

# Order of worship

## Gathering

Give each child an adhesive-backed heart and tell the group that these hearts represent their love. Then ask the children to give their love to someone in need—symbolically—by going to the wall and pasting their heart on or near a picture of a needy person. (If the children need more direction, define *needy person* as anyone needing special care because of a physical disability, poverty, etc.)

## Opening Prayer

Sing the Gathering song as the children slowly file past the wall of pictures and briefly touch each photo of a needy person. You take the lead so that they will see what to do and imitate you. Eventually lead the children back to the worship space to sit down.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

## First Reading: Isaiah 43:22-25

**Leader:** We honor God every time we show love for the needy. In today's First Reading, God talks to people of ancient times who have stopped honoring him with temple sacrifices—things like meat that was always used to help the poor. You may be surprised to hear what God has to say to these people.

At the end of the reading:

**Leader:** The word of the Lord

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Psalm: Psalm 41:1-2abcd, 3 and 13

The Psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the Psalm, sing or announce the response. (If using a sung response, see Music.)

**Leader:** Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

**Children:** Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

## Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

## Proclaim the Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

**Leader:** In the First Reading, we learned that when we neglect prayer and good deeds, God is always willing to give us another chance. Now let's listen to the Gospel, which is about four people who did something good for a crippled man they knew.

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.

**Children:** And with your spirit.

**Leader:** A reading from the Gospel of Mark.

**Children:** † Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end of the reading:

**Leader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

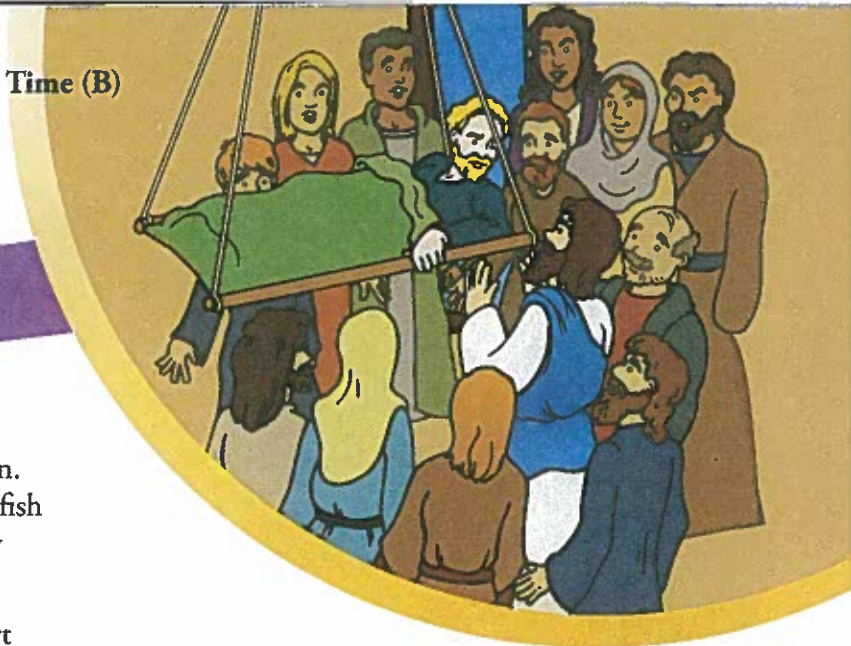
**Children:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## Homily

First, share with the children information from this week's Scripture Background on how houses were built in Jesus' time. Make sure they understand exactly what the four people did to help the disabled man.

Then ask these questions:

- Even for adults, do you think it was easy to carry the disabled man across town and up the stairs to the roof of the house where Jesus was? If you had been with the four people, could you have helped out in any way? (Open doors for them, make sure their path was clear, chase away barking dogs, etc.)
- How much time do you suppose it took the four people to help the man?
- What else could the four people have done that day, instead of helping their friend? (Attend Jesus' interesting talk; stay home and sleep; get extra work done; etc.)



Make these observations:

- These four people obviously had big hearts or else they would not have worked so hard to help the man.
- People with little hearts, on the other hand, are selfish and won't give up their time to help the needy. They are blind to the suffering of others.

Ask one child to represent a person with a little heart who is blind to others' suffering. Stand the child before the wall of photos, and give him or her the little adhesive-backed heart. Blindfold and spin the child around three times as for the game "Pin the Tail on the Donkey." Then direct the child to attach the small heart to a photo of a needy person. End the demonstration with these observations:

- When we live in sin and selfishness, we are like the blindfolded person with the little heart.
- If we ever *do* help anyone, it is completely by accident.
- But God wants us to help others by choice!

## Profession of Faith

**Leader:** Please stand now for our Profession of Faith. The response to each prayer question is, "Yes, I do."

**Children:** Yes, I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God, our loving Creator, who made and cares for all of us, especially the needy?

