



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

First Sunday of Lent

Children's Liturgy of the Word

The First Sunday of Lent contrasts two choices: saying "no" to God and saying "yes" to God.

In the first reading from Genesis, Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden, where God provides everything they need. God asks them to trust Him and avoid eating from one tree. Tempted by the serpent, they doubt God and choose to disobey. This act of mistrust introduces sin into the world. When teaching children, you may want to emphasize that sin begins when we stop trusting God's goodness.

In the second reading, Saint Paul explains that although sin entered through Adam, salvation comes through Jesus. Where Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed. Jesus restores our friendship with God and gives us the grace to choose what is right.

In the Gospel, Jesus spends 40 days in the desert and is tempted by the devil three times. Unlike Adam, Jesus resists temptation and remains faithful to God. He models trust, self-control, and obedience.

The key teaching point for children is this: Lent is a time to practice saying "yes" to God. We will face temptations, but with Jesus' help, we can choose truth, kindness, and trust in God.

Background

Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7 explains God's creation of humanity, emphasizing our dignity as human beings made from the earth and brought to life by God's breath. We were placed in the Garden of Eden, where trees represented life and choices. It recounts the serpent tempting Eve, leading her to eat the forbidden fruit, resulting in opened eyes, shame, and covering themselves. This original sin disrupted the harmony of creation.

Psalms 51, attributed to David after his adultery and murder, is a penitential psalm that expresses profound contrition, acknowledges sin, and pleads for divine mercy and renewal.

Romans 5:12-19 Paul contrasts Adam's trespass—introducing universal sin and death—with Christ's grace, which superabounds, justifying and granting life to many. Sin's reign yields to Christ's justifying life.

Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus, led by the Spirit into the wilderness, fasts forty days and nights, then faces three temptations from the devil: (1) turn stones to bread to satisfy hunger—Jesus replies, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word from God's mouth"; (2) jump from the temple pinnacle, presuming angelic protection—Jesus counters, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test"; (3) worship Satan for worldly kingdoms—Jesus commands, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him alone." The devil departs; angels minister to Jesus. This portrays Christ's victory over sin's lures (flesh, presumption, pride), modelling Lenten resistance through Scripture.

Lent invites our repentance, like David; resists like Christ; and embraces fasting/prayer/almsgiving to reverse Adam's defeat toward Easter life.

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: (in these or similar words)

My dear children, as we begin our Lenten journey like Jesus in the desert, go now to your special time with God's Word. Listen well, say "No!" to temptations.

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

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Today is the First Sunday of Lent—a time to get ready for Easter by saying "yes" to God and "no" to bad choices, just like Jesus did.

Let's make the Sign of the Cross!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

READINGS

FIRST READING

Genesis 2.7-9, 16-18,2-5; 3.1-7++

A reading from the book of Genesis.

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'"

But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 51.1-2, 3-4a, 10-11, 12+15

R. Have mercy, O Lord, for we have sinned.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin. **R.**

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight. **R.**

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me. **R.**

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise. **R.**

SECOND READING

Romans 5.12, 17-19

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters:

Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, so death spread to all, because all have sinned. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one, Jesus Christ.

Therefore, just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so the act of righteousness of one leads to justification and life for all people.

For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one the many will be made righteous.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

GOSPEL

Matthew 4.1-11

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.

The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his Angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left him, and suddenly Angels came and waited on him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to listen to the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

Genesis 2.7-9, 16-18,2-5; 3.1-7++

God created man from dust and breathed life into him. God placed Adam in the garden of Eden. In the garden, God made many trees, including the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, telling Adam he could eat from any tree except this one, or he would die.

God then created Eve as Adam's partner. They were both naked and felt no shame.

The serpent asked Eve if God really said they couldn't eat from any tree. Eve replied that they could eat from all the trees except for the one in the middle of the garden, or they would die.

The serpent told her they wouldn't die; instead, eating from it would make them like God, knowing good and evil.

Seeing that the tree was good for food and pleasing to look at, Eve took the fruit and ate it, giving some to Adam, who also ate. Their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked, so they made clothes from fig leaves.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 51.1-2, 3-4a, 10-11, 12+15

R. Lord, forgive us, for we have sinned.

God, please give me mercy.

Show me your kindness.

Wash away my mistakes.

Clean my heart from my sins. R.

Lord, forgive me.

Make my heart strong and loving.

Lord, help me speak,

so I can praise you. R.

SECOND READING

Romans 5.12, 17-19

Children:

Sin entered the world through Adam, which affected everyone. But, just as Adam's wrongdoing led to death, Jesus offers forgiveness to everyone who has sinned. Listening to Jesus can lead to eternal life.

GOSPEL

Matthew 4.1-11

Jesus went into the wilderness and was tempted by the devil. He did not eat for forty days and nights and became very hungry.

