

**A**

**TO**

**Z**

**of School  
Assemblies**

**ST MARYS CF10**

# **A to Z of School Assemblies**

**26 School Assembly Outlines  
one for each letter of the Alphabet!**

# Advent

*Advent often gets squeezed out or overtaken by early Christmas celebrations but it's an important time with strong themes of light and dark, of preparation and anticipation, of waiting and wondering. It should not be forgotten and offers great material for assemblies! (Luke 1:26-38)*

## Opening Activity: The Daily News

Take the daily newspaper and browse through it in front of the pupils. Explain to them that, these days, the news (either on TV, Radio, Internet or in the newspapers) is so often filled with more bad news than good news. Tell them that you are going to tear out the items of bad news...and see how much of the newspaper is left to read! Read out the headlines of each item and ask if they think it is bad news or good news and respond appropriately! Bad news, it seems, makes better (or more popular) news than good news. Quite often the good news is tagged onto the end of 'The News' on TV as a humorous story to cheer us up, a shaggy dog story, in the midst of all the doom and gloom!

## Mary is given good news

Tell the pupils about the story of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) where Mary is given good news for her and the world by the angel Gabriel. Here, the good news comes into the world, into all the situations, not to help us forget about the bad things, but to change our perspective of those things and to transform them with the presence of Jesus. At the time of the angel's visit, Mary may not have known exactly what this 'good news' would have meant but she accepted it and then—filled with that good news— she couldn't wait to go and share it with her cousin Elizabeth.

## The good news: Jesus is with us.

At Christmas, God becomes human, he comes to live among us. He is present in every human situation. He gives us hope, he is among us, he is close to us, even though at times we may not be able to feel his presence. This is the news that Mary received, this is the news she shared with her to her cousin Elizabeth, this is the news that Jesus proclaimed, this is the news that we proclaim. We are called to share this good news with others today. God is with us. That's really good news!

## Reflection

Invite the young people to think about some of the news stories you have explored this morning, especially the 'bad news.'

What does Jesus offer to the people in the stories?

How is the coming into the world 'good news' for us?

What can we do to share the good news of Jesus with others?

## Prayer

God our Father,  
there are so many items of bad news in the world.  
Help us to know the good news of Jesus,  
who has come into our world,  
to share in our lives,  
to show us how to live,  
and to lead us closer to you.

## What you may need:

A copy of the daily newspaper

# Belonging

## **Matthew 22:15-22**

*Who or what do you belong to? Do you have a sense of belonging? In what sense do we belong to God? This assembly aims to look at how we belong to God: after all he has made us. The question is though: how much does he want from us?*

### **Opening Activity: 'This remains the property of...'**

Take a look at some items such as Credit Cards, Debit cards, Supermarket Loyalty cards. On each of them there will be a small declaration that 'This card remains the property of...whatever company it is.' They can take it away from us at any time. They are only on loan to us! If we break the agreement, then they will ask us (or tell us!) to return it to the bank or shop.

### **Jesus is asked a trick question**

There is a story in the Bible when Jesus is asked a trick question: should they pay taxes to Caesar or not. They want to catch him out but Jesus' reply is, 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God.' Jesus' response means, quite simply, that we belong to God. If we really want to honour God, if we really want to do what's right then we should give God everything he has given to us, everything that ultimately belongs to him. The story gets to the heart of who we really are. Here we find our real identity, and it's discovered by acknowledging that we belong to God, that he is our Father, and that we should give to God everything that belongs to him, and that means our very selves! Then, and only then, will we discover the wonderful possibilities of life with him.

### **We belong to God**

Sometimes we forget that we (and everyone else) belong to God. We may not live our lives and treat others as though we belong to God. But we have been created by him. He has given us life and everything we need. (In Holy Baptism we allowed God to lay his claim to us. We are marked with the sign of the cross. It's a small declaration that the whole of our lives belong to God). So, if we really want to reach our full potential and discover who we are we would do well to look to God. It's to him that we belong!

### **Reflection**

Do we have a sense of belonging: to family, school, clubs, friends?  
Do we have a sense of us 'Belonging to God'  
How could that change the way we live?  
How does it change the way we live?  
Is it easy to be at God's beck and call?!  
Do we really want to live for God?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, there are so many things that we belong to.  
Help us to remember that belonging to you  
Is the most important thing.

### **What you may need:**

You wallet with store cards, debit cards and credit cards.

# Christ the King

*Today we celebrate Christ the King. Yet, we also soon realise that he is a very different kind of King from many of the Kings we know from history. He doesn't live far away, above and beyond: he is amongst his people, ruling with love.*

## Opening Activity

Have a fun round of the Bush Tucker Trial from 'I'm a Celebrity, get me out of here!' Ask for a few volunteers. Provide some small chocolates and tell them that they are chocolate covered locusts, maggots or giant ants, etc. (Ensure that no one is allergic to anything first, such as nuts, etc) If at any time they wish to stop participating, all they have to say is "I'm a celebrity get me out of here!" How did they get on?! Were they willing to do it? How far would they really be willing to go if they really had to embrace some of the challenges from the TV Programme?

