***LSW***

children

Year C

### Fourth Sunday in Advent

**Images**

Praising Mother and Son

**Points to note**

This is the final Sunday of Advent. And after all the exciting anticipation from John the Baptist, we take time out to praise the Lord and His Mother as we draw closer to his coming on Christmas Day.

The session then can end on a bit of a devotional note if you can get the children to calmly and solemnly recite the Hail Mary. If you do, draw attention to the words said by Elizabeth in the prayer.

If you are able to, prepare the Magnificat on a board so that the children can also say the prayer together. It is the song of praise that follows on from this reading. The Magnificat is also said in the Evening Prayer, recited by every priest and religious as well as many devout lay Catholics every evening throughout the world. If you think about it, somewhere in the world it would be evening at any one time. So, somewhere in the world there would be Catholics saying the Evening Prayer. So, remind the children before they say the Magnificat that they are accompanying someone somewhere in the world in their Evening Prayer when they say the Magnificat.

**Liturgy**

Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia!

I am the handmaid of the Lord:

let what you have said be done to me

Alleluia!

## Gospel

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And also with you.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Luke

*All:*  Glory to you O Lord

(Lk 1:39-44)

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, ‘Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.’

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Discussion**

*Go through the story again but this time, explain who each person is. I would expect everyone to know how Mary is but explain that this story is when she is already pregnant with the Baby Jesus for two months. (Well, we don’t really know how many months pregnant is really was but we celebrate the Annunciation (when Jesus was conceived) 25 March and the Visitation (this story) 31 May.*

*Elizabeth is a cousin of Mary but she was very old when she became pregnant with a baby, by the blessing of God. The baby is actually John the Baptist, the same one we read about in the previous two Sundays. So, Jesus and John the Baptist were cousins because their mothers were cousins.*

*Discuss the point of the reading when Mary met Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth in her old age is pregnant with child and so Mary went over to visit her even though she was pregnant herself.*

*When Elizabeth saw Mary, she greeted Mary. Note the words that she used. It is the second line of the Hail Mary prayer. (The first line is the words that the angel Gabriel used to greet Mary during the Annunciation). So, her way of greeting Mary is deemed to be as good as the angel Gabriel’s until generations of Catholics since then hves been echoing them when we wish to praise the Mother of God.*

*Also, note that at the same time the baby leapt in the womb. Ask the children what do they think the baby was doing jumping about in the womb. Likely it was in happiness. Do you think it was happiness on meeting Mother Mary or Baby Jesus? I think it was the latter. So, even before he was born, John the Baptist has been heralding the coming of Jesus.*

*So, paint the scene well: Mother-to-be greets and praises Mother-to-be. Baby-in-the-womb meets and praises Baby-in-the–womb. Quite a scene, isn’t it?*

*Discuss with the children, how they would greet Jesus if they meet him coming. After all, Advent is the time we all think about how we wish to greet Jesus as we await his coming. How we greet Jesus is not just what and how we say but also how we prepare our hearts to receive him when he comes into our hearts.*

Prayer

Pray the Hail Mary but for today, ask the children to emphasise the words of Elizabeth in the second line.

If you have time and you have prepared the words, pray the Magnificat. Explain to the children that the Magnificat is the song that Mary sang to praise God after she was praised by Elizabeth.