

3: Lent (Ash Wednesday)

This one-week lesson should be undertaken during the week in which Ash Wednesday is celebrated.

FROM THE CURRICULUM

Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)

During this theme of work, the children will engage with the following knowledge and concepts from Level 2:

CHRISTIAN FAITH

Mystery of God

- God sent Jesus to show us how much he loves us and to teach us how to love others

Mystery of Jesus Christ

- Jesus spent forty days and forty nights in the wilderness praying to God his Father
- Jesus worked as a carpenter

WORD OF GOD

Sacred Scripture: Jesus' Public Life

- Jesus in the desert (Lk 4:1-13; Mt 4:1-11)

LITURGY AND PRAYER

Prayer

- Jesus prayed frequently and especially when he had important decisions to make

Prayer: Additional Prayers

- Blessing and giving of ashes

Liturgical Year

- Lent is a time of preparation for Holy Week and Easter – the most important feast in the Church's year
- Lent lasts for forty days because Jesus fasted in the desert for forty days and forty nights
- Lent is a time to turn back to God and believe the Good News
- Lent is a time for me to show the ways that I can be a friend like Jesus
- Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent when ashes are placed on the forehead of Catholics as a reminder to believe the Good News and to follow Jesus more closely

PRAYER SPACE

Place the following items in the prayer space as you begin this theme:

- Bible, open at Luke 4 (Jesus in the Desert)
- Candle
- Cross/Crucifix
- Holy water
- Rosary beads

As the theme progresses, the following items should be added to the prayer space:

- Purple/violet cloth (Lent)
- A mini-desert space

TEACHER NOTE

Faith Words

Ash Wednesday, Lent

For Memorisation

Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent





BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Lent is that period of time, beginning on Ash Wednesday, which is set aside for penance, fasting and almsgiving in preparation for the celebration of Easter. It is modelled in part on the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert before the beginning of his public ministry. Ash Wednesday is a day of fasting and abstinence. There are only two fast days in Ireland: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting means adults between the ages of eighteen and sixty can eat only one full meal a day. Abstinence in Ireland forbids the consumption of meat and applies to those over the age of fourteen. This obligation endures throughout life.

The children have been introduced to Lent every year from Junior Infants/P1 on. At that level, Lent was introduced as a time to share, reflecting the call for Christians to give alms (charity) during this holy season. In Senior Infants/P2, Lent was explored as a time to say sorry, a reflection of the Penitential nature of the season. In First Class/P3, we introduced the notion of 'giving up' for Lent. This year, children will be encouraged not only to 'give up' something for Lent but also to pray and to share what they have. This will follow their exploration of the story of Jesus in the desert.

OBJECTIVES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The children should be enabled to:

- *Understanding:*
 - » Name Lent as a time of preparation for celebrating the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday) and Easter
 - » Reflect on the fact that followers of Jesus undertake Lenten promises as a sign that they want to live like Jesus
 - » Identify the trifold nature of Lenten promises

Communicating and Participating:

- » Explore and retell the story of Jesus in the desert in their own words, according to their own ability
- » Work with others to prepare a classroom desert space
- » Participate in a prayer service to mark Ash Wednesday

FAITH FORMATION GOALS

That the children would also:

- Enter into the spirit of Lent by undertaking a trifold Lenten promise

YOU WILL NEED

- Materials to make a mini-desert space: a container such as a biscuit tin or baking tray, sand, twigs, pebbles, cacti, etc.

AT A GLANCE

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

- Preparing

PRAYER

- Psalm 139

Let's Look

SCRIPTURE

- 'Jesus in the Desert'

POEM

- 'Jesus Went into the Desert'

CHATTING

- About Lent

Let's Learn

CHATTING

- About Lenten Promises

CHILDREN'S BOOK

- In School: p. 58
- At Home: p. 59

Let's Live

END OF THEME PRAYER SERVICE

- The Prayer Service included at the end of this theme should be done on Ash Wednesday.

Prayer Service

Let's Look ...



ONLINE

INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

Preparing

Introduce this Interactive Activity in which children choose the best way for people to prepare for things that they have to do. Once the activity is complete, chat using these or similar questions:

- Do you think it is important to prepare for things, like the people in the pictures? Think about the man who was training for the race ... why was it important that he be prepared? Could he just turn up on the day of the race without having prepared, and expect to win? Why or why not?
- Do you remember a time when you had to prepare for something? How did you prepare? Let's Think-Pair-Share.
- Not too long ago, we were preparing for Christmas. What is the name of that special time? What kinds of things did we do during Advent to prepare for Christmas?
- We're now coming up to a very special time called Lent. It is also a time of preparation. Does anyone know what we are preparing for during the season of Lent? What else do you know about Lent?

PRAYER

Psalm 139

Sign of the Cross

T: Today, we will change the cloth in the prayer space from green to purple/violet. This will remind us that we are entering into the season of Lent. God will be with us during Lent, just as God is with us at every other time of the year.