## Get me out of here?

Today we celebrate Christ the King, but we know from Jesus' life and teaching that he is a very different kind of King. He lived as a real human being. Through Jesus, God becomes human, and lives among us, experiencing everything that we experience. He could have, at any moment, have said, 'I'm the Son of God get me out of here!' In the garden of Gethsemane on the night of his arrest, Jesus struggled with what was about to happen. He knew how awful it was going to be. He knew it would be difficult and painful. But he chose to carry on and embrace all that was about to happen. Jesus said, 'Father, not my will but yours be done.' He could have, at any stage, said to God: 'Get me out of here, please.' But he didn't. He wanted to accomplish what he had been sent to do.

## Jesus lives among his people

Jesus says that he is present in all those who are in need, those who suffer, the 'little' people of the world. Jesus said, 'As you did this for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did it for me.' Jesus is a very different kind of King! He is a king who continues to live among his people, and he is present in every situation, no matter how difficult or uncomfortable, no matter how painful. The Kingdom of Jesus is very different from earthly kingdoms. It isn't built on wealth or luxury. He doesn't live apart from his people behind large, guarded walls. Jesus Kingdom is built on Love and doing the will of God. The Kingdom of God is amongst us. We discover the love and reign of God in the grittiness of life. Jesus is a down to earth King, a close king, a King who lives among us.

## Reflection

Have there been situations in our life that we wanted to escape from?

Have there been difficult things that we have tried to avoid?

Are there times when we feel as though we are alone?

Remember that Jesus is with us in every situation: he has been and still is involved in our lives.

## Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Thank you for coming into the world

to share God's love and to show us how to live.

Help us to remember that you are with us always.

## What you may need:

Some creatively fashioned Bush Tucker Trial snacks!

# Discrimination

*This assembly looks at how we can so easily discriminate against others and what we can do to overcome discrimination in the world and in our own community (Luke 10:25-37)*

## Opening Activity

Look at the group in front of you. Tell them that there is something not quite right, that although there may be very good reasons why they have sat in particular places (perhaps they are sat in Form groups or separated into boys/girls, etc). That you would like to move some of them. Proceed to move individuals, from one side of the hall to another. Say things like, 'You don't look right there. You need to be with this group of people.' Then tell them that everyone on this side of the hall will have special privileges: no homework, first in for lunch, longer break times, get to choose two subjects they don't want to study, etc. The other group, on the other hand, will be treated rather differently. They have to stay on after school finishes for extra work, they will only be allowed lunch after everyone else has eaten, and there will be double homework every weekend.

## How does it feel?

How does it feel to be discriminated against for no apparent or logical reason? How does it feel to be treated differently from others? How does it feel to have some rights taken away or other burdens added? Of course, that exercise was just for a bit of fun. It doesn't mean anything! However there have been groups of people throughout history and in our own day who have been discriminated against for all kinds of different reasons—the colour of their skin, their race, religion, beliefs, sex, age, disability or sexuality. It has happened in the past. It happens today. It happens throughout the world. It happens in our own communities.

Tell them the story of the Good Samaritan. In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus breaks down the barriers between people. The Samaritans and the Jews disliked each other and yet, here in his story, the Samaritan is the one, the only one, who treats the man with compassion.

We are called by Jesus to treat all people with respect and dignity. All people are made in God's image. God places equal value on every person. We can live side by side with many differences. We can rejoice in our differences, learn from one another, grow closer to one another, be enriched by one another, love one another. 'Love one another,' said Jesus, 'as I have loved you.'

## Reflection

Have you ever felt discriminated against?

Have you ever treated anyone differently because of the way they looked or the things they believed?

What can we do to end discrimination?

## Prayer

God,

Help us not to discriminate against one another.

Help us to celebrate our differences

and to work together for the good of all people.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

# Easter

*Easter is the most important time of the year for Christians, when we rejoice in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.*

## **Opening Activity: Oh Mummy, life after death!**

Provide some white toilet rolls and ask for volunteers to make up two teams. Against the clock they have to make an Egyptian Mummy by wrapping one of the members of their team! When they have completed ask the young people to nominate the best mummy, then allow each Mummy to break out!

## **Jesus and the Empty Tomb and life after death!**

The Egyptians used to embalm their Pharaohs and other important people and surround them with all the possessions because they believed that they needed them for the after life. At Easter we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. He was wrapped in a cloth and placed in a tomb. But three days later, when some of his followers went to anoint the body, they discovered that the tomb was open. Jesus was not there, all that was left was the white cloth folded up neatly. Some of them didn't know what this meant. What it meant, of course, was that Jesus was alive, he had risen from the dead!

## **Eternal Life has already begun**

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the most important event for Christians. Jesus' love can not be overcome. God cannot and will not be overcome. Jesus came for us to live life to the full, he came to raise us up and give us life. This life has already begun. Today we celebrate God's love that overcomes all things, even death! Jesus' resurrection enables us to live with God forever: we have already begun eternal life with God.

## **Reflection**

How do we recognise signs of Jesus' Risen Life in our world today?

How do we recognise signs of Jesus' Risen Life in our own lives?

What does it mean to be a baptised Christian?

What does Jesus being alive mean to us?

## **Prayer**

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Father, help us to know what this means in our lives:

that Jesus is always with us,

that he wants us to spend forever with him.

that his love overcomes everything.

