



Prayer & Liturgy

The Still Small Voice

Using Christian Meditation in Primary Schools

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

1 Kings 19:11 - 13

Introduction

In 2024-2025 we introduced schools to Christian meditation as a way of prayer that children and staff may not have encountered before. Three booklets were produced for use in schools which have now been adapted and collated into one booklet to enable all schools to further embed this practice within their own settings.

The opportunities are given monthly to coincide with the school year and the focus remains on:

- **Christian Meditation** and using a prayer-word.
- **Imaginative contemplation** and entering into the Scripture through the use of the imagination.
- **Visio Divina**, which means "divine seeing," as a form of prayer that invites individuals to reflect on and pray through visual art or images.
Where images have been shown with a hyperlink this is merely to guide teachers to where I found the image in question. It is intended to help you find the image to display on an IWB. ***It is not intended that any text accompanying the webpages should be used.***

Teachers are familiar with the 4-part structure of Celebrations of the Word, so this has been maintained for these sessions. This is **NOT** the only way in which it can be approached but offers, we hope, a way into the practice that is both prayerful and suitable for children in primary schools

It would be useful to use the same format each time you visit this type of prayer: having a plain, white, lit candle, some quiet reflective music such as a *Taizé* chant. The text given should be adapted to suit the age and circumstances of the children. Take time over these, make space for pauses. These are indicated by an ellipsis: ...

You will also need some aid as a start and stop signal. This can be a chime, a bell, a meditation bowl or even a very quiet alarm on a mobile phone that isn't too loud or startling for the children!

"In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence."

St Teresa of Calcutta

September

We are still in the season of Ordinary Time and the liturgical colour is green.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 3rd September: St Gregory - St Gregory and St Patrick's, Whitehaven, St Gregory's, Preston and Workington.
- 4th September: St Cuthbert - St Cuthbert's, Blackpool, Carlisle, Wigton and Windemere.
- 29th September: SS Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels - Alston Lane, Grimsargh and St Mary and St Michael's, Garstang.



1. The Call of Simon and Andrew

Gather

“Sit quietly in a position that is comfortable for you. Put your hands together.” (It is not necessary for children to join their hands in an attitude of prayer. It might be hands joined, hands apart, hands clasped)...

“Look at the candle and as you do this breathe in quietly and hold whilst I count to five... Now breathe out slowly and quietly... Let’s do this a few more times... feel quiet and peaceful.”

Listen

“These words come from the beginning of Mark’s Gospel. As you sit in this quiet place listen carefully to the words:

“... passing along by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” (Mark 1:16-18)

Respond

Look at your hands now, feel the skin on the back of them... on your palms... Think of Jesus’ hands holding the tools of a

carpenter... think of the hands of the fishermen casting their nets into the sea...

Now think of Jesus holding out his hands to you... He is saying to you “Follow me”...

Now close your eyes and sit quietly... In your mind say the words “Follow me” over and over again... If your mind starts to wander go back to these words and keep saying them over and over. I will tell you when to start by... (ringing a bell, chiming...) I will signal when it is time to stop with the same sound.”

(Model this with your starting sound then start to say “Follow me” very quietly, dropping your voice until there is no sound. Judge a set period of time for this that you feel the children can deal with. Aim to build up to a full minute by the end of the month!)

Sound the end signal to conclude the meditation.

Send

“Let’s hold our hands in a way we feel comfortable to pray. Let’s say together: ‘Jesus/Lord, help me to follow you’”.

2. The Healing of a Leper

Gather

"Sit quietly in a position that is comfortable for you. Put your hands together." (It is not necessary for children to join their hands in an attitude of prayer. It might be hands joined, hands apart, hands clasped)...

"Look at the candle and as you do this breathe in quietly and hold whilst I count to five... Now breathe out slowly and quietly... Let's do this a few more times... Feel quiet and peaceful."

Listen

"These words come from the beginning of Mark's Gospel. As you sit in this quiet place listen carefully to the words:

"A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, 'If you choose, you can make me clean.' Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I do choose. Be made clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean." (Mark 1:40-42)

Respond

Look at your hands now, feel the skin on the back of them... on your palms... Think of Jesus' hands reaching out to touch someone who is sick.

Now think of Jesus holding out his hands to you... He is saying to you "Be made clean"... He doesn't just mean make me clean of being ill but of anything that stops me being close to him.....

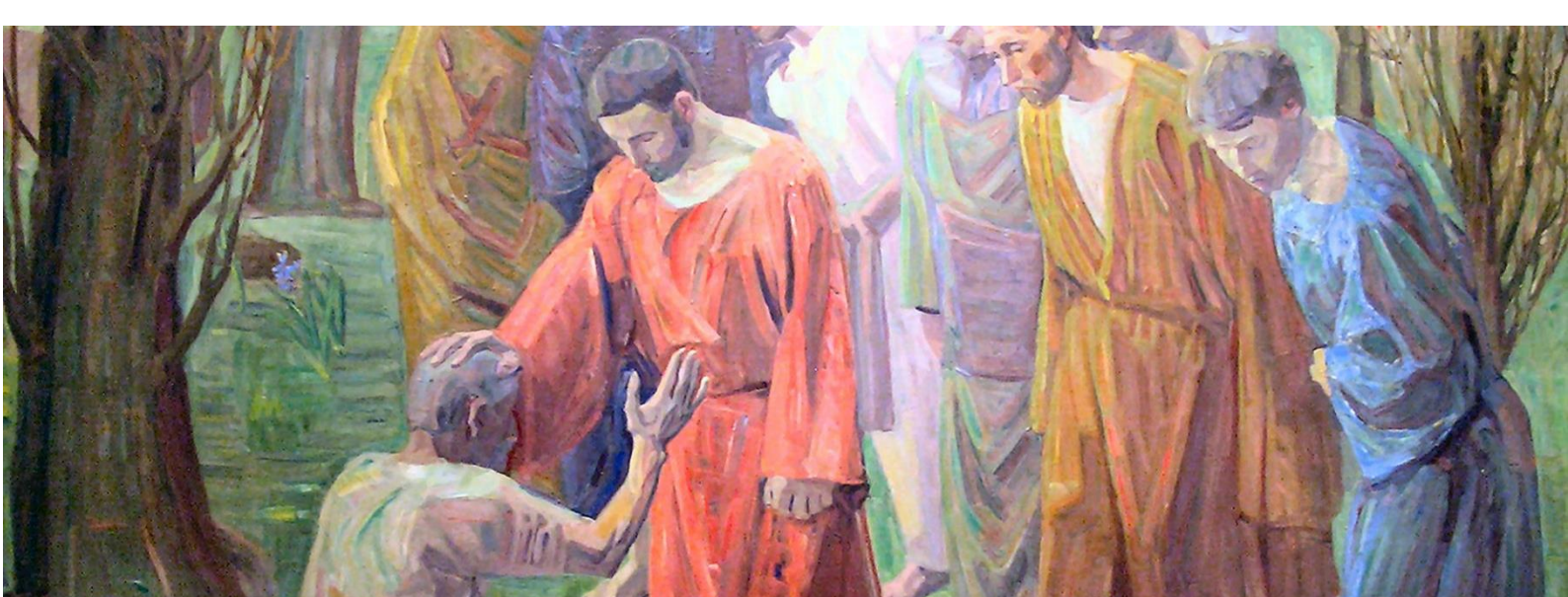
Now close your eyes and sit quietly... In your mind say the words "Make me clean" over and over again... If your mind starts to wander go back to these words and keep saying them over and over. I will tell you when to start by (ringing a bell, chiming...) I will signal when it is time to stop with the same sound."