**Children:** Yes, I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who came to earth to love and serve all of us, especially the needy?

**Children:** Yes, I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who stays with us that we will grow in love, especially for the needy?

**Children:** Yes, we do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in the holy, Catholic Church, begun by Jesus to love and care for all, especially the needy?

**Children:** Yes, I do.

## Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** We are the Church founded by Jesus. Right this minute, let's show our love for others, especially the needy, by praying for them with all our heart. Our response to each petition will be, "Rescue them in times of trouble."

**Children:** Rescue them in times of trouble.

**Leader:** For the Holy Father and all leaders of the Church, especially those with big problems to solve at this time, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Rescue them in times of trouble.

**Leader:** For each and every member of our parish, especially those who are sick or disabled, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Rescue them in times of trouble.

**Leader:** For each and every person living in our town, especially those who are in a shelter, halfway house, nursing home, or hospital, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Rescue them in times of trouble.

Invite the children to add their own petitions.

**Leader:** Loving God, we know that you rescue the needy in times of trouble. Sometimes you do this with the help of angels, and sometimes you do this with our help. Never let us miss a chance to help a person in need. This we ask through Christ, our Lord.

**Children:** Amen.

## Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. Remind them to take a leaflet home and share it with their families.

## Prepare with Prayer

*I offer you my heart, LORD God,  
and I trust you.*

*You are honest and merciful  
and you teach sinners  
how to follow your path.*

Psalm 25:1, 8

### Today's Readings

Genesis 9:8-15

Psalm 25:4-5abc, 6 and 7cd

Mark 1:12-15

.....  
*During Lent, we look at what keeps us from  
following Jesus into his kingdom.*

## Scripture Background

Today's First Reading comes from the Genesis account of the great flood. As noted by Lawrence Boadt in *The Catholic Study Bible*, Noah's story follows a pattern typical of several ancient Bible stories: (1) God acts with love toward people; (2) the people rebel; (3) God warns of coming disaster; (4) God administers a just punishment for people's sins; (5) God again acts with love toward people.

Given this pattern, we are being "biblically incorrect" if we look at the flood as a ruthless destruction of the earth. Rather, it is a helpful cleansing. God used the flood to clear the way for new life in a new world, one in which God and humanity are reconciled.

In the Gospel, Jesus reenacts humankind's ancient struggle to remain faithful to God despite temptation. Led to the desert by the same Holy Spirit so powerfully present at his Baptism, Jesus deals with the discomforts of hunger and thirst and the dangers of wild beasts before finally facing down the devil himself. But this time he breaks the ancient cycle of sin and punishment by refusing the devil's enticements.

What if Jesus had repeated history and succumbed to temptation? What an awful thought. Instead, we can enjoy the fruits of his victory. We are the eightieth generation of Christians to hear the good news that Jesus began preaching after his sojourn in the desert. Yet the continuing need to return to basics makes his ancient message ever new for us, too: "Turn back to God and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

## Lent: A Time for Remembering

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* provides these additional insights into the Scripture readings in today's liturgy:

- We begin Lent with the story of the flood because, during special seasons of the year, the Church "re-reads and re-lives the great events of salvation history in the 'today' of her liturgy" (1095).
- The story of Christ's temptation in the desert vividly demonstrates the truth of Paul's words in his Letter to the Hebrews: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning" (540).
- Concerning Lent in general, the catechism notes that these forty days are set aside for "intense moments of the Church's penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works)" (1438).

## Relationship to Children

In today's Homily, you will discuss three traditional Lenten practices: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. The strictest form of fasting is giving up food entirely for a set period of time—a practice inadvisable for children to try. When you talk about fasting, make sure children understand there are different kinds of fasting. For Catholics 14 years of age and older, not eating meat on Fridays is a requirement during Lent. That is one kind of fast. Cutting down on unhealthy treats is another kind. Still another is spending less time watching TV or using electronic devices for entertainment.

## This Week's Preparation

In the worship area, on a table covered with a violet or purple cloth, place:

- a lectionary
- and a candle

For the Gathering, review the "race" suggested on page 60. If you choose to do the activity, have ready a stack of magazines the size of *Newsweek* or *Time*, enough to give one magazine to each child in attendance.

## Music

See page 62 for more information.