## **What you may need:**

Toilet Rolls

# Friendship

*Jesus called his disciples friends. What is friendship really all about—and what does it mean to be a friend of Jesus? (John 15:15)*

## Opening Activity: What's in a friend?

Prepare various words or phrases on cards that may be used to describe good qualities in a friend. For example, kind, forgiving, generous, helpful, supportive, loving, trustworthy, dependable, funny, good listener, etc. Ask them to suggest which qualities are the least important in order to eliminate a word at a time. Repeat this until you are left with just three words. What are you left with? What sort of things do you look for in a good friend? Talk about the qualities that are left and why they think they are so important.

## Jesus calls us friends

On the night before he died Jesus explained to his disciples that he had chosen them as his friends (John 15) Jesus calls us friends because he loves us. He is someone we can trust, who cares for us, shares with us, looks out for us. He is someone we can get close to and who wants to be close to us. 'A servant does not know what his master is doing,' said Jesus. It doesn't mean that we are equals—because this is a different kind of friendship. We wouldn't necessarily do *everything* a friend told us to do would we? Although, if they asked us to do things that were bad for us or other people they wouldn't be very good friends! But Jesus knows what is good for us. He knows what is best for us. He wants us to be involved in his life. He wants to be involved in our life. He is interested in us. He loves us. He loves us so much that he died for us.

## Being a good friend to Jesus

What kind of things do you get up to with a good friend? Look out for each other, hang out together, spend time together, be there for one another, confide in one another? All these are things that Jesus invites us to do with him. He wants us to get to know him better by: reading the bible, spending time with him, talking to him, listening to him, discovering him in all of our friendships. Sometimes our friends let us down—and we let our friends down. Jesus never lets us down. He is always there for us. Are we always there for him?

## Reflection

What do we look for in a good friend?

Are we a good friend to others?

To what extent do we think Jesus is a friend?

How can we strengthen our friendship with Jesus?

## Prayer

Lord Jesus,

thank you for being our friend.

Help us to be a good friend to others

and to share your love with them. **Amen.**

**What you may need:** prepared cards with values written on them

# Good or Bad?

*We make all kinds of judgements all the time. What about when we judge other people. Are we more quick to look for the 'bad' in people than for the 'good'? (Matthew 7:1-5)*

## Opening Activity: Making a Judgement!

Provide a number of different examples of footballers, films, groups, singers, comedians, etc and ask them who is the best? What you choose, of course, will depend on what is popular at the time. Choose something contemporary! For example: who is the best footballer: Cristiano Ronaldo or Thierry Henry?

## Judging Others

We make judgements all the time about all kinds of things. All of us have different opinions from time to time. All of us have to make judgements about different situations. We make judgements, too, about people—we say who is the best or the worst at something, who is good or bad. In some circumstances we may have some that are either 'all good' or 'all bad.' But really, perhaps, we are a mixture of good and bad—we are capable of doing both good things and bad things.

Jesus said, 'Do not judge others and you will not be judged yourselves. How can you take the speck out of your brother's eye when you have a log in your own?' He warns us against being hypocritical, he warns us against pointing out other people's bad points and avoiding or covering up our own. He tells us to treat people with kindness—even if we think they are bad or have done bad things. There is something good in everyone! He tells us not to overlook, reject or ignore them. Look for good in people, encourage good in people.

## Looking for good in others

Yes, we can and do make judgements about people. But if we can find the good in people and encourage them in goodness, and also look for the goodness in ourselves, then we will help to make this world a better place and to be the people God wants us to be. It doesn't mean that when someone has done something bad that it should be overlooked. We all have to be responsible for our actions but it does mean trying to help people and support them to put the bad things behind them, to improve their ways. That way all of us can become better people.

## Reflection

Are you very judgemental?

Are you always more ready to point out other people's mistakes?

How do you respond when someone judges us?

What can we do to encourage and look for good in people?

## Prayer

God,

help us to look for the good in people

And to support one another in improving our lives

And being the people you want us to be.

We make our prayer through Jesus the Lord. **Amen.**

## What you may need

A List of celebrities or famous people

# Hands

*The Visual Aid for this Assembly? Our Hands! Capable of healing and harming, working and worrying, this assembly looks at how we can use our hands for bringing the healing, loving touch of Jesus to the world? (Isaiah 49:16)*

## Opening Activity: Look at your hands

Invite the pupils to look at their hands. What are they like? Dirty, clean, marked, scratched, soft, smooth. Do you have pen marks or scratches, well-groomed nails or bitten nails., dark skin or pale skin, etc. What about other people's hands? Your friends, father's, mother's, grandparents? Are they big, small, delicate, rough from labour, smooth, well groomed. Our hands often tell us a lot about who we are, what we do, what kind of work we have are involved in.

## How we use our hands

Hands can do lots of different things. They can offer comfort and affirmation or they can hit and hurt and slap. They can be held out in welcome or push people away. They can hold gifts to brighten up someone's life or stones to throw and hurt. They can be used to urge people forward or to hold people back. They can be used in prayer, they can bless, save someone's life (surgeon's hands), build (a workman's hands), create a piece of beautiful art (artist's hands), they can mend, tend, feed, comfort.

## Using our hands for God

We can use our hands for God. To share his love and comfort, to serve others, to encourage and affirm.

In the Bible there is a wonderful phrase about God holding us in the palm of his hand. It's a comforting image, that God holds us. Jesus stretched out his arms in love and his hands were nailed to an cross. In the Graham Kendrick hymn The Servant King, we sing: 'Hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrendered.'