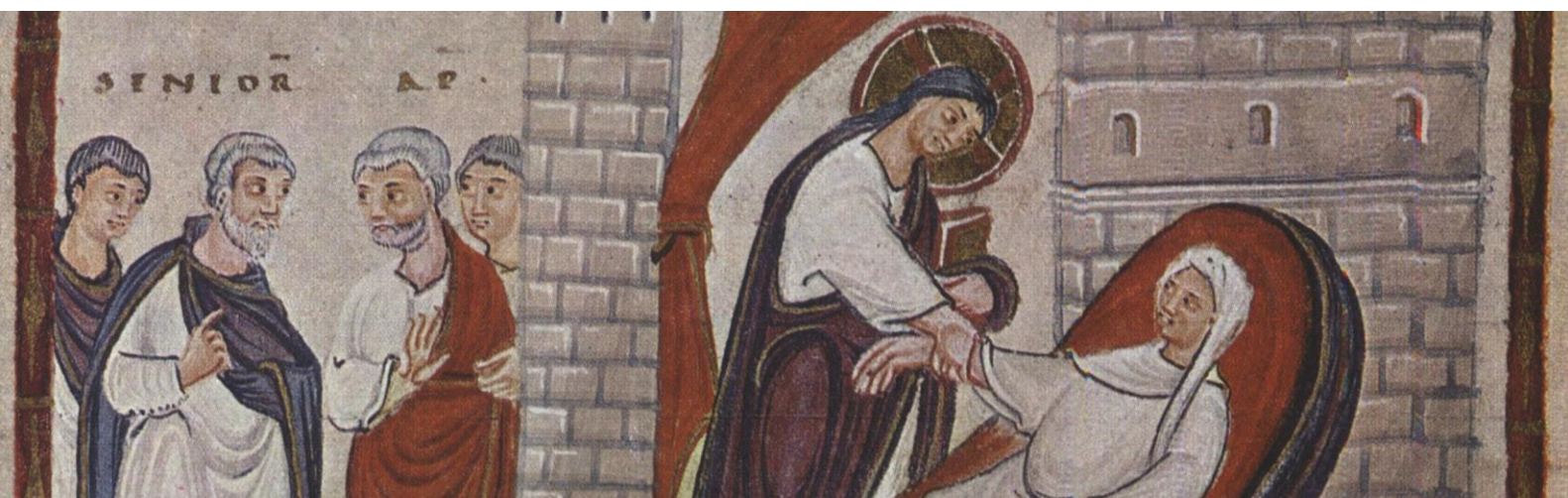
(Model this with your starting sound then start to say "Make me clean" very quietly, dropping your voice until there is no sound. Judge a set period for this that you feel the children can deal with. Aim to build up to a full minute by the end of the month!)

Sound the end signal to conclude the meditation.

Send

"Let's hold our hands in a way we feel comfortable to pray. Let's say together: 'Jesus/Lord I want to be close to you'".





3. The Raising of Jairus' Daughter

Gather

"Sit quietly in a position that is comfortable for you. Put your hands together." (It is not necessary for children to join their hands in an attitude of prayer. It might be hands joined, hands apart, hands clasped) ... Look at the candle and as you do this breathe in quietly and hold whilst I count to five... Now breathe out slowly and quietly... Let's do this a few more times... Feel quiet and peaceful."

Listen

"These words come from Mark's Gospel. As you sit in this quiet place listen carefully to the words:

"Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' So, he went with him... He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha kum,' which

means, 'Little girl, get up!'" (Mark 5:22-24, 41)

Respond

Look at your hands now, feel the skin on the back of them... on your palms... Think of Jesus' hands reaching out to touch the little girl...

Now think of Jesus holding out his hands to you... He is saying to you: "Talitha kum".

Now close your eyes and sit quietly... In your mind say the words "Talitha cum" over and over again... If your mind starts to wander go back to these words and keep saying them over and over. I will tell you when to start by (ringing a bell, chiming) ... I will signal when it is time to stop with the same sound."

Sound the end signal to conclude the meditation.

Send

"Let's hold our hands in a way we feel comfortable to pray. Let's say together: 'Jesus/Lord, help me to love you'".

October

The liturgical colour is still green as we continue through the season of Ordinary Time. It is the month of the Guardian Angels and the Holy Rosary.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 1st October: St Theresa of the Child Jesus - St Teresa's, Cleveleys and Preston
- 4th October: St Francis of Assisi - St Francis, Goosnargh
- 7th October: Our Lady of the Rosary - Our Lady of the Rosary, Dalton-in-Furness
- 9th October: St John Henry Newman - Newman Catholic High School, Carlisle and Cardinal Newman College, Preston
- 17th October: St Margaret Mary - St Margaret Mary, Carlisle
- 31st October: St Begh - St Begh's, Whitehaven. (NB in St Bees this feast is celebrated on 7th November)



4. The Annunciation

Gather

“Sit quietly in a position that is comfortable for you. Put your hands together.” (It is not necessary for children to join their hands in an attitude of prayer. It might be hands joined, hands apart, hands clasped)... Look at the candle and as you do this breathe in quietly and hold whilst I count to five... Now breathe out slowly and quietly... Let’s do this a few more times... Feel quiet and peaceful.”