**Gathering:** "Beyond the Days" by Ricky Manalo  
(*Spirit and Song*, OCP)

**Psalm:** "Psalm 25: To You, O God, I Lift Up My Soul" by Bob Hurd (*Spirit and Song*, OCP)

**Gospel Acclamation:** "We Hear God's Word" by Christopher Walker

Consider these facts:

- The website [kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org) reports that one in three children in the USA are now considered overweight or obese.
- A leading cause of childhood obesity is the amount of time children spend in sedentary activity.
- Among American children under two, 26% have televisions in their bedrooms, and among those under six, two out of three live in homes where the TV is on about half the time, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation report published in 2003.
- According to the same report, children six and under spend an average of two hours a day playing outside, but almost four hours a day in front of a screen or listening to digital media.

Even for children, Lent can be a good time to restore balance to any part of life that has gotten out-of-balance. The same can be said for families. In the late 1960s, one Kansas family always gave up TV for Lent, spending their evening hours playing board games instead. They jokingly referred to Lent as their time to become a family again.

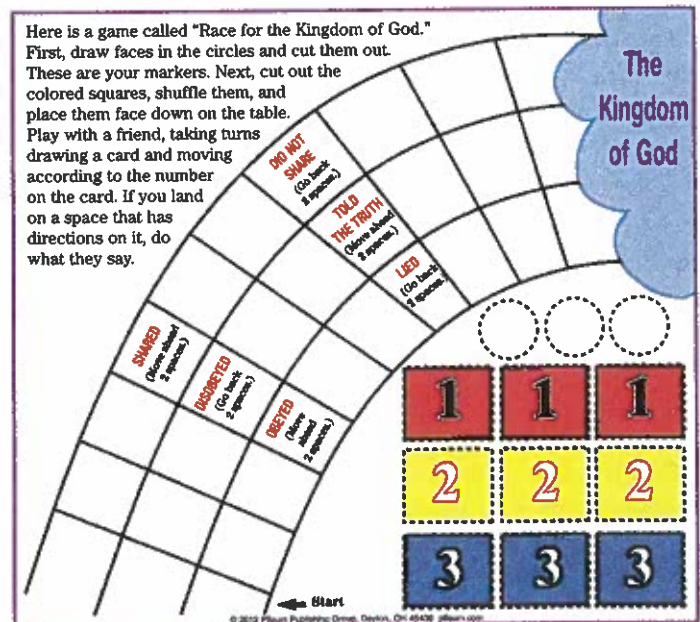
Share with the children any Lenten penances that you have tried, especially those you or your family did when you were a child. This will stimulate their thinking for this week's family activity suggested in the children's leaflet.

## Children's Leaflet

Families decide on a Lenten practice that works for them. The children's activities emphasize the importance of following Jesus' example when faced with temptation.

Here is a game called "Race for the Kingdom of God." First, draw faces in the circles and cut them out. These are your markers. Next, cut out the colored squares, shuffle them, and place them face down on the table. Play with a friend, taking turns drawing a card and moving according to the number on the card. If you land on a space that has directions on it, do what they say.

**The Kingdom of God**



# Order of worship

## Gathering

**Leader:** There is a race that Jesus wants everyone to enter—the race for the kingdom of heaven. Today I want you to pretend that this wall is the kingdom and, starting from the opposite wall, you will be racing to the “kingdom.” Each of you, however, must *walk*, not run, while keeping your arms folded and a magazine balanced on top of your head. (Demonstrate how this is done.) If your magazine falls to the floor during the race, you must stop, put it back on top of your head, refold your arms, and continue the race. (After the activity is finished, settle the children for discussion.)

**Leader:** Everyone please sit down now. I have a few questions about the race.

- Who won the race? Who came in second? Third?
- There is no time today, but if the race were run again, what would happen if *only* the three winners raced with magazines on their heads and everyone else raced without them? Would today’s winners be the winners again? Why or why not?

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** Please bow your heads for prayer. Dear God, we couldn’t go very fast in today’s race because things on our heads were slowing us down. In the *real* race to your kingdom, sometimes things *inside* our heads slow us down, and they are there because we let them in. We see toys advertised on TV and we want them. Then, when it is time to share what we have with others, we make a fuss and drag our feet. Every time we do that we are dragging our feet in the race to your kingdom! Lord, we are sorry, and we promise to do better, through Christ our Lord.

**Children:** Amen.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

## First Reading: Genesis 9:8-15

**Leader:** Have you heard the Bible story about Noah and the great flood? In ancient times, God sent a flood to punish the world’s sinners but saved Noah by telling him to build a big boat before the rains came. In today’s First Reading, the flood is over and Noah’s

family has returned to dry land.

At the end of the reading:

**Leader:** The word of the Lord

**Children:** Thanks be to God.

## Psalm: Psalm 25:4-5abc, 6 and 7cd

The Psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the Psalm, sing or announce the response. (If using a sung response, see Music.)

**Leader:** Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

**Children:** Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

## Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

## Proclaim the Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

**Leader:** Today’s Gospel tells about Jesus right after his baptism in the Jordan River. He was *almost* ready to begin his mission of preaching the good news, but there was still one more thing he needed to do. Can you guess what it was?