The devil said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus replied, "It is written, 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city Jerusalem and set him on the highest point. He said, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; it is written, 'He will command his angels about you,' and 'They will lift you up so you won't strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered, "It is also written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Next, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. He said, "I will give you all these if you fall down and worship me." Jesus said, "Go away, Satan! It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and took care of him.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember 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? *Allow children to respond.*

Today, the scripture reminds us that everyone faces temptations, just like Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden and Jesus in the desert. But Jesus shows us how to say "No!" to bad choices and "Yes!" to God's love.

Imagine a garden called Eden, full of fruits and trees. God made Adam and Eve from dust, and there was one special tree they weren't supposed to touch—the tree of good and evil. A snake (the devil!) tricked Eve, saying, "*You will not die... you will be like God.*" Eve ate the fruit, gave some to Adam, and they hid because they felt bad, and they realized they were not wearing any clothes.

Why did they listen to the snake? *It promised something cool, but it ended up causing trouble!*

If you were Adam or Eve, what might trick you into eating the forbidden fruit today? *Sneaking cookies, cheating, etc.*

Fast-forward to Jesus! After being baptized, he went into the desert for 40 days, without food, and became hungry. The devil tempted Him three times:

1. Turn stones into bread! Jesus said, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."
2. Jump off the temple—angels will catch you! Jesus replied, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."
3. Worship me for all the world's kingdoms! Jesus shouted, "Away with you, Satan! Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

Jesus said no to food, safety, and power.

What's one temptation you face? *Grabbing a friend's toy, spending too much time on screens, etc.*

Pretend you're in the desert, hungry like Jesus.

What would you say to the devil?

These stories are connected. Adam and Eve fell, but Jesus, the new Adam, beat the devil for us! In Lent, we follow Jesus to Easter joy.

Alternate Reflection

Today, we begin a very important season in the Church called Lent. Lent is like a journey. For 40 days, we try to grow closer to God. We pray more, we make small sacrifices, and we try to make better choices.

In the first reading from Genesis, we hear about Adam and Eve. God gave them everything they needed. But they were tempted to disobey God. They chose their own way rather than God's.

In the Gospel from Matthew, we hear about Jesus in the desert. Jesus was also tempted — but He chose to trust God every time. Jesus went into the desert for 40 days. He prayed and fasted. He was very hungry. The devil tried to trick Him:

- "Turn these stones into bread."
- "Jump off the temple so angels catch you."
- "Bow to me, and I'll give you all the kingdoms."

Each time, Jesus said NO. He chose to trust God. Sometimes we are tempted too. Temptation is when we feel pulled to make a wrong choice — even when we know better.

Maybe:

- We want to be unkind.
- We want something right away and don't want to wait.
- We want to do what we want instead of what God wants.

Adam and Eve said yes to temptation. Jesus said no. Lent is our time to practice saying "no" to sin and "yes" to God.

Simple Teaching Points

- Temptation is not a sin — giving in is.
- Jesus understands our struggles.
- We can use prayer and God's Word to stay strong.
- Lent helps us practice choosing God.

What is one small sacrifice you can make this week?

What is one good choice you can make? Being kind to a sibling, telling the truth, sharing, praying.

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.

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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: I believe.

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

All: I believe.

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

All: I believe.

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

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Jesus shows us how to say "No!" to temptations, just like in the desert. Let us pray to God for the same strength. After each intercession, we all say, 'Lord, hear our prayer.'

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church, that Bishops, Priests, Deacons, and leaders preach God's Word strongly, as Jesus used Scripture against the devil. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For our families, that we pray together, share, and help each other during Lent like Jesus fasted. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For the whole world, that everyone turns from bad choices to God's love this Lent We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For all children, that we say no to temptations like the snake or devil, and choose God's way. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause]. We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. R:

The Leader says:

Jesus, you won over temptation for us. Hear our prayers, make us strong like you, and bring us to Easter joy. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and reflect on what they have heard and what they are now doing. Be mindful of children who may have difficulty finding their families.

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT: JOINING JESUS IN THE DESERT

With Host Dorothy Atuhaire Ssonko & Friends from Uganda Catholic Television



THE GOSPEL STORY (Matthew 4:1-11): JESUS' 40 DAYS

| IN THE DESERT | TEMPTATION 1 | TEMPTATION 2 | TEMPTATION 3 | VICTORY! |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| | | | | |
| The Holy Spirit led Jesus to fast & pray for 40 days and nights. | Devil: "Turn stones to bread!" Jesus: "No! We live by God's Word, not just." | Devil: "Jump! Angels will save you!" Jesus: "No! Do not test the Lord your God." | Devil: "Worship me for the world!" Jesus: "Away Satan! Worship God alone!" | The devil left, and angels came to help Jesus. |

OUR LENTEN PILLARS



WHAT WE CAN DO!



- Pray from your heart (like Jesus!)



- Read the Bible (Gospels like Matthew)



- Say NO to bad suggestions & temptations!



- Be brave & support each other!

MEMORY VERSE: "Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert." (Matthew 4:1)



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Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
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