Listen

Now close your eyes and as you sit in this quiet place listen carefully to these few words from Luke’s Gospel. It is part of the story of when the angel Gabriel came to Mary. (I have changed the first few words, so it makes sense to the children).

“The angel came to Mary and said, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!”... And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God...” (Luke 1: 28,30)

Respond

Still with your eyes closed picture the scene in your mind... Can you see the angel

Gabriel...? Can you see Mary...? Can you remember what the angel said to Mary...?

In your mind say the words “Do not be afraid” over and over again... Keep breathing slowly and quietly... feel peaceful and at rest with God... If your mind starts to wander go back to these words and keep saying them over and over... I will tell you when to start by (ringing a bell, chiming...) I will signal when it is time to stop with the same sound.”

(Model this with your starting sound then start to say “Do not be afraid” very quietly, dropping your voice until there is no sound. Judge a set period of time for this that you feel the children can deal with. Aim to build up to two full minutes by the end of the month!)

Sound the end signal to conclude the meditation.

Send

“Open your eyes and come back into the room. Let’s hold our hands in a way we feel comfortable to pray. Let’s say together: ‘Jesus/Lord, help when I feel afraid.’”

5. The Visitation

Gather

“Sit quietly in a position that is comfortable for you. Put your hands together.” (It is not necessary for children to join their hands in an attitude of prayer. It might be hands joined, hands apart, hands clasped) ... Look at the candle and as you do this breathe in quietly and hold whilst I count to five... Now breathe out slowly and quietly... Let’s do this a few more times... Feel quiet and peaceful.”

Listen

Now close your eyes and as you sit in this quiet place listen carefully to these few words from Luke’s Gospel. It is part of the story of when the Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth.

“Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour...”
(Luke 1: 47)

Respond

Still with your eyes closed picture the scene in your mind... Can you see Mary meeting Elizabeth...? Can you see how happy they

both look...? The word rejoice means to be very happy.

In your mind say the word ‘Rejoice’ over and over again... Keep breathing slowly and quietly... feel peaceful and at rest with God... If your mind starts to wander go back to this word and keep saying it over and over... I will tell you when to start by (ringing a bell, chiming...) I will signal when it is time to stop with the same sound.”

(Model this with your starting sound then start to say “Rejoice” very quietly, dropping your voice until there is no sound. Judge a set period of time for this that you feel the children can deal with. Aim to build up to two full minutes by the end of the month!)

Sound the end signal to conclude the meditation.

Send

“Open your eyes and come back into the room. Let’s hold our hands in a way we feel comfortable to pray. Let’s say together: ‘Jesus/Lord, I rejoice to be with you today.’”



November

The liturgical colour remains green until the feast of Christ the King when the liturgical colour is white. It then changes to purple for the Season of Advent

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 21st November: Christ the King - Christ the King, Preston and Blackpool and Dean Gibson, Kendal which serves the parish of Christ the King, Milnthorpe.
- 24th November: St Catherine of Alexandria, Penrith
- 30th November: St Andrew - St Mary and St Andrew's, Barton

6. Meditations on The Names of God

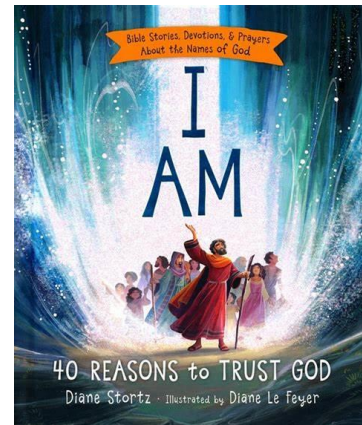
Now that the children are used to sitting still and quietly in prayerful meditation it is time to introduce the idea of “prayer-words” to the children. Prayer-words is a simplified version of the traditional Catholic idea of *meditatio* or *meditations*, which can involve reciting passages of Scripture or the repetition of a single word or small phrase.

In the Christian tradition, prayer-words are often rooted in Scripture or sacred texts. Unlike Eastern meditation practices that aim to empty the mind, Christian meditation involves filling the mind with the presence of God from scripture or from a traditional prayer.

For the next two months the children will be introduced to Christian meditation without a scripture passage. Instead, a range of names for God will be offered.

Using an unfamiliar word allows the children to focus on their breathing and stillness, whilst still having a connection with God.

I have used the book “*I AM - 40 reasons to Trust God*” by Diane Stortz as the starting point for the names used in the prayer-words. This book might be used to support Y5 Branch 5: Dialogue and Encounter: “Recognise that the Tanakh uses different names for God that reveal aspects of his nature” (U5.6.4)



If teachers wish to use this book, it is worth noting that many of the Jewish names for God include the word *Jehova*. In Hebrew scriptures the word *Jehova* is written down but never spoken aloud. *LORD* is used instead. As a sign of respect, we do not use the word *Jehova* - or *Yahweh* - as used in earlier Catholic versions of Scripture such as the original Jerusalem Bible but instead refer to *LORD*. It is written in capital letters to make clear the Name of God was in the original text.

So, for example *Jehova Shalom* becomes *The LORD is Peace*.

The names I have selected, including their pronunciation and the meaning are given below. Teachers are free to choose any of these.

- **Adonai- (A-don-EYE) Lord, Master**
- **El Emeth (EL-EH-met) God of truth**
- **El Shaddai (EL shad-EYE) God all powerful**
- **Elohim (EL-o-HEEM) -Creator**
- **Kadosh (kah-DOESH) - Holy One**

It may be helpful to have these words printed out onto cards. Introduce one for the week and aim to spend up to a total of 5 minutes in total each day on meditation (Straight after lunch or Break is a good time!)



Template for Meditation on the Names of God

Explain to the children that they have done so well with their meditation that you are now going to introduce some new words. These are all names for God, but the words are not in English. They are in Hebrew - the language of the Jewish Scriptures that Christians call the Old Testament.