Teresa of Avila wrote:

'Christ has no body now, but yours.  
No hands, no feet on earth, but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which  
Christ looks compassion into the world.  
Yours are the feet  
with which Christ walks to do good.  
Yours are the hands  
with which Christ blesses the world.'

## Prayer

Lord Jesus,  
here are our hands:  
open to receive all the good things you give,  
open to welcome others,  
open to help others.  
Help us to bring your healing touch to the world. **Amen.**

# It's Never too late

*How good do we think we are? How do we evaluate what we have accomplished? Is there ever a time when we can say, 'Enough' is enough?' This assembly looks at how it's never too late to do more or even to make a start—particularly useful if adapted for the week before exams!*

## Self Evaluation

Attempt to create or make something in front of the pupils. For example, fun balloon animals or Potato animals, using potatoes and cocktail sticks. Even better, ask for some volunteers and ask them to do the creating! How did they do? How well have they done? Can any of the volunteers stand back and look at their creation with pride?! Do you ever stand back and look at something you've done and thought: 'That's rubbish!' Or have you ever looked at something you've accomplished and thought, 'Yeh, that's pretty good!' Do you ever try to evaluate what you do? How do you evaluate what you have done? What about other things? The day to day things? The way you have spoken to people, the things you have done for them (or not done for them?) Do you think, 'could have done better?' or 'I'm glad I did that'? We are used to tests and exams and being evaluated. Sometimes we may not do so good at one subject because we haven't worked as hard as we could. Or perhaps we have been unable to work because of difficult personal circumstances—or it may be that we just struggle with a certain subject. We may have an exam tomorrow or next week and think, 'It's too late. It's not worth revising or working now! I just can't do it!'

## Up until now we have done nothing!

There is a lovely story told about St Francis Assisi. It may sound rather strange to call it a lovely story because it happened on his death bed. He was surrounded by his brothers and he said, 'Let us now begin to serve the Lord for up to now we have done nothing.' He wasn't dismissing everything that God had accomplished through him. He wasn't dismissing everything that his brothers had done. After all, he had accomplished some amazing things in his lifetime. So many people were attracted to Jesus through his life and ministry, and he did so much to share the good news of Jesus with others. What he was trying to say, perhaps, is that there is always more to do, and it is never too late!

## Making a Start

There is a saying, 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks.' Some people think that it's too late or not worth beginning to follow Jesus. They may think it's too late, or too much trouble, or not for them. The words of St Francis reminds us that there is always work to do, that it's never too late! That we can always be doing more, that we can seize every opportunity to do something, or to look for what needs to be done. Whether it's school work or helping a friend in need. Whether it's cleaning your bedroom or going to Church? There is always more to do—and always time to do it! Yes, we may do some really good and great things but there's always more to do!

## Reflection

Have we put off doing things because we don't think we have time?  
Are there times when we think it is too late to do something?  
Are there things that we think we could be doing?  
What more can we do to help others?

## Prayer

God, help us to take every opportunity to:  
help others; share your love; do our best. We ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**What you may need:** Materials to make something, for example potatoes and cocktail sticks or balloons.

# John the Baptist

*John the Baptist is both colourful and eccentric—his role was to prepare the way for Jesus, to make a straight path for him into our lives. This assembly outline looks at some of the obstacles that get in the way!*

## Opening Activity: Flat-earthers

If you have one you may want to take with you a globe of the world.

Did you know that there are people in the world who still believe the world is flat? They think that the idea that the world is spherical is a conspiracy created by NASA and Governments, and that such things as photographs of the world from outer space are fakes! These people have been nicknamed 'flat-earthers' because, despite all the evidence, they still believe the earth is flat!

## John the Baptist—the flat-earther—prepared the way for Jesus

John the Baptist could, in many ways, be termed a flat-earther (not because he believed the earth was flat—he probably couldn't care less, and they certainly didn't have the technology or science available to prove it one way or the other!) but because he wanted to flatten the earth! Now this may seem a rather ridiculous thing to say. But John the Baptist didn't literally mean that we should flatten mountains and hills—he was talking symbolically. God was coming and there was to be no obstacle in his way, he wants a straight and direct road into people's lives.

## Making a straight way or a flat path for Jesus into our lives

There are lots of things in our lives that get in the way of God, there are lots of obstacles (things such as...) What John the Baptist came to do was to prepare the way for Jesus, calling people to repentance, to say sorry for those things that have become obstacles to living as God wants us to, to direct our attention towards Jesus—to turn our lives around and clear it of all the things that stand between God and us.

## Prayer

Father, lots of things get in the way,  
and spoil our friendship with Jesus.  
Help us to get rid of the obstacles,  
so that Jesus may have a straight road into our lives.

## What you may need:

A Globe of the world

# Kingdom of God

*In the Lord's Prayer we say, 'Thy Kingdom Come.' But what do we mean by the Kingdom of God? This assembly may be adapted and used during Election Time.*

## Opening Activity: Election Manifesto

Invite the pupils to imagine if they could rule the world – or at least just a little bit of it! What kind of laws would they have? How would they rule? What kind of world would they create? It's not such a strange thing to imagine, really. Lots of people are given (or in some unfortunate circumstances, take by force) the responsibility of leadership, and try to change the way a country is run, try to change a whole nation. Many of them engage in huge election campaigns because they believe that they can do a better job than anyone else. They may also have an *Election Manifesto*, where they lay down their plans for the country and tell us how they will change things if they are elected, if they get into power.

