



# Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

## First Sunday of Lent, Year A

Violet

*Wait patiently*

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7, Psalm 51, Matthew 4:1-11

*This is the First Sunday of Lent. Have you ever thought about doing something that you know is not right? We call this 'temptation'. Even Jesus had to face temptations in his life. God wants all of us to make right choices, and this can be hard for us to do. In Lent, the forty days when we prepare for Easter, we will be encouraged to keep in touch with God, make right choices, be less selfish and more generous.*



### Leader's Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for the First Sunday of Lent, starting with the Gospel. (You may choose to use or focus on one reading only, but remember that the Gospel may not be omitted. The Second Reading is omitted in the Lectionary for Masses with Children.) Then look through the preparatory material that follows and familiarise yourself with the Liturgy Outline.

### GOSPEL

Matthew 4:1-11

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert, so that the devil could test him. After Jesus went without eating for forty days and nights, he was very hungry. Then the devil came to him and said, "If you are God's Son, tell these stones to turn into bread."

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures say: 'No one can live only on food. People need every word that God has spoken.'"

Next, the devil took Jesus to the holy city and had him stand on the highest part of the temple. The devil said, "If you are God's Son, jump off. The Scriptures say: 'God will give his angels orders about you. They will catch you in their arms, and you will not hurt your feet on the stones.'"

Jesus answered, "The Scriptures also say, 'Don't try to test the Lord your God!'"

Finally, the devil took Jesus up on a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms on earth and their power. The devil said to him, "I will give all this to you, if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus answered, "Go away, Satan! The Scriptures say: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left Jesus and angels came to help him.

*If the first Reading from Genesis is to be used this Sunday, in the Liturgy of the Word with Children, leaders should be cautious not to present the story as historical. As the concepts of sin and nakedness presented in the narrative would be difficult for the children to grasp with full understanding it is recommended that the focus be on the Gospel.*

### **A reading from the book of the Genesis**

The Lord God took some earth and used it to make a man. God breathed into the man's nose, and the man started breathing. The Lord God had made a garden in a place called Eden, which was in the east, and he put the man there.

The Lord made all kinds of beautiful trees and all kinds of fruit trees grow in the garden. Two other trees were in the middle of the garden. One of the trees gave life, and the other showed the difference between right and wrong.

The snake was sneakier than any of the other wild animals that the Lord God had made. One day it came to the woman and asked, "Did God tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?"

The woman answered, "God said we could eat fruit from any tree in the garden except the one in the middle. He told us not to eat fruit from that tree or even touch it. If we do, we will die."

"No, you won't die!" the snake replied. God understands what will happen on the day you eat fruit from that tree. You will see what you have done, and you will know the difference between right and wrong, just as God does."

The woman stared at the fruit. It looked beautiful and tasty. She wanted the wisdom that it would give her, and she ate some of the fruit. She gave some to her husband Adam, and he ate it too. At once they saw what they had done, and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together to make clothes for themselves.

### *PSALM*

Psalm 51

**Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

You are kind, God! Please have pity on me. **R**

You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins. **R**

Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again. **R**

Make me as happy as you did when you saved me; make me want to obey! **R**

Help me to speak, and I will praise you, Lord. **R**

*Scriptures from the Lectionary for Masses with Children (CEV)  
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## *Before we begin*

*If the first Reading from Genesis is to be used this Sunday, in the Liturgy of the Word with Children, leaders should be cautious not to present the story as historical. As the concepts of sin and nakedness presented in the narrative would be difficult for the children to grasp with full understanding it is recommended that the focus be on the Gospel. "Original Sin", as it is commonly called, is a difficult concept for pre-adolescent children.*

The first eleven chapters of Genesis are considered by scholars to be pre-history and as such sacred myth. Myth is **not** to be understood as something that was once believed by a population to be true that has now been proven false. The literary form of myth is the telling of an imaginative story using symbols to explain things beyond our human understandings and comprehension.

While a myth may be imaginative, it speaks and reveals the truths of the thing it is explaining. Myth speaks about reality. A fundamental question that myth has always attempted to answer is where did the earth come from and why are we here? Throughout human history, we have tried to explain the creation of the world through the limited means of our own understanding of time and space.

The stories of creation written by the ancient Israelites were not intended to mislead, but to convey the power of God's love for his people. The stories the Israelites wrote on creation were made to show the relationship between God and humanity. Unlike creation stories from other ancient cultures, the Israelites believed that God did not create humankind as an afterthought or by mistake, but created humanity in the "image and likeness" of himself (Genesis 1:26). Unlike many other religions of the ancients in which hundreds or even thousands of gods created the world and humankind for their use as slaves, the Israelites believed that God alone completed the task and he did it with love.

The author's intention in the first story of creation was not to give a scientifically accurate account of how the world and humanity came to be but, rather, was to show the intimate relationship and involvement of God with his creation and the love that he poured into doing so. The second story of creation in Genesis (Genesis 2-3) is less about creation of the world and more about why we as human beings suffer. The man and woman are created in the Garden of Eden and given free reign to do whatever they want except one thing: eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In this story the tree represents all human beings choice to act contrary to the way God wants us to live. Eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil by Adam and Eve symbolize sin, something that was freely chosen by both of them. With our ability to sin, our knowledge of evil which directly affects our relationship with God increases, causing us to grow further from the hopes God has for us.