Use the text below as a guide. Keep it very simple and give the children time and space.

Today we are going to use a special word for God. The word is **Elohim** (EL-o-HEEM) which means CREATOR. Can you say Elohim? (The word in brackets gives guidance how to pronounce the name). We are going to use this word to help us to focus on God by saying it over and over again – we call this “Prayer-Words” (Or Meditatio – MED-EE-TATS-ee-yo -, if you think they will remember it.)

Shall we begin? (Light the candle)

“Sit quietly in a position that is comfortable for you ... Sit with your back very straight and your hands and feet still...

As I sound the bell/the chime... start to breathe in very slowly and quietly. As you breathe in start to say our special word for God... **EL-o-Heem** over and over again... As you breathe in very slowly say the word in your head... as you breathe out very slowly say the word again... Keep doing this... If any thoughts come into your mind just push them gently to one side and focus on your word, your MANTRA...

(Sound your start signal)

Now allow everyone to begin the meditation. Depending on the age of the children and how much experience they have had so far, aim for at least two minutes, building up to 5 minutes (or even more) by the end of the month.

(Sound your end signal)

Now I come back into the room... I am still and peaceful... I thank God, the Creator- Elohim- that he made me and everyone around me...

Each week introduce a different word from the list for the children to use as their mantra.

By displaying each name in turn on card when it is introduced allows children to begin to build up a bank of words for meditation. Use the same script, adapted slightly as necessary, so that children develop a sense of familiarity with the exercise.

December

The liturgical colour is purple for the season of Advent until Christmas when it changes to white.

From the first Sunday of Advent 2024 a new Lectionary is in place. If children are involved in the Ministry of the Word at Mass, it is important that teachers are aware of this when they prepare to read. The new Lectionary will use the text of the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE).

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 26th December: The Holy Family - Holy Family, Barrow, Ingol, Blackpool and Warton
- 27th December: St John the Evangelist - St John's, Poulton and The Willows, Kirkham

7. Meditations for Advent

We are now in the season of Advent. The word Advent means 'coming'.

During this season the readings reflect the longing of God's people for the coming of the Messiah, which we frequently translate as Christ.

Both words mean 'anointed one'. Israelite kings, prophets and priests were anointed with oil as a sign that they were special to God and filled with God's Spirit.

Advent celebrates three comings:

1. The first coming of Christ born in the stable in Bethlehem.
2. The coming of Christ every day in the celebration of the Mass.
3. The coming of Christ at the end of time - Christians call this the Last Judgment.

Meditation for this month will use a different set of words for our prayer-words. These all relate to the coming of Jesus, the Christ into the world.

- **Emmanuel (E-MAN-you-el) God with us**
- **Logos (LOG-awss) The Word**
- **Christos (KRIS-tos) Messiah**
- **Maranatha (MAH-RAN-ARTHA) Come Lord**



An icon showing the Second Coming of Christ

Template for Meditation on Christ at Advent

Explain to the children that they as we are now in a new season, the season of Advent, we are going to use different words for our prayer-words. Introduce some new words. These are all names for God, but the words are not in English. I have included Maranatha which means Come Lord as this is a word often used as a meditatio. It is not a name for God but rather an invocation or prayer.

You might like to change your plain white candle to a purple one or use the Advent Wreath.

Use the text below as a guide. Keep it very simple and give the children time and space.

“Today we are going to use a special word for God. **Emmanuel** (E-MAN-you-el) God with us.”

“Can you say Emmanuel? (The word in brackets gives guidance how to pronounce the name). We are going to use this word to help us to meditate. When we use a word over and over again like this, we call it a ‘prayer-word ... We did the same thing last month.”

“Shall we begin? (Light the candle)”

“Sit quietly in a position that is comfortable for you ... Sit with your back very straight and your hands and feet still...”

“As I sound the bell/the chime... start to breathe in very slowly and quietly. As you breathe in start to say our special word **Emman-u-el** over and over again... As you breathe in very slowly say the word in your head...as you breathe out very slowly say the word again... Keep doing this... If any thoughts come into your mind just push them gently to one side and focus on your prayer-word.”

(Sound your start signal)

Now allow everyone to begin the meditation. Depending on the age of the children and how much experience they have had so far, aim for at least two minutes, building up to 5 minutes (or even more) by the end of the month.

(Sound your end signal)

“Now I come back into the room... I am still and peaceful... I thank God who is with us- Emmanuel - that he is with me now and always.”

Adapting for Following Weeks

Each week introduce a different word from the December list for the children to use as their prayer-word.

By displaying each name in turn on card when it is introduced allows children to begin to build up a bank of words for meditation.

Use the same script, adapted slightly as necessary, so that children develop a sense of familiarity with the exercise.

January

The month of January is dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus, which is celebrated on January 3rd.

The first eight days of January fall during the liturgical season known as Christmas which is represented by the liturgical colour white.

The remaining days of January are the beginning of Ordinary Time. The liturgical colour changes to green — a symbol of the hope of reaping the eternal harvest of heaven, especially the hope of a glorious resurrection.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 13th January: St Kentigern - St Kentigern's, Blackpool
- 19th January: St Wulstan - St Wulstan's and St Edmund's, Fleetwood



8. The Baptism of the Lord

Have ready an unlit candle. It is not necessary to have a picture displayed but if teachers feel its helps, then an image could be projected on a screen.

Gather

Let's make ourselves comfortable and ready to enter into this moment with Jesus. Take a few quiet breaths in and out... and focus on the candle as it is lit. (Now light the candle)

When we are ready, I am going to tell you a story and you can either close your eyes or look at the candle or at your hands to help you not to get distracted by things around you... As I tell you the story I may ask you questions. Try to keep your answers in your head until we have finished.

Word

Now, imagine you are standing on the banks of a big river. It's a hot day, and the sun is shining on your face.

Feel the warmth on your face. The water is cool and flows gently over the rocks. You hear the soft sound of the river, and birds are singing in the trees above your head. What else can you hear...?

You are with a crowd of people who have come to see someone very special. Who is with you? What do they look like...? There's a man in front of you, standing in the river, and he is talking to the people. He's dressed very strangely: his clothes are made of camel's hair. Do you know who he is...?