**Leader:** The Lord be with you.

**Children:** And with your spirit.

**Leader:** A reading from the Gospel of Mark.

**Children:** † Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end of the reading:

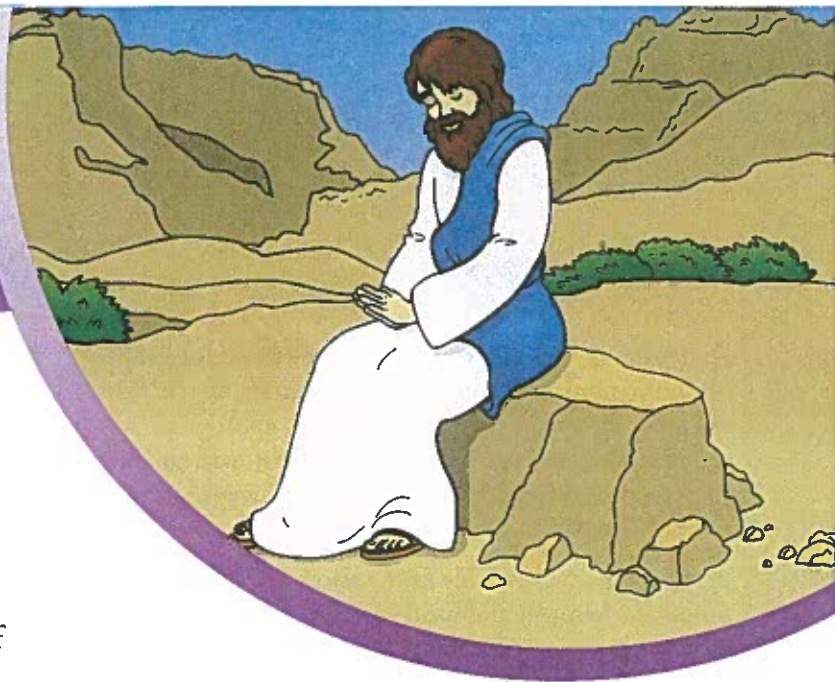
**Leader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**Children:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

## Homily

Base a Homily on these ideas.

- Before Jesus could begin his important mission, he needed time alone with God. He spent forty days in the desert, praying and fasting.
- During that time, Satan tried to talk him out of fulfilling his mission, but Jesus remained faithful to God.



- Every year during Lent, we imitate what Jesus did in the desert; we spend forty days focusing on what God wants of us.
- We do more praying than usual.
- We do less eating than usual (or less of *anything* that we might have been overdoing lately).
- We give extra help to the poor.
- Prayer, fasting, and helping the poor are three ways of “lightening our load” in the race to God’s kingdom.

### Profession of Faith

**Leader:** Please stand for our Profession of Faith and repeat each line after me.

**Leader:** I believe in God the Father who made heaven and earth.

**Children:** I believe in God the Father who made heaven and earth.

**Leader:** And the rainbow in the sky to give us hope.

**Children:** And the rainbow in the sky to give us hope.

**Leader:** I believe in Christ his Son who became human.

**Children:** I believe in Christ his Son who became human.

**Leader:** That we might turn to God and believe the good news.

**Children:** That we might turn to God and believe the good news.

**Leader:** I believe in the Holy Spirit who led Jesus to the desert.

**Children:** I believe in the Holy Spirit who led Jesus to the desert.

**Leader:** And leads the Church today.

**Children:** And leads the Church today.

### Prayer of the Faithful

**Leader:** (*with outstretched arms*) We are the Church, and the Holy Spirit leads *us* on our journey through Lent. Just think, if we always go where the Spirit leads, one day we will enter the kingdom of heaven! To each

petition, please respond, “Your kingdom come, O Lord.”

**Children:** Your kingdom come, O Lord.

**Leader:** For the leaders of the Church, that their preaching and example will turn many hearts to God, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Your kingdom come, O Lord.

**Leader:** For the people of our parish, that all will grow close to God during these forty days of Lent, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Your kingdom come, O Lord.

**Leader:** For the people of our town and country, that all will be guided by God’s truth, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Your kingdom come, O Lord.

**Leader:** For all people who walk on the path of evil, that they will repent and believe the good news, let us pray to the Lord.

**Children:** Your kingdom come, O Lord.

Invite the children to add their own petitions.

**Leader:** Let us pray. Loving God, please help us give up all those things that could weigh us down in our Lenten journey. We ask you to make us strong in spirit, just as Jesus was strong, through Christ our Lord.

**Children:** Amen.

### Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. Remind them to take a leaflet home and share it with their families.