ashes to remind us that we make mistakes and need God's help and forgiveness.

We Say Sorry

Before listening to the Scriptures which show Jesus' obedience to the Father, let us remember that we do not always do what God wants us to do.

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 understand Jesus' death and resurrection more. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What happened to Jesus in the desert? What tempted him? What do you find tempting?
- Think of a time when you have been *really* hungry. What would it feel like if you hadn't eaten for forty days? Would you have wanted to turn stones into bread?
- If you hadn't seen any friendly faces for forty days, how would you feel? Would you want to show off to people by doing some amazingly powerful things?
- The Devil tried to get Jesus to use his power to serve himself, not to do what God wanted.

- Do you sometimes want to use your talents and belongings just for yourself, not to make the world a better place? We probably do this most often when we feel sad or lonely.

Response

During Lent we remember the forty days Jesus spent in the desert. During that time He had the opportunity to prepare for the very important things he would go on to do afterwards. Each year we have the chance to use this time to prepare to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection.

What sort of different things could we do during Lent to help us grow closer to God?

[N.B. Sometimes children and 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. It is worth mentioning this in the context of today's Gospel. For example, food or fame or anything else are not *bad* in themselves. However, if we treat those things as if they were more important than God they would become sinful for us.]

- Ask for a volunteer;
- Explain that one leader will tell the child things s/he should do to grow closer to God (e.g. pray, be kind to others, invite someone to play with them, help their parents, etc.);
- Explain that at the same time another leader will say neutral or unhelpful things (e.g. those crisps look nice, I'd like to watch tv, 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 is a time for us to concentrate on what is important and to understand how God wants us to live.

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting 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, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying: 'Jesus brings us the Good News of God's Kingdom, and so we bring our needs to him...'

Leader: We pray for the Church, that in Lent we will listen more to God. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray that leaders everywhere will have the courage to be caring, especially in places where there is fighting and war. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people dealing with natural disasters like floods. Lord in your mercy,

All: **Hear our prayer.**

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

All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: God, help us to show people that you are close to them through our loving actions.

We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**