He is telling everyone that they need to turn back to God and ask for forgiveness. He's been baptising people in the river to help them make a new start. People call him John the Baptist. Watch the people going up to him... how do they look...? A bit scared...? Are they looking worried or sad...? Can you hear what they are saying to him...?

Watch how he takes them into the river to be washed clean of the things they have done wrong... Look at their faces as they come back onto the side of the river... Would you like to go down to John in the river...?

Just then the crowd parts into two sides and a man walks down towards John. He has a smile on his face...

John looks surprised and says, "Jesus, why do you want to be baptised? You are perfect! You don't need to repent like everyone else." What are the people around you saying when you hear this...?

But Jesus smiles and says, "It is right for me to be baptised, to show everyone the way to my Father."

Now watch as Jesus gently steps into the water, and John dips him under the river, just like he did with the others... Look around at the other people standing on either side of the river... Can you hear what they are saying...?

As soon as Jesus comes out of the water, something amazing happens. The sky opens up, and you see a bright, shining light and a dove coming down from heaven... The dove lands on Jesus, and a voice from the sky says, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Now, let's leave the story and come back together into the room.

Response

(these are just for guidance)

- Where were you in the story?
- How did it feel to see all the people going to see John?
- How do you think Jesus felt when He was baptised by John?
- Is there any special moment for you from the story that you would like to share with everyone now?
- What do you think it means when God said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Send

Let's bring our session to a close by saying together:

"I am beloved by God; He is well pleased with me."

After the session you may like to invite the children to write or draw in a special prayer journal for their Imaginative Contemplation session in their own time.

February

The month of February is dedicated to the Holy Family.

We are in the season of Ordinary Time which is represented by the liturgical colour green.

Green, the symbol of hope, is the colour of the sprouting seed and arouses in the faithful the hope of reaping the eternal harvest of heaven, especially the hope of a glorious resurrection.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. The liturgical colour changes to purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 11th February: Our Lady of Lourdes – Our Lady of Lourdes, Carnforth

9. The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

Have ready an unlit candle. It is not necessary to have a picture displayed but if teachers feel its helps, then an image could be projected on a screen.

Gather

Let's make ourselves comfortable and ready to enter into this moment with Jesus. Take a few quiet breaths in and out... and focus on the candle as it is lit. (Now light the candle)

When we are ready, I am going to tell you a story and you can either close your eyes or look at the candle or at your hands to help you not to get distracted by things around you... As I tell you the story I may ask you questions. Try to keep your answers in your head until we have finished.

Word

Now, imagine you are standing with a crowd of people outside the Temple in Jerusalem... The temple is the biggest place you have ever seen. People are coming from all over to the temple to pray and to say thank you to God. It's so busy here! What can you see...? What can you hear...? What different smells are there...?

Now go inside the Temple... Look around you... It's much darker in here and cooler out of the hot sun. Can you feel the coolness of the floor under your feet? What can you see...? What can you hear...? What different smells are there...?

You notice a couple with a baby come inside... What do they look like...? Who is holding the baby...? They are coming to the temple to offer a special gift to God, just as the law of their people says they must do when their child is born. It's a small gift, two little birds, as a sign of their love and faith. Do you know who they are...? Its Mary and Joseph with baby Jesus...!

Watch as they start to walk forwards... An old man called Simeon comes out of the shadows towards them... They stop and look at him... Can you see their faces...? Can you see the face of the old man...? Can you tell what they are feeling...?

Simeon takes the baby in his arms, so very carefully... Now go a little closer because he is starting to speak... He says: "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;"

You wonder what he means... He is saying that he can die happy because he has seen the Saviour of the World that has been promised! What do you think when you hear these words...?



Look at the faces of Mary and Joseph... Can you imagine what they are thinking by the look on their faces...?

But Simeon isn't the only one who knows how special Jesus is. A wise old woman named Anna, who has spent her life praying in the temple, sees Jesus too. She has waited a long time for this day. Watch as she comes up to them... What does she look like...? What does she do next ...? She smiles, her heart full of peace and love, and she tells everyone around her about the child who will change the world. ...

Watch now as Mary and Joseph leave the Temple... What do you think they are saying to each other...? Go up to them now... perhaps they will let you hold the baby too...? Is there something you would like to say to them at this moment...?

Now, let's leave the story and come back together into the room.

Response

(these are just for guidance)

- Did you see yourself in the story? Who were you?
- Why had you come to the Temple that day?
- What do you think Simeon felt when he held Baby Jesus?
- What do you think Mary and Joseph thought when Simeon and Anna recognised Jesus as the one who will change the world?
- Is there any special moment for you from the story that you would like to share with everyone now?
- What do you think Anna said when she spoke to everyone about what she had seen and heard?

Send

Let's bring our session to a close by saying together:

“Jesus, you are the Light of the World.”

After the session you may like to invite the children to write or draw in a special prayer journal for their Imaginative Contemplation session in their own time.

March

This is the month of St Joseph, husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus.

Ash Wednesday, marks beginning of Lent. The liturgical colour changes to purple — a symbol of penance, mortification and the sorrow of a contrite heart.

As Easter is a moveable feast two examples are given: one on the theme of forgiveness and reconciliation and one for Palm Sunday rather than being tied to specific dates in the liturgical calendar.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 17th March: St Patrick - Our Lady and St Patrick's, Maryport, St Gregory and St Patrick's, Whitehaven, St Patrick's, Workington, Cleator Moor and Heysham
- 19th March: St Joseph -St Joseph's, Workington, Lancaster, Preston, Cockermouth, Frizington and Wesham

10. The Prodigal Son

Have ready an unlit candle. It is not necessary to have a picture displayed but if teachers feel its helps, then an image could be projected on a screen.

Gather

Let's make ourselves comfortable and ready to enter into this moment with Jesus. Take a few quiet breaths in and out... and focus on the candle as it is lit. (Now light the candle)

When we are ready, I am going to tell you a story and you can either close your eyes or look at the candle or at your hands to help you not to get distracted by things around you... As I tell you the story I may ask you questions. Try to keep your answers in your head until we have finished.