## Jesus' Manifesto of Love

God has a plan for the world. He knows what he wants the world to be like, and he knows how it can be achieved. This is what we mean by the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is what the world is like when God is acknowledged as King, and we live as he wants us to live. Now, if God was a wicked kind of king, or some kind of tyrant, he would *force* us into living a certain kind of life. But Jesus has shown us a different way. The only law in God's Kingdom is 'Love.' Jesus said, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all and with all your might, and your neighbour as yourself,' we are told by Jesus (Matthew 22: 37 – 39 ). If all of us loved God and loved our neighbour as ourselves, the world would be a very different place. What a wonderful world it would be!

In so many ways, God reverses the values of the world. He has a different idea of power and authority, a different idea of what is really important in life. Mary, in her *Magnificat* song, gives a colourful image of God's values, of God's Manifesto. In her song we see how God turns the values of the world upside down, how he puts love first. She shows us how the poor and weak and those in need are given a special place. 'He has shown the might of his arm, He has routed the proud and all their schemes; he has brought down monarchs from their thrones, and raised on high the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.' (Luke 1:51- 53)

## The Kingdom of God is among you

When Jesus was once asked by some people when the Kingdom of God would come, he replied, 'You cannot say, "Look, here it is," or "There it is!" For the kingdom of God is among you.' (Luke 17:20-21) We really can help to change the world: through prayer, through love, through doing what God wants, through putting the needs of others before our own, through doing all the little things that God asks of us, and more besides. The Kingdom of God is what happens in people's lives when they embrace God's ways, when they accept his plan, when they put him first, right at the centre of their lives. So, if we had to put all we have said into three simple sentences it could be: God rules the world – with love God has a vision for the world – of love. God has a law – to love. What can we do to recognise God's Kingdom today? How can we put God's love into action? When we pray 'Thy Kingdom Come' do we really mean it?

## Prayer

Loving Father, help us to seek your Kingdom  
And to work and pray for its coming in all its fullness  
by loving you and our neighbour.  
We make our prayer through Jesus the Lord. **Amen.**

# Love

*The word 'Love' is used in so many different ways. This assembly outline look at what we mean by love and what how much love really costs!*

## **Opening Activity: My Pet Scorpion!**

Take a small box and tell them that you have brought along your pet scorpion. Ask for a volunteer to hold it and look after it for you whilst you are giving your talk. Tell them that it is a poisonous hard backed scorpion, from central Africa, and that it has a nasty, lethal sting in its tail so that they shouldn't open the box or look inside! See what reaction (if any!) you get!

## **The Old Man and the Scorpion**

There is a story told by a man called Henri Nouwen. An old man used to sit and pray every day at the River Ganges. One day he was distracted by a scorpion that has got caught between the branches of a tree stretching over the river. The old man was moved with compassion for the scorpion and reached out to save it, but the scorpion stung him. Undeterred the old man tried again, and the scorpion kept stinging, until the man's hand began to swell and his face contorted with pain. A passer by called out, 'Hey, you stupid old man. Don't you know that if you carry on trying to save that stupid scorpion it will kill you.' 'My friend,' replied the old man. 'Just because it is the nature of the scorpion to sting why should I lose my nature to save?'

## **The cost of Jesus' love**

Jesus loves us and knew how costly it would be to love us. Have you ever heard the phrase, 'I love you to death'? Jesus literally loves us to death. He shows us how much he loves us by dying for us. The people he has come to save have pierced him with nails and caused him pain and killed him. But it doesn't stop him from carrying on loving and saving us. Just because it is human nature to hurt doesn't mean that Jesus loses his nature to save. Jesus knows the cost of love. And it never stops him loving.

(Don't forget to retrieve your 'Scorpion!')

## **Reflection**

Do we have a sting in our tail?

Have others ever hurt us?

How do we feel towards them?

Do you think love is difficult or easy?

How far did Jesus go in loving u?

## **Prayer**

God our Father,

Sometimes we have the potential to bring hurt and harm to others, even when they are trying to help us.

Help us to be accept the love of others.

Sometimes, we get hurt by others with whom we try to share your love.

Help us to be strong in loving.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

# Magnificat

*Mary's Song of Praise in the Hill Country is a favourite song of the church, sung every day at Evening Prayer. It is a beautiful and powerful, comforting and challenging, This assembly explores the Song from the Hill Country.*

## Opening Activity: Songs when you were born

In preparation you will need to find out which Year Group you are leading assembly for and work out the year of birth. Then visit this link: [everyhit.com](http://everyhit.com) to make a list with dates of the Number One Songs during that year.

Ask the pupils if there are any birthdays today or this week. If there are, ask them if they know what was Number 1 in the charts when they were born. If they don't know tell them from your pre-prepared list! Then ask other people when their birthdays are and ask them the same question and give them the answer.

Have they heard of the song or artist? Some songs seem to stay around for ever. Others get forgotten very easily. Some songs stand the test of time. Other songs get lost in time. That's the difference between a classic song and a very ordinary song, I suppose.

