### LSW

children

BEING IN LENT

Lent comes from an Old English word, which means *spring*.  It has the same Germanic root word as *long*, which denotes how the days lengthen in spring. There is great significance in this choice of the word.  Spring is seen as the season of renewal.  Trees that seem dead in winter bud and come back to life in spring.  Sheep have lambs in spring so that the little lambs will have the most time to grow before the onset of winter.  Spring, & Lent, are therefore the seasons of new life, the new life of Jesus that we will celebrate at Easter.

Lent lasts for forty days but if you count the days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday, there are 46 days in all.  It is forty if you exclude the Sundays.  That is why, technically, we refer to the Sundays as Sundays *in* Lent and not Sundays *of* Lent.  The Church's official name for Lent is *the Period of Forty Days*.

During all of Lent, the church is stripped of all decorations, including flowers, banners, etc.  We also do not sing the joyous Alleluia at mass, being replaced by the *Glory and Praise*.  The Gloria is not sung, and only recited if there is a major feast.

In the past, there used to be a 17-day period of preparation before Ash Wednesday, a period of preparation for the period of preparation, you may say.  Today, that period of preparation is no longer religious but has become the carnival season.

In Brazil, it could last 46 days to mirror the duration of Lent. The famous carnival is the one in Rio de Janiero.  That is held on a long weekend (Friday to Tuesday), during which everyone parties to their heart's content before they start their fasting and penitence in Lent.

The original carnival is the *carnevale* in Venice, which has just been recently revived.  That is where the meaning of the word comes from: *carni* (which means *meat*) and *levare* (which means *put away*).  Carnival, therefore, means *goodbye to meat*.  So, the next time you see the carnival in Rio, do you think those people are partying to say goodbye to meat?

Lent is also the final and intense period for catechumens preparing for baptism at Easter.  In fourth century Jerusalem, catechumens had to attend classes for three hours every day in Lent!  Today, they are presented to the congregation every Sunday in Lent to be scrutinised for their worthiness for baptism.  Traditionally, they prepare for the baptism with a six day fast and baptised Catholics join the fasting in solidarity with the catechumens.

Year A

**First Sunday in Lent**

**Images**

Preparing for Jesus sacrifice

**Points to note**

Lent is the preparation for the climax of the Church year. There is a lot to cover for these six weeks (five if you exclude Palm Sunday, when the Passion story should be told). As such, I am covering the topics for discussions over the three years.

The first Sunday in Lent his year will be an introduction to Lent as in the penitential spirit to prepare for the Holy Week. In Year B, I will discuss the point of our own sacrifice while Year C will focus on the idea of promises.

**Liturgy**

*Explain that during the penitential season of Lent, we do not sing the Alleluia, which is normally reserved for joyous occasion. Instead during Lent, we sing the Praise and Glory to God.*

Acclamation before the Gospel

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

Man does not live on bread alone,

but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory!

Gospel

*Discuss with the children about the new season of the Christian calendar that we are entering. This is available in the end panel of this leaflet & for a more complete explanation, at* [*Soundbites about Lent and Easter*](http://childrenlivingthesundayword.blogspot.com/2013/10/soundbites-on-lent-easter-season.html)

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And also with your spirit.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew

*All:*  Glory to you O Lord

(Mt 4:1-11)

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.’ But he replied, ‘Scripture says:

*Man does not live on bread alone*

*but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’*

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. ‘If you are the Son of God’ he said ‘throw yourself down; for scripture says:

*He will put you in his angels’ charge,*

*and they will support you on their hands*

*in case you hurt your foot against a stone.’*

Jesus said to him, ‘Scripture also says:

*You must not put the Lord your God to the test.’*

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. ‘I will give you all these’ he said, ‘if you fall at my feet and worship me.’ Then Jesus replied, ‘Be off, Satan! For scripture says:

*You must worship the Lord your God,*

*and serve him alone.’*

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

This is the Good News of the Lord

**Dialogue**

*This discussion should be kept short as the bulk of the discussions take place before the reading.*

Jesus was tempted for forty days and forty nights. Can you think of any other stories in the Bible where the number forty turned up? *Noah's flood lasted for forty days; the Israelites wandered around the dessert for forty years; Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai. In each of these stories, there is an element of waiting or penitence. That is why we have forty days of Lent. You can run through some of the points in the end panel if not already discussed.*

What was Jesus tempted for? *Food against hunger (the bread); Testing God (expecting angels to save him); Power (in exchange for all the kingdoms). Explain that each of these three temptations has a deeper meaning:*

* *Food represents wealth. Do we get greedy for things that we don’t need like that beautiful dress when we have plenty, that new gadget because others have it?*
* *Testing God means doubting him and others has asked to take care of us. Do we always worry about bad things happening and not trusting that God will always let things happen for the best?*
* *Power means we want to control people and make bad things happen to them. Do we sometimes lie to get someone else into trouble or make people promise us things by sneaky means?*

*These are all the temptations similar to those that Jesus went through in the desert. During Lent, God wants us to think about our temptations and at least for 40 days, not give in to them. Not be greedy; Trust God; Do not lie or be sneaky.*

*End with inviting the children to commit to doing something concrete and specific to resist any of these temptations during Lent.*