

Liturgy of the Word with Children
First Sunday of Lent, Year C
9 March 2025
Luke 4:1-13

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 in the desert too. Jesus' forty-day sojourn into the desert calls to mind the forty years spent in the desert by the Israelites after they left Egypt. "Forty" for the Jews is a symbolic number, meaning a long time. The Israelites failed many times in their wanderings, but in contrast Jesus remained faithful to God's plan for him, rather than falling to the temptation to use his powers and position to satisfy his own ends. Jesus overcame the temptations by relying on God's Word, although it should be noted that even the devil can use Scripture, by quoting it out of context and interpreting it falsely, as seen in the third temptation.

It is important to keep the focus on Jesus when reading this Gospel passage, not on the devil. Jews at the time of Jesus did not have the same understandings of 'Satan' as Christians now do – for Jews then 'the Satan' was a being in God's court whose task it was to test the loyalty of God's followers (as in the Book of Job in the Old Testament). Since then, Jewish and Christian understandings of Satan have developed and changed. However, Jesus is the most important figure in this Gospel passage, as in all things, and so we should keep our attention firmly on him.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, you will need a tray (such as a roasting tin) with some sand in it.

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

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 would be worth mentioning this in the context of today's Gospel. For example, food, 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 then they get in the way of our relationship with God and become sinful for us.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You show us what is important in life, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You lead us to the truth, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You call us to be like you, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

We Pray (1)

God in heaven, help us this Lent to understand how to follow Jesus' example in our lives. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

'Alleluia,' the normal Gospel Acclamation, is not sung during Lent. For the Gospel Acclamation you might like to have a look at:

- *Music for Children's Liturgy of the Word* by Christopher Walker (Oregon Catholic Press);
- Some of the Gospel Acclamations used at your parish mass if suitable;

- Try writing your own words using tunes familiar to children (see suggestions in *The Complete Children's Liturgy* by Katie Thompson (Kevin Mayhew publishers), and words suitable to the season, such as the following:
 - Glory and praise to you / Lord Jesus Christ!
 - Glory to you O Christ / You are the Word of God!
 - Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ / King of endless glory!

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Think of a time when you have been *really* hungry. What do you think it would feel like if you hadn't eaten for 40 days? Would you have wanted to turn stones into bread?
- If you hadn't seen any friendly faces for 40 days, how do you think you would 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 to save the world.
- Do we sometimes use our talents and belongings only for ourselves, not to make the world a better place? We are probably most likely to do this when we are feeling down or lonely.

Response

Remind the children that even when they feel alone, like Jesus was in the wilderness of the desert, that God is always with us. Even if we cannot see Jesus, He is with us and that his Spirit now lives with us too.

- Encourage the children to take turns (one at a time) to make two handprints in the tray of sand, one to represent them, and one to represent Jesus.

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, who created the world to be a lovely place?
- Do you believe in Jesus Christ, who came into this world to save us from our selfishness and show us how to live?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps keep us strong when we are tempted?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'God, we know we are never alone, that you are always with us, and so we pray...'

Leader: We pray for the Church throughout the whole world, that we may use our position and influence to bring people closer to you. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who have powerful jobs or positions. May they use them for good in the world, not to show off their powerfulness. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for everyone in the world who is hungry or homeless. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

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

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: God, we know that sometimes we are the answer to somebody's prayer. Help us this Lent to follow you and put aside our selfishness. We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.