## Songs and Music are important to us

Songs and music are very important to us. Music can help us to relax, or it can fire us up. It can help us forget about things, or it can help us express how we feel. It can be something we do alone (in our rooms or on our earphones) or something that we can share with other people. Some music is just a bit of fun, other music has a more serious message. Some music does it for us, other music can leave us cold! Some music we love, other kinds of music we hate! Some music is acceptable or cool to listen to, other music we enjoy in private just in case anyone discovers that we like it!! Yes, music is important to all of us in so many different ways. And I imagine we all have a favourite song, or a few favourite songs that we like to listen to.

## Favourite Song of the Church

In the Bible reading we had earlier we have a song. Words of Mary that have become a favourite song of the church. It is such a favourite, in fact, that it is sung or recited every single day at Evening Prayer. It's a song called The Magnificat, a word which comes from the Latin of the first phrase of the song: My Soul magnifies the Lord—or my soul glorifies or praises God.

When Mary received news that she was to be the mother of Jesus she rushed to the hill country to see her cousin Elizabeth. She was pregnant too. Her child was to become known as John the Baptist, the one who was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. So the two women both had something to be joyful about: both for themselves and for the world.

The song speaks of all that God has done in the life of Mary, and all that he is doing for the world. She speaks too of the future, of the kind of world that God wants, of all that God *will* do. This is what Mary said and what the Church sings every single day:

*'My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,*

*and holy is his name.*

*His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.*

*He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.*

*He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.*

*He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'*

It's a powerful song. It's not sentimental. In fact, it's rather challenging and in some ways disturbing. It disturbs us from being too comfortable, too laid back, too smug about life and the world, or too distant from the problems of the world. Above all, it's a Song of Praise. Mary is glad and grateful for everything she is being asked to do. She may not understand everything, but she is courageous enough to say yes to God. In all that is being asked of her she wants to praise and thank God.

Perhaps the year that John the Baptist was born and the year that Jesus was born, those words were still running around the mind of Mary and her cousin Elizabeth. You know how a song gets in your head sometimes, and you can't stop singing it out loud or in your mind?! What better song could you have?!

### **Reflection**

What favourite songs do you have?

What do they mean to you?

Has a song ever expressed how you feel?

Does Mary's Song speak to you in anyway?

Is there a phrase that really stands out?

### **Prayer**

Use the words of the Magnificat as prayer, or play or sing a version of it. If it's your tradition say the 'Angelus' or the 'Hail Mary'

# No Body

*Charles Borromeo is a Saint of the sixteenth century. What on earth has he got to teach us about tackling the problems in the world today? This assembly helps us to see what's happening around us and to try do something about the things that are wrong.*

## Opening Activity: Climbing High

What's the tallest building you have ever climbed? Perhaps you have been to the Empire State Building or been to the Eiffel Tower. Perhaps you have climbed the tall tower of a Cathedral or been to the Blackpool Tower! On the shore of Lake Maggiore is a giant statue of St Charles Borromeo, who was born in a Castle near the lake (many people go to the Lakes on holiday). It's 35.1 metres high and just like the statue of Liberty you can climb right up inside his head and look out through his eyes! The statue is the second tallest bronze statue in the world (after, of course, the statue of liberty which is 46 metres tall but if you take the pedestal into account it is 93 metres high)

## Looking through the Eyes of a Saint

St Charles Borromeo (Feast Day November 4) was ordained priest in 1563 and became Bishop of Milan in the same year. Charles Borromeo was a great reformer of the Church. He could see what was wrong with the church and, despite opposition, put into place what he thought was right. He put systems into place to help the poor and needy. He improved the education of the clergy and laity. He preached and taught. He did so much to improve and change the church.

## What do we see?

I am sure there will be lots of things that we think are wrong with the church or the world, and which could be improved. Can we really see when things are wrong? (Not just the things we don't happen to like but the things that are perhaps really wrong and need changing). Do we look into things, and keep in touch with what's going on in the world? Are we interested in what's happening in the world? Not just popular gossip and news about celebrities—but global things? What do we see? What would we change? And why?

It takes great courage to change things, especially when we meet with great opposition. Think about Martin Luther King who fought so hard against racism in the United States and who was killed for his beliefs and actions. Think about Mahatma Gandhi who fought against tyranny and stood up for civil rights through non-violent, peaceful means. He too was also assassinated. Think about Bishop Desmond Tutu, Trevor Huddleston and Nelson Mandela who fought so hard against Apartheid in South Africa.

All these people have seen or experienced something in the world that they wanted to change. They could see what was wrong. They could see what needed to happen. Even though they were faced by great opposition they carried on working for the good of others. And for some of them that meant that they were killed for their beliefs. There are lots of things too in our own communities, in our school, that are not always good. Do we see when people are unhappy? Do we see when someone is bullied or picked on? Do we see when someone is lonely or in need of some help? Or do we look away and pretend we haven't seen a thing?

Imagine we could see the world through the eyes of a saint? What does that mean? It means trying to see the world as God sees it. We are called to be Christ's body in the world: to be his hands and feet, his eyes and ears, to be his healing touch, his comforting words, to listen to the voice of the needy and oppressed and to change the world into the kingdom of God.

**Prayer**

God our Father,  
there are so many things in the world that are wrong.  
Help us to see what needs to be done,  
and give us the courage and faith to help change the world into a better place.  
We ask this through Jesus the Lord. Amen.