Word

Imagine that you are sitting with Jesus, listening to him talking... Look at the faces of everyone around him... Do they all look the same? Notice one group of people who don't look happy at all. They are complaining that Jesus is spending his time with people who have done bad things, they complain that he spends too much time with these kind of people...

What do you think about this...? Look at Jesus again, what is his expression like now...? Listen now whilst he starts to tell a story... You like Jesus' stories. Settle down to listen. As he tells his story lots of thoughts and questions come into your mind...

He tells about two sons and their father. The younger boy wants to leave the farm and take his share of the father's money and go away for adventures. Can you picture him going to his father...? What might he be saying...? What might the father be saying...?

Watch now as the son goes away. What is he wearing... does he look happy or sad to be going away...? What about the father... does he say anything to his son as he is leaving...? Where is the older son...? What is he saying or thinking...? What does he look like at this moment...?

Follow the son down the road... What can you see... hear...? He gets to a town and starts to make new friends, friends with money who like having parties. Watch one of those parties in your imagination. Can you see what everyone is doing...? Are they having a good time...?

Now the story changes. The son has no money left. Where have all his friends gone...? They have all left him. Is that what real friends would do? He must get a job feeding pigs. Now what can you see...hear... smell...?

The son realises he has made a big mistake. He wants to go back to his father but he's afraid. He starts the long journey back. Can you picture him now...? What is he wearing...? He has no shoes, what does the road feel like under his feet...? Is he hot...tired...thirsty...?

Can you see the road...? At the end of the road is the father. As soon as he sees the son coming along the road, he rushes to meet him. Watch as the two figures come together... what does the son's face look like...? What does the father look like...? Listen as the son starts to speak... he says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

Watch now what the father does... He calls his servants; he gives orders for new clothes and a feast to be held to celebrate. Go into the house and watch the party... Notice one person who is

still standing outside... It's the older brother, the one who stayed at home, he won't come into the celebration...

Watch the father go out to him. He is speaking to his son. How does the son look when his father comes out to him...? The father wants his son to be happy that his brother has returned. How does he look when he speaks to him...? Listen as he says, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours..." and then, "It is fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found."

Now, let's leave the story and come back together into the room.

Response

(these are just for guidance)

- Which part of the story did you like best?
- Can you think of times you did something wrong? How did you feel when someone forgave you?
- Is there any special moment for you from the story that you would like to share with everyone now?
- Why didn't the older son want to come in to the party? Can you understand why he might feel that way?

Send

Let's bring our session to a close by saying together:

"Thank you, God, my Father that you are always ready to forgive me when I turn back to you."

After the session you may like to invite the children to write or draw in a special prayer journal for their Imaginative Contemplation session in their own time.



11. Palm Sunday

Have ready an unlit candle. It is not necessary to have a picture displayed but if teachers feel its helps, then an image could be projected on a screen.

Gather

Let's make ourselves comfortable and ready to enter into this moment with Jesus. Take a few quiet breaths in and out... and focus on the candle as it is lit. (Now light the candle)

When we are ready, I am going to tell you a story and you can either close your eyes or look at the candle or at your hands to help you not to get distracted by things around you... As I tell you the story I may ask you questions. Try to keep your answers in your head until we have finished.

Word

Imagine you are in a village near to Jerusalem. It's a hot, dry day... What do the buildings look like... Who are you in this scene...? There is a narrow street with small shops and workshops, outside one of them is a young horse tied up. What colour is it...? What is it doing...? The name for a young horse is a colt. Go up to the colt... don't be afraid... would you like to stroke it... How does it feel... Does the colt make any noise...?

Just then two strangers come into the village. Can you see what they look like...? Are they tall...short...? Have they got long hair...? Beards...? Can you hear what they are talking about...?

They come right up to where you are standing and one of them starts to untie the colt to lead it away. The owner comes out of the shop while they are doing this. Can you hear what they are saying to the strangers...? Can you hear their voices... see their faces...? How do you feel about two strangers taking the colt away like this...? Listen to what one of the strangers says: "The Lord has need of it". What do you think when you hear these words?

Straight away the owner lets the men take away the colt. You want to know more so you follow them out of the village... Not far away is a crowd of people... can you hear them talking... Do they look happy... sad... worried... excited ...? The two strangers stop at the edge of the crowd. Now watch as people start taking off their cloaks and putting them on the back of the colt to make a comfortable sitting place on its back... Who do you think is going to sit on it...?

The crowd parts and a man steps forward. Its Jesus! You know this because you have seen him in some of the villagers talking to people, telling them, stories and sometimes making sick people better. Watch what happens now... He climbs on the back of the colt... as it's only a young horse it's still quite short and Jesus' legs hang down on either side...He sets off down the road leading up to Jerusalem. Are you going to stay or are you going to follow to see what happens next...?

Notice the road... its quite stony and rough... People along the road are taking off their cloaks and putting them down on the road to make the ride smoother for Jesus. What are you going to do...? Are you going to put your cloak down too...? The crowd is starting to shout and cheer... Can you hear how the noise is growing as Jesus rides along...? What are the people doing now...? Are they lining the road or running alongside Jesus...?

Listen to what they are saying. "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" Do you want to join in with the crowd with these words...? Jesus carries on up the road to Jerusalem, but you turn back now and make your way back to the village. How are you feeling now...?

Now, let's leave the story and come back together into the room.

Response

(these are just for guidance)

- Which part of the story did you like best?
- What do you think the owner of the colt said when he saw the strangers taking the colt away?
- Why did he let them take it away?
- Is there any special moment for you from the story that you would like to share with everyone now?
- Have you heard this story before? Do you know what else the people did as well as putting their cloaks on the colt's back and on the road? (They waved palms, but this is not mentioned in Luke's Gospel!)

Send

Let's bring our session to a close by saying together:

"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!"

After the session you may like to invite the children to write or draw in a special prayer journal for their imaginative contemplation session in their own time.

April

The month of April is dedicated to The Holy Spirit. April falls during the Easter season which is represented by the liturgical colour white — the colour of light, a symbol of joy, purity and innocence.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 16th April: St Bernadette - St Bernadette's Blackpool and Lancaster

Invite everyone to say the words from Proverbs:

“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.”