The Catholic Church teaches in the Catechism that the account of the fall in Genesis 3, "uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history."(Catechism, 390)

## *Background to the Readings for Leaders*

Two written traditions of the Creation story were combined in the Genesis scriptures. Today's first reading is the older of these original traditions, and pictures God as a skilled artisan with an intimate relationship in the nurturing of humanity. Today's gospel follows immediately from the baptism of Jesus, and speaks to us of these very real and human temptations that Jesus suffered as Satan disputed the claim that he was the Son of God. The original Adam of Creation is replaced by Jesus, who loves God above all things. He does not repeat the mistakes of the first Adam – his love of God transcends all things, even the temptations of the master of temptations. Jesus makes his choice firm as he rejects Satan,

using the Scriptures as his authority in response. Matthew depicts Jesus as the new Moses – the forty days in the desert recalls the forty days Moses spent on the mountain and the forty years the Israelites spent in the wilderness.

### *Images from the Readings*

- Very hungry
- People need God's Word
- Go away, Satan!
- Angels came to help him
- We need to trust God
- God would always want the best for us



### *Reflection for Leaders*

The readings for the first Sunday of Lent set the scene for the next six weeks of Sabbath 'time out'. Lent lavishes on us the grace and the space for 'time out' - time to reflect on the treasure that is our faith, time to reflect on our lives, to be still and to pray. In the gospel account for the first Sunday of Lent, we find Jesus having some 'time out' of his own in the desert. After his baptism, Jesus was driven into the wilderness by the Spirit to reflect and to pray for forty days! What happens to Jesus in the desert? The desert or wilderness was seen as a place of trial, a place of aloneness, a place in which all is revealed, for there is simply nowhere to hide! It is the place in which Jesus is forced to come face to face with himself and his identity. During the season of Lent we asked to reflect on our identity as daughters and sons of God, men and women made in God's image, and how we are called to die to self and become alive in Christ. In this season of autumn (in the Southern Hemisphere) as the leaves fall, and we seek to give of ourselves to others, and place ourselves vulnerably in prayer before our God, however we might take upon ourselves the naked reality of the bare branches of the Tree upon which hung the Saviour of the world.

### *Reflecting on the Readings with the children*

Before Sunday read over the suggested discussion points given in the Leader's Liturgy Outline. With the 8-12 year olds: First, listen to the children's own responses to the Reading/s and then, if needed, use some of the discussion starters suggested.

With the 5-7 year olds: Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'.

### *Suggested Focus*

Prepare a focus for the area where the children's Liturgy of the Word is to be held:

*Hessian, Lectionary, a candle, a simple cross and some stones/rocks sand. A collection of autumn leaves, and some leaves cut from card with some Lenten practices written – eg set table, make bed, dry dishes, share with others, cheer up someone who is sick, forgive someone, etc.*



# LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

## First Sunday of Lent, Year A

At a suitable moment after the Opening Rites, but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are presented with the Children's Lectionary and a candle and sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

*INVITATION – Pōwhiri* I invite the children to join in the procession for their celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

**To the Minister of the Word:** Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

Receive this candle as the light of Christ who is present in his Word.

### *PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS – Te Kapa o te Pukapuka Tapu*

#### *WELCOME – Ko te whakataua*

**Leader:** O God, help us like to Jesus, to pray to you when we are alone or afraid. Help us this Lent to be kind and helpful to our family and friends.

**R** Amen.

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#### *First Reading: Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7*

(if used)

The Word of the Lord / Ko te Kupu a te Ariki  
**Thanks be to God / Whakamoemiti ki te Atua**

*Psalm 51* (if used)

**Response: Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned.**

D G A D Bm A D A

Praise the God of all com- pas- sion, Lord of hea - ven, Lord of earth.

D G A/C# D G A A7 D

He is king of all cre - a- tion, he is mer - cy, he is love.

### Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

**Minister of the Word:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

**Children:** **Glory to you, O Lord / Korōria ki ā koe, e te Ariki**

**At the end of the Gospel:** The Gospel of the Lord

**Children:** **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ / Kia whakanuia rā koe, e te Ariki, e Hēhu Karaiti.**

## REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH THE CHILDREN – Whai Whakaaro

**8-12 year olds:** *Suggested Beginning:* A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

- This week we hear that Jesus went into the desert on his own for forty days. Why do you think he did this? (not to get away from others but to spend time praying and thinking.)
- Do you know what 'temptation' means? (thinking about and being drawn to do something that you know is wrong)
- Jesus was faced with temptations just as we are. Do you think it was easy for Jesus to be good and make right
- This is a special time in the Church year called Lent. There are no flowers in the church, and we see the purple cloth used around the church and in Father's vestments.
- It is a time when we pray and prepare for Easter. During this time we remember to think carefully about the choices that we make and think about what is most important to us. What sort of choices do you think God wants us to make this Lent?
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**5-7 year olds:** Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'

## LITURGICAL ACTION – *Ko te Ritenga Karakia*

Invite the children to take an autumn leaf cut-out card home and put the Lenten practice (or one of their own choice) into action during the week.



## PROFESSION OF FAITH –

### *Panui o te Whakapono*

We believe in God the Father,  
who made the whole world.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
who was born in Bethlehem  
and lived among us,  
who died on the cross for us,  
and rose from the dead.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit  
who brings life and love to us all.  
We believe that the Church is one family,  
and that one day  
we will share everlasting life  
with God in heaven.  
Amen.

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL – *Te Īnoinga o te Hunga Whakapono*

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

**Leader:** God knows our needs and listens to our prayers, so let us bring them in confidence:

- We pray for our families, our friends, and our school teachers  
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- We pray for people who alone or who are hungry  
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- We pray that we might make good choices  
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- We pray for faith to keep believing in Jesus  
Let us pray to the Lord **R** **Lord hear our prayer**  
or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

**Leader:** Loving God, listen to the prayers we make in the name of Jesus

**All:** **Amen.**

The children rejoin the assembly before the prayers over the gifts.