**Prayer of Teresa of Avila**

"Christ has no body now, but yours.  
No hands, no feet on earth, but yours.  
Yours are the eyes through which  
Christ looks compassion into the world.  
Yours are the feet  
with which Christ walks to do good.  
Yours are the hands  
with which Christ blesses the world."

# Olympic Struggles

*'Faster, higher, stronger' goes the motto of the Olympic Games. What if we think that Sport just isn't our thing? What can we learn from the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and how can it inspire us in life?*

## Olympic Rings

Project onto a screen or hold up a picture (or a flag) of the Olympic symbol: the five intertwined rings. Ask the pupils if anyone knows the meaning of the symbol. What kind of thing is this symbol trying to say or represent? *Answer:* the five intertwined rings of the Olympic symbol represent the unity of the five inhabited continents that participate in the competition. Whilst the Olympic Games is a series of competitions: with one athlete competing against another, each trying to beat their competitors, the essence of the Games is about peace, unity and friendship. (That's what the Olympic Torch represents) It is a celebration on a Global scale, a gathering of nations, of athletes trying to perform to their best abilities, pushing the limits, giving an amazing display of what the human body and spirit can achieve. The Olympic motto is *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, a Latin expression meaning 'Faster, Higher, Stronger'. These ideals are also expressed in the Olympic creed: *'The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life, is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.'* (Perhaps you can project these words onto a screen)

## Struggle on through Life

Many of us will have great plans for the future. There are many wonderful things that we would like to do or be. (Perhaps ask for examples, if appropriate). One day, some of us may achieve some of those things. Others of us will never end up doing what we had hoped or planned. But the most important thing is that we try our best, that we aim high, and try to do all we can to do good in the world, and do some wonderful things.

The truth is that, for most of us (if not all of us), life is (and will be) a mixture of joy and sorrow, of ease and struggle, of clear paths and obstacles, of comfort and challenge. And some of us may end up having rather more difficult lives than others.

Jesus said, 'He who endures to the end will be have eternal life.' (Matthew 24:13) He didn't say those who are successful or better than anyone else, he didn't say those who always win. No, he said those who endure: those who have kept on trying, those who have been resilient and courageous. Those who have endured so much, and yet, even in the face of adversity, continue to move on. There are many stories of people who have achieved great things against the odds—and many of those people compete in the Olympic and especially the Paralympic Games. There will be people with great disabilities who have not allowed those disabilities to get in the way of their dream. They have endured so much, and yet they have kept on trying, putting their heart and soul into doing something great and good.

It may be that Sport and Athletics is not quite your thing. Some of us may feel rather out of place on a football field or an athletics track or in a swimming pool. And many of us can only wobble our way on a bike! But the Olympics and Paralympics inspire us to try hard, to work hard, to struggle on and do our best. It also reminds us that we are part of one human race, striving for peace, unity and friendship along the way. 'The one who endures to the end will have life!'

## Prayer

God our Father, we thank you for the many athletes who will inspire us in the London 2012 Olympics. Help us through all the struggles and challenges of life, that we may continue on to the end, always doing our best. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

# Playing our Part

*Faced with so many 'World' problems on a universal scale we can be left to wonder what on earth we can do to make a difference. This assembly looks at the little things we can do that can make a big difference! It can also be used to deal with specific world issues, whether it's climate change or famine, crime or terrorism, natural disasters or anything else that is an issue of the day*

## **Opening Activity: What on earth can we do?**

Hold in your clenched hand a small tea/votive light but don't show them what you hold. Tell them you have something in your hand that can change the world. Something that can feed the hungry, stop wars, help people to live together in peace. Can they guess what it is? Open your palm and show them the small candle. Now, you may ask 'How on earth can that small candle change the world?!' There are so many great problems in the world, so many things that need to be sorted out: wars and conflicts, street crime, millions of people going hungry, millions of people ill or dying of HIV/AIDS, the problem of terrorism, and so on. How on earth can this little candle change the world? (You can use this assembly to explore one issue in particular. Give the young people more details and information about the particular problem you are talking about, whether you want to show them images or give them some simple statistics)

## **Small Lights**

There is an old proverb that goes, 'It's better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness.' It would be so easy to look at the problems in the world and think, 'What can we do? What difference can we make?' Why bother? But it is far better to do what we can rather than doing nothing at all. It is better to light a small candle than to sit around complaining how dark it is! Mother Teresa once said, 'We are asked to do no great thing, only small things done with great love.'

## **Doing the small things**

Most of us are not called to do great things, in the eyes of the world, at least. Some people are, of course! But most of us won't be the Prime-minister or leading politicians or world leaders or the President of the US. But can you imagine if everything we did, every little thing, was filled with great love how the world could then be transformed around us? God takes the little things that we do and transforms them. He makes them significant!

This little candle symbolises all the little things we can do in order to transform the world around us. It could be being helpful to someone, saying a kind word, sharing a smile, running an errand for someone, giving a word of encouragement or comfort to someone. If the flame that we light can light up the life of someone around us, just think how that light can spread.