Change the cloth on the prayer space

T: Listen to the words of this psalm. It is taken from the Bible.

You can also read this psalm from The Catholic Children's Bible (Ps 139:1-6):

**Lord, you have examined me and you know me.
You know everything I do;
from far away you understand all my thoughts.
You see me, whether I am working or resting;
you know all my actions.
Even before I speak, you already know what I will say.
You are all around me on every side; you protect me with your power.
Your knowledge of me is too deep; it is beyond my understanding.**

T: This psalm reminds us that God is with us. God is with us today. God was with us yesterday. And God will be with us tomorrow. Let's pray together, 'Loving God, you are always with us'.

C: Loving God, you are always with us.

T: When we are awake and when we are asleep, loving God, you are always with us.

C: Loving God, you are always with us.

T: When we are chatting and when we are quiet, loving God, you are always with us.

C: Loving God, you are always with us.

T: When we are preparing and when we are celebrating, loving God, you are always with us.

C: Loving God, you are always with us.

T: When we are good and when we are not so good, loving God, you are always with us.

C: Loving God, you are always with us.

T: When we are happy and when we are sad, loving God, you are always with us.

C: Loving God, you are always with us.

Sign of the Cross

Let's Learn ...

SCRIPTURE

'Jesus in the Desert'

Begin by recalling some of the scenarios from the interactive activity in which people were preparing for various things. Then explain that, in his life, Jesus also prepared for the important work that

God sent him to do. Read 'Jesus in the Desert' below. Explain that it comes from the Gospel according to Luke.



ONLINE

Teacher Tip:

Look through the desert images online so that children can get a sense of what kind of place it is.

'Jesus in the Desert'

(Adapted from Lk 4:1-13; Mt 4:1-11)



By the time he was about thirty years old, Jesus decided he was going to begin the work God had sent him to do. God the Father wanted Jesus

to show the people how much he loved them, and to teach them how to love one another.

To prepare for this work, Jesus went into the desert close to where he lived. The desert was a dry, hot place where no one lived and

very little grew. Jesus knew he would be all alone. He stayed in the desert for forty days and forty nights. During that time he ate nothing. He prayed to God, and asked for help to do what he needed to do.

Three times during those forty days, Jesus was tempted to break his fast. He was also tempted to leave the desert. But he did not. God sent his angels to come and help Jesus, and to give him the strength he needed.

When Jesus came out of the desert, he left his home and his work as a carpenter in Nazareth, and began to travel around, teaching people about God and healing those who were sick.

Having read the Scripture story, check for understanding using questions such as, 'How long did Jesus spend in the desert?' Then dig deeper using these or similar questions:

- I wonder ... how do you think Jesus felt when he was all alone in the desert for those forty days and forty nights? How do you think it felt to go without food for that long?
- How many times was Jesus tempted to leave the desert? Do you remember a time when you were tempted to do something that wasn't the right thing? Did you do it, or were you able to stay strong, like Jesus?

- Do you think Jesus' forty days in the desert were a good way for him to prepare for the work that God wanted him to do? Why or why not?

Conclude by preparing a mini-desert space with the children. Place this in the prayer space as a reminder of the time that Jesus spent in the desert. Ask the children to help you add sand, twigs, pebbles and cacti, and anything else representative of the desert. You can make this in the prayer space itself or within a smaller container such as a biscuit tin, baking tray, etc.

Prayer Space:

Display the mini-desert space in the prayer space for the lenten season.

POEM

'Jesus Went into the Desert'

Read the following poem for the children. Then demonstrate the actions that go with each line. Where possible, allow the children to walk around the room to do these actions, as you read the poem.

Jesus went into the Desert

Jesus went into the desert. (*slow steps*)
He stopped. (*stop*)

He fasted. (*hands over mouth*)
He was hungry. (*hands over stomach*)
He looked. (*hands cupped around eyes*)
He listened. (*hands cupped around ears*)
He thought. (*hands cupped around head*)
Jesus came out of the desert. (*slow steps*)
He praised God. (*hands raised*)
He loved others. (*shake hands with those nearest*)

Teacher Tip:

Watch the video of a class saying this poem and doing the actions.

CHATTING

Teacher Tip:

You may like to introduce the Trócaire box at this point, as an example of the ways in which the followers of Jesus can show their love and concern for others during Lent.

About Lent

Begin by recalling how long Jesus spent in the desert and what he did during that time: he prayed and fasted. Then explain to the children that, today, the followers of Jesus set aside a time during the year when they too could pray and give things up, although not in the same way as Jesus did. We call this time 'Lent'. Chat with the children about Lent using these or similar questions:

- Jesus prayed and fasted because he was preparing to do the work that God sent him to do. In fact, Jesus prayed a lot and especially when he faced important decisions. What time of the year are we preparing for when we pray and fast during Lent? What special time of the year does Lent lead up to?