Say the words: “Come Holy Spirit, open the eyes of my mind to see more clearly.”

(Over time the children can learn to say these words with you).

Listen

A reading from the Gospel of John 20:1-3

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So, she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, ‘They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!’ So, Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.

Now sit quietly and look at the artwork. Notice the colours, the shapes and any feelings that come to you. You might want to take a brief time after this to let the children talk about what they see and feel.

Response

Now sit quietly and let God come into your heart. Whatever thoughts or words come into your mind about the image, know that they are coming from God. What do you want to say to God in your heart as you reflect/look at this image?

Send

You may want to use a sound cue to end this period of silent meditation and contemplation. Conclude with a line from Psalm 107 v1:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love lasts for ever.”

Say together the prayer:

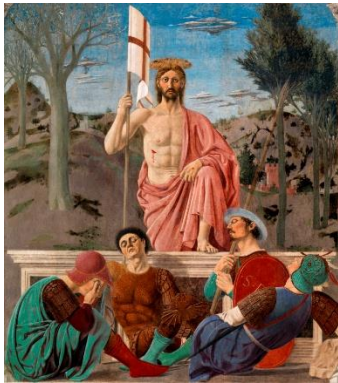
“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.”

Takeaway

Teachers might leave out a copy of the artwork for children to annotate, add post it notes write a prayer.

Suggested Images for April

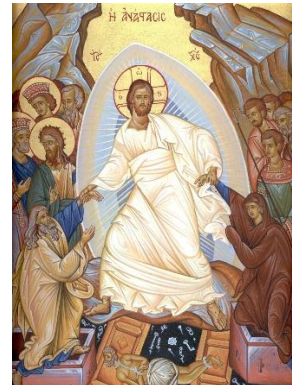
Artwork	Artist	Link
Easter Morning & The Light of the Resurrection	Jen Norton	https://www.jennortonartstudio.com/easter-morning-and-the-light-of-the-resurrection/
The Resurrection	Pierro della Francesca	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Resurrection_(Piero_della_Francesca)
Do Not Hold Onto Me	He Qi	https://www.heqiart.com/3-crucifixion--resurrection.html
Empty Tomb	Ken Samwill	https://pixabay.com/illustrations/jesus-empty-tomb-bible-holy-8853521/
The Harrowing of Hell	Albanian Orthodox Icon	https://www.flickr.com/photos/jimforest/159475497



Pierro della Francesca



Ken Samwill



Albanian Orthodox Icon

(Due to copyright, not all the images listed above can be displayed in this booklet)

May

The month of May is dedicated to Our Blessed Lady, Mary.

Thirty days of devotion to Mary goes back to medieval times. It is traditional to crown statues of Mary with flowers, to hold processions and to say the Rosary.

We are in the Easter season until Pentecost and so the liturgical colour remains white.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 1st May: St Joseph the Worker – Another feast day for all our St Joseph schools.
- 3rd May: SS Philip & James - St. James', Millom
- 4th May: English Martyrs – English Martyrs, Preston
- 25th May: St Bede - St Bede's, Lytham and Carlisle
- Throughout the month of May, pray for all our schools named after Mary and Our Lady.

12. Visio Divina: Christ the Good Shepherd

Gather

The readings for the 4th Sunday of Easter are about Jesus as our shepherd and guardian. Choose a piece of artwork that portrays Jesus as the Good Shepherd. This can be from the examples shown on the following page on or from any other source. Have it displayed on IWB and gather the children. You might want to turn off the lights, have some quiet music, playing or any other way in which the children prepare for prayer.

When everyone is settled begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Invite everyone to say the words from Proverbs:

“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.”

Say the words: “Come Holy Spirit, open the eyes of my mind to see more clearly.”

(Over time the children can learn to say these words with you)

Listen

A reading from the Gospel of John 10:14

“I am the good shepherd, says the Lord; I know my own sheep and my own know me.”

Now sit quietly and look at the artwork. Notice the colours, the shapes and any feelings that come to you. You might want to take a brief time after this to let the children talk about what they see and feel.

Response

Now sit quietly and let God come into your heart. Whatever thoughts or words come into your mind about the image, know that they are coming from God. What do you want to say to God in your heart as you reflect/ look at this image?

Send

You may want to use a sound cue to end this period of silent meditation and contemplation. Conclude with a line from Psalm 107 v1:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love lasts for ever.”

Say together the prayer:

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.”

Takeaway

Teachers might leave out a copy of the artwork for children to annotate, add post it notes write a prayer.

Suggested Images for May

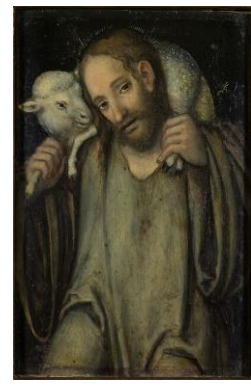
Artwork	Artist	Link
Le Bon Pasteur	Phillippe de Champagne	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_Bon_Pasteur_Philippe_de_Champagne.jpg
The Good Shepherd	John Dunkley	https://www.oceansbridge.com/shop/uncategorized/the-good-shepherd-3
Mosaic of Good Sheperd	Unknown - Ravenna	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ravenna_%E2%80%94_The_Good_Shepherd_mosaic.jpg
The Lost Sheep	Alfred Usher Soord	https://www.stbarnabashomerton.org/alfredsoordpaintingas.htm
The Lost Sheep	Lucas Cranach the Younger	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lucas_Cranach_d.J._-Christus_als_guter_Hirte_%28Angermuseum%29.jpg



Pierro della Francesca



Ravenna Mosaic



Lucas Cranach

(Due to copyright, not all the images listed above can be displayed in this booklet)

June

The month of June is dedicated to The Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On Pentecost Sunday the colour changes to red then reverts to white until after the Feast of Corpus Christi.

June also falls within the liturgical season of Ordinary Time, which is represented by the liturgical colour green, a symbol of hope and new life.

Although the feast of Pentecost may occur during May it usually coincides with school half terms, so this is given for June.

