



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Children's Liturgy of the Word

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Our universe, especially our world, has death, resurrection and renewal as its very core; continuous change is a part of its nature. Lent, if you like, is a celebration of change, turning back, renewing and reviewing, and turning over a new leaf. It is a time of looking to prepare for and a time to remember the rainbow and our part in the covenant. Turn away from our idols, our preoccupations, our crutches, anything that we have become accustomed to using as props and supports and turn back to God. Even the pursuit of knowledge and learning is a distraction. Practice acts of charity on yourself this Lent, reign in the excesses and take account of your spiritual life.

Our readings for this first Sunday focus on the fidelity of God and our share in that fidelity through baptism. Our first reading is the conclusion of the story of the flood. The rainbow, a sign of the covenant made with all living creatures, reminds us that God is always faithful. In the Gospel, Mark recalls Jesus' baptism and reminds us that even baptism does not exempt us from the temptation of straying from the covenant. Jesus meets the test and emerges victorious. His victorious proclamation calls us to renew our fidelity to the covenant and our baptismal promises by changing our lives and believing in the Gospel.

Objectives

- † To help connect Lent to baptism.
- † To introduce the word covenant to the children as a special promise made by God.

Environment and Materials

- † Two screened adult leaders.
- † Liturgical space: the liturgical colour is **Purple**.
- † White cloth, Lectionary and a candle.
- † Place the Bible in a prominent location for the children to see.
- † Select volunteers (older children or adults) to proclaim the readings.

Background

First Reading: Genesis

- † Covenant unifies today's readings.
- † We first hear it in the Genesis reading.
- † A flood has covered the earth, and only Noah, seven members of his family, and the animals on the ark survive.
- † Frustrated and angered by the moral corruption that pervaded the lives of the Hebrew people, God found only Noah and his tribe worth saving.
- † Now, with the dawn of a dry day, God expresses a change of heart and an eternal promise to Noah and all creatures.
- † Never again will a flood destroy all creation.
- † This covenant is a sign of mercy as God clarifies that love rather than harsh punishment will mark his relationship with the human family.
- † This is the promise of the covenant.

Gospel: Mark

- † On the First Sunday of Lent, the Gospel is about Jesus' time of temptation in the desert, which precedes his public ministry.
- † Jesus is driven into the desert by the Spirit and remains there for 40 days.
- † Satan tempts him, and angels minister to him.
- † Having successfully faced temptation and surrendered his will to that of the Father, Jesus begins his public ministry.
- † He no longer can stand back but must begin to give voice to the truth within, the truth that begs him to speak of the kingdom of God.
- † With a chance to repent of sinful ways and believe in the Gospel -of eternal justice, Jesus sets out to gather a band of followers.
- † Thus begins the journey that will lead to the cross, which does not mark the end but the beginning of the mission that will never end and brings us here today.

Leader's Reflection Questions

- † What signs of God's covenantal love do you recognize around you?
- † How are you preparing for Lent?

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: Dear children, go with your leaders and learn about God giving us a rainbow as a sign of his love and Jesus in the desert.

When most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children to sit and prepare. Begin with the Sign of the Cross. Help the children think about and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

**Loving God, you invite us to follow you. Help us to listen to your voice.
Amen.**

Invite the children to listen to the Gospel.

First Reading

The children sit during the proclamation of the reading.

A reading from the book of Genesis.

God said to Noah and his sons with him,

“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.

I establish my covenant with you: never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you for all future generations:

I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

The Word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God

Gospel

The children stand for the Gospel. The leader proclaims the Gospel. All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and chest. Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark. All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and chest.

Children respond: Glory to you, O Lord

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel, according to Mark

After Jesus was baptized, the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness.

He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan, and he was with the wild beasts, and the angels waited on him.

Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims The Gospel of the Lord.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The children sit to listen to the reflection.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Please consider the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

An excellent place to begin is the question: What did you hear?

Imagine wanting to eat a cookie before dinner, and your mom tells you no. She leaves the kitchen. No one else is around. You want a cookie, but you know it would be wrong. Your mom doesn't want you to ruin your appetite for dinner, and you don't have her permission. But the smell of the cookies is very tempting.

Today's Gospel text about Jesus takes place in a desert. He is tested there by Satan. In other words, the devil was tempting him. But Jesus did not give in.

Why was Jesus out in the desert in the first place?

God's Spirit led Jesus to the desert. He was alone for a while. He must have prayed. He might have spent some time thinking about God. He was thinking about what he would do next. Until this time, Jesus spent a lot of time near his home.

Do you remember how long Jesus stayed in the desert?

It was forty days.

Think about how long ago Christmas and New Year's were. That is about the same time that Jesus stayed in the desert. It was an excellent place to think and pray, but the desert was also dangerous.

What tells you it was dangerous?

Jesus was with the wild animals.

Even though there was danger, Jesus knew God would care for him.

What tells you about God's care and love?

The angels took care of him.

After forty days, Jesus left the desert. He was ready to do the work God wanted him to do. He began to teach people about God. He told them God's Kingdom was coming! What sort of kingdom would it be? A place where poor people were cared for, hungry, sick, or lonely would have someone to help them.

But Jesus told them another part of the story. Maybe the most important part. If they wanted God's Kingdom to come, they had to help. They had to stop doing bad things and start doing good things.

Don't be tempted to make poor choices. Focus on God and what he wants you to do with your life as Jesus did in the desert. Lent reminds us to do the same things.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith.

Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who became our brother and gave his life for us?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: We do believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Invite the children to think of the needs of others and to announce their petitions. The leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. It may be necessary for the leader to repeat and paraphrase the petition and conclude it with the cue for the response: For this, we pray. All respond to each petition by saying: Lord, hear our prayer. Sample intercessions are below.

Leader: Inspired by today's readings, let us call upon our loving God for our needs. Our response is: Lord, hear our prayer. **R./**

Lector: For the Church, may the spirit of God help the Church to tell the Good News in every place on earth, we pray: **R./**

For all people, that everyone will have someone to care for them when they need the help of others, we pray: R./

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children or add intercessions based on the Church's current needs, the world, or the local community.

Lector: For those who suffer when people are unkind, mean or violent towards them, we pray:

Leader: O God, you show us the love in others; send your love upon us and those for whom we pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children or add intercessions based on the Church's current needs, the world, or the local community.

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing.

Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, ON, adapted for children.
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