- Jesus fasted while he was in the desert. We don't need to fast completely – that wouldn't be a wise thing to do – but is there anything that we could 'fast from' or give up during Lent?
- Lent is a time for the followers of Jesus to show the ways in which they can live like Jesus. We can do this by praying and giving things up but, I wonder ... what other things could we do to show that we want to live like Jesus? *(Acts of kindness, generosity and charity would be particularly appropriate here, focusing on the third 'pillar' of Lent)*

TEACHER NOTE: When discussing things to fast from/give things up with children, it is important to keep the conversation as realistic as possible. For example, there is no point in children saying that they could fast from television or computers for the whole of Lent if that is something they are unlikely to do. Perhaps, however, they could suggest giving up those things for weekdays but not Saturdays and Sundays during Lent, for example. Where appropriate, share your own experiences of 'giving up' things during Lent.



Let's Live ...



WHAT HAVE YOU TAUGHT?

Before Jesus began to do the work that God had sent him to do, he spent forty days and forty nights in the desert. During this time, he prayed to God, and he fasted. As the followers of Jesus, we too have a time during the year when we fast from something in particular, when we pray in a particular way, and when we try to be more generous than usual. We call this time 'Lent', and it helps us to prepare for celebrating the Easter Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday) and the season of Easter.

CHATTING

About Lenten Promises

Begin by recalling the three different things that the followers of Jesus can do during Lent: praying more than usual, 'giving up' something in particular, and being especially kind and generous. Invite the children to give as many examples as they can of each of these things, and record them on the board.

CHILDREN'S MATERIALS

In School

P. 58: Children read the story, 'Jesus in the Desert'.

At Home

P. 59: Children brainstorm the things people can do for Lent. They are invited to chat with their families about what they will choose to do for Lent this year. There is also a prayer to say together.

Prayer Service

Theme: Ash Wednesday

TEACHER NOTE: This prayer service should be done on Ash Wednesday. You may like to check with the school chaplain to see if he and/or a parish representative is available to come into your classroom to distribute ashes to the children. If not, you may be able to collect ashes from the parish church, and to distribute them to the children yourself. You do not need to be a priest to distribute ashes on Ash Wednesday. Where the distribution of ashes is not possible at all, encourage the children to go to the church with their families after school to receive ashes.

If possible, have the children sit around or close to the prayer space. If this is not possible, have the children turn their chairs towards the prayer space.

Opening Song: 'Grow in Love' (Track 1, p. 138)

Sign of the Cross

T: We begin by lighting our candle. Our candle reminds us that God is with us.

Light candle

T: Before Jesus started to do the work that God had sent him to do, he decided that it would be good for him to go away and be on his own for a while. He wanted to go somewhere quiet, some place where there would be no distractions, some place where he could pray. So, Jesus went into the desert. While he was there, he did not eat. Three times he was tempted to break his fast, but, with God's help, he stayed strong.

Let's take some time today to talk to God in prayer, just as Jesus did when he was in the desert. Repeat after me: feet on the floor. *(children repeat)*

Hands on your knees. *(children repeat)*

Shoulders back. *(children repeat)*

(In a much softer tone) Eyes closed. *(children repeat, also in a softer tone)*

(pause)

(Softly and slowly) Take a big breath in. *(children breathe in)*

(Softly and slowly) Let a big breath out. *(children breathe out)*

(Almost whisper) Take a big breath in. *(children breathe in)*

(Whisper) Let a big breath out. *(children breathe out)*

Your body is still. All is quiet. And if you listen really carefully, maybe you will be able to hear your heart beating. *(pause)*

Picture yourself in the desert. *(pause)*

Feel the hot sun on your skin. *(pause)*

Feel the heat of the sand on your feet. *(pause)*

You are not alone in the desert. Jesus is with you. *(pause)*

Jesus is here to prepare to do God's work. He is preparing to teach people about God's love, and to bring God's love to the world by caring for people who are sick, including those who are left out. *(pause)*

Using your inside voice, tell Jesus how you can also bring God's love to the world. Can you care for people who are sick? How do you include those who are left out? Talk with Jesus now. *(pause)*

Listen to what Jesus has to say to you. *(pause)*

Now it's time to leave the desert. When you are ready, you can open your eyes again. *(pause)*

T: Every year, we celebrate a special time called Lent. During Lent, we remember the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert. We call the first day of Lent 'Ash Wednesday'. Today is that day. On Ash Wednesday, the followers of Jesus wear ashes on their forehead as a sign that Jesus is their leader, and that they are going to try in a special way to



live like him during Lent. These ashes have been blessed by _____ (*name local priest*).
Invite the children to come forward one by one, and place the ashes on their forehead in the sign of the cross. As you do so you can say, '[Name], live as a follower of Jesus'. Play Track 3, 'Reflective Music' as the children proceed to receive their ashes.

T: Jesus, our friend,
You spent forty days in the desert, preparing to do
God's work.

May we, during this holy season of Lent, try our best to follow you, and to grow in love with God and with others.

C: Amen.

Sign of the Cross

Closing Song: 'Grow in Love' (Track 1, p. 138)