Schools may wish to visit this before the half term break if they wish.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month:

- 6th June: Corpus Christi – Corpus Christi, Preston
- 8th June: St William – St William's, Pilling
- 9th June: St Columba – St Columba's, Barrow
- 11th June: Sacred Heart – Sacred Heart, Barrow, Thornton and Preston
- 13th June: St Anthony – St Anthony's, Fulwood
- 29th June: St Peter – St Peter's, Lytham and The Cathedral School, Lancaster

13. Visio Divina: Pentecost

Gather

Choose a piece of artwork that portrays the events of Pentecost or the Holy Spirit. This can be from the examples shown on the following page or from any other source. Have it displayed on IWB and gather the children. You might want to turn off the lights, have some quiet music playing or any other way in which the children prepare for prayer. When everyone is settled begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Invite everyone to say the words from Proverbs:

“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.”

Say the words: “Come Holy Spirit, open the eyes of my mind to see more clearly.”

(Over time the children can learn to say these words with you).

Listen

A reading from the Gospel of Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting... And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Now sit quietly and look at the artwork. Notice the colours, the shapes and any feelings that come to you. You might want to take a brief time after this to let the children talk about what they see and feel.

Response

Now sit quietly and let God come into your heart. Whatever thoughts or words come into your mind about the image, know that they are coming from God. What do you want to say to God in your heart as you reflect/ look at this image?

Send

You may want to use a sound cue to end this period of silent meditation and contemplation. Conclude with a line from Psalm 107 v1:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love lasts for ever.”

Say together the prayer:

“Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.”

Takeaway

Teachers might leave out a copy of the artwork for children to annotate, add post it notes, write a prayer.

Suggested Images for June

Artwork	Artist	Link
Pentecost Reredos	Lawrence OP - Flickr	https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/41313361074/
Wood Carving	Lawrence OP - Flickr	https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/14185431878
Pentecost – Stained Glass	Lawrence OP - Flickr	https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/3580235485
The Descent of the Holy Spirit	Gerard David	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gerard_David_%28Follower%29_-_The_Descent_of_the_Holy_Spirit_-_Fogg_Art_Museum.jpg
Pentecost	St Albans Psalter	https://05varvara.wordpress.com/2012/07/02/unknown-artist-pentecost-the-descent-of-the-holy-spirit-on-the-apostles-st-albans-psalter-12th-century/
Pentecost	Egino Weinert	https://islandlife-inamonastery.blogspot.com/2013/05/come-holy-spirit.html



Reredos



Wooden Carving



Stained Glass



Gerard David

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July

The month of July is dedicated to The Precious Blood of Jesus.

The entire month falls within the liturgical season of Ordinary Time, which is represented by the liturgical colour green.

Please pray for the following schools whose feast days fall in this month and in August

- 6th July: St Maria Goretti – St Maria Goretti's, Preston
- 11th July: St Benedict – St Benedict's, Whitehaven
- 23rd July: St. Bridget – St Bridget's, Egremont
- 25th July: St James the Great – St James, Millom
- 31st July: St Ignatius', Preston
- 4th August: St. John Vianney – St John Vianney's, Blackpool
- 11th August: St Clare – St Clare's, Fulwood
- 15th August: Our Lady of the Assumption – Our Lady of the Assumption, Blackpool
- 20th August: St Bernard – St Bernard's, Barrow and Preston
- 21st August: St Pius X, Preston and Barrow
- 27th August: St Monica - Austin Friars St Monica's, Carlisle
- 28th August: St Augustine - St Augustine's, Preston

14. Visio Divina: The Beauty of Creation

Teachers are invited to share in the beauty of God's world in preparation for the summer holidays! In preparation for the Season of Creation they might meditate on the example of St Francis, revered for his love of God's creation.

Gather

St Francis loved all people and creatures as his brothers and sisters because God made them all. He saw God in all of his Creation. Have the image displayed on IWB and gather the children. You might want to turn off the lights, have some quiet music playing or any other way in which the children prepare for prayer.

When everyone is settled begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Invite everyone to say the words from Proverbs:

"The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both."

Say the words: "Come Holy Spirit, open the eyes of my mind to see more clearly."

(Over time the children can learn to say these words with you)

Listen

A reading from St Francis of Assisi's prayer "*Canticle of the Sun*."

"We praise you, Lord, for all your creatures, especially for Brother Sun,
who is the day through whom you give us light.

We praise you, Lord, for Sister Earth, who sustains us with her fruits, coloured flowers, and herbs..."

Now sit quietly and look at the artwork. Notice the colours, the shapes and any feelings that come to you. You might want to take a brief time after this to let the children talk about what they see and feel.

Response

Now sit quietly and let God come into your heart. Whatever thoughts or words come into your mind about the image, know that they are coming from God. What do you want to say to God in your heart as you reflect/look at this image?

Send

You may want to use a sound cue to end this period of silent meditation and contemplation. Conclude with a line from Psalm 107 v1:

"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love lasts for ever."

Say together the prayer

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen."

Takeaway: Teachers might leave out a copy of the artwork for children to annotate, add post it notes, write a prayer.

Suggested Images for July

Artwork	Artist	Link
St Francis in the Desert	Giovanni Bellini	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1480_Bellini_St.Francis_in_the_Desert_anagoria.jpg
St Francis	Jen Norton	https://www.jennortonartstudio.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/JN910_StFrancis_web.jpg
Sculpture of St Francis & Bird	Photo of Sculpture by Chong Fat	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MOS_StFrancisChurch_StFrancisStatue.jpg
St Francis of Assisi	Małgorzata Wrochna	https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St_Francis_of_Assisi,_by_Ma%C5%82gorzata_Wrochna.jpg
St Francis	Photo of Sculpture by Carlo Raso	https://www.flickr.com/photos/70125105@N06/22584780344



Photo - Chong Fat



Giovanni Bellini



Małgorzata Wrochna



Photo - Carlo Raso

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The Christian may sometimes envy
those who have renounced the cares of the world
for the supposed calm of the desert;
but then those who live in the world
may at any time find within themselves the true desert,
where no one enters,
where no one is with you,
but where there is only you and God.

It is hard to find Christ in crowded places.

We need solitude.

If your heart is attentive,

God allows himself to be seen.

In the crowd you will find noise,

in the silence you find God.

Enter into yourself,

leave all noise and confusion.

God speaks to us in the great silence of the heart.

St Augustine of Hippo (354 - 430AD)