## **Prayer**

### *Light the candle*

Father, as we light this small candle,  
help us to think about how the small things we are asked to do  
can bring light and love to those around us.  
Help us to fill every small thing with great love.  
We ask this through Jesus the Lord. Amen,

## **What you may need:**

Small votive or tea light

# Quite a Turn Around

*St Francis is one of the most loved and well know saints: yet his story is a challenging one. In a world where many people are judged by what they have or how successful they are, Francis turns his back on it all to embrace the riches of knowing Jesus.*

## Opening Activity: Rags to Riches

There are lots of rags to riches stories—stories about people who started from very humble beginnings and worked hard or came into money to become rich. For example, fairy stories like Cinderella, Aladdin, Dick Whittington. Or real life figures like J.K. Rowling, Alan Sugar, Gordon Ramsey, Elvis Presley, Tom Cruise, etc. Choose a topical one or age-related example. These are people who went from rags to riches. Some people also go from riches to rags when they hit on hard times or become bankrupt.

## Riches to Rags

The story of St Francis is a story of a riches to rags person. St Francis was from a very rich family. He enjoyed the playboy lifestyle, he loved parties and spending time with friends, leading a carefree life. One day though he didn't something extraordinary. He stood in the market square and stripped off all his clothes. It was a symbol that he had had enough of his life and that he was giving up everything for Jesus. He lived a life of simplicity and poverty, and reached out to those in need. He began to reform the church, he inspired many people, he attracted many people by his holiness.

But in essence it was a rags to riches story but in another way—because he discovered the riches that come from knowing Jesus. His life, though stripped of many things, was full of joy. Francis above all was a joyful person. He knew how to rejoice in everything that God provided. Some of his prayers are still used today. Like the Canticle of Creation....

## Growing to be Rich!

We may not be called to lead the same lifestyle as Francis—but we are called to be joyful, to be holy, not to allow things to get in the way of doing what God wants us to do. St Francis teaches us that. We may not grow up to be rich—but we will know the most valuable thing in the world—knowing Jesus, loving Jesus and living as he wants us to live.

## Prayer

Father, we thank you for Francis  
who has shown us how to follow Jesus.  
Help us to be as joyful as he was  
and to reach out to those in need.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

# Rejection

*It's not a nice feeling being rejected: yet, it's something we will experience throughout our lives, whether it's for a job, a competition or by friends. This assembly looks at how Jesus was rejected. It was, of course, an unjust rejection but he has, through his death and resurrection, proved his importance!*

## **Opening Activity: It Means Everything to Me!**

Take your mobile phone into the assembly and dialling and redialling an imaginary number. Ask the pupils to excuse you for a moment. Tell them that you are just trying to save (*insert the name of someone from the latest Talent Show!*) from being rejected from the show. TV Talent shows are all around us! Whether it's singing, dancing or ice skating we just don't like to see our favourite act ejected or rejected from the competition. Perhaps you have even phoned up to try to save your favourite act—and all to no avail! Sometimes we may get a little dismayed when we think that justice wasn't done! Ask them if anyone phoned up to save someone! Is anyone willing to admit it! At times it may seem like the most important thing in the world to us. It is certainly the most important thing in the world for the participants who time and time again when interviewed can be heard to say that to win or be in the final 'means everything to me!' But only one will survive and only one can win! All the others will just be rejected!

## **Jesus was rejected**

In the Bible it is said of Jesus, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes.' The cornerstone, of course, is the most important stone in a building. It is the keystone, the foundation stone, the stone that holds everything else together, the stone from which every other stone is built. Jesus, of course, is the cornerstone of this story. He is the important one, yet we know that he was rejected, that he was not simply thrown out of people's lives and ejected but that he was, even worse, arrested and executed. But in his rising from the dead he has proved his importance and power, he has proved that he is the one who holds all things together, he is the one who gives substance and meaning to our lives.

## **We can accept or reject Jesus today**

Even today, we are given the opportunity to accept or reject Jesus. Jesus doesn't force himself on us. He gives us the option to follow him or fall away, to take the road that he has offered us in life or to take our own route. It's up to us. Jesus gives us the option of rejecting him. In the letter of St Paul to the Philippians, Paul says, "I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3: 8) In other words, compared to knowing Christ, everything else in our life can be regarded as rubbish. Only when we live life in Christ can we see the true value of things and really know what should mean everything to us: Christ himself. So whether or not, throughout our lives, we meet with rejection from others, whether or not we fail to succeed at times, whether or not we fail to get accepted for one thing or another, Jesus is the constant in our life: he is the one important thing that gives meaning to our lives.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you know what it is to be rejected.  
When we meet with rejection help us to trust in you  
and give us the faith to accept you into our lives. **Amen.**

## **What you may need**

Mobile Phone

# Saints

*November is a full and colourful month with lots of feasts, occasions and celebrations: both religious and secular: All Saints being one of them on November 1*

## Opening Activity: Role Models

Provide a list of celebrities or pick up a copy of a Celebrity Magazine on the way and flick through it in front of the young people. Who do people admire? Who do they look up to? Who are they inspired by? Who do people want to be like? Who are people's role models? What responsibilities are there for people who are role models, who live life in the public eye?

## The Saints as role models for following Jesus

Today we celebrate All Saints' Day. The Saints are people who have allowed God to have his own way with them, who have allowed God to influence and transform their lives. They are examples of what it means to follow Jesus. They are role models for anyone who wants to follow Jesus. We are all in the same family. We are all called to be disciples of Jesus, and to do what God wants us to do. The Saints were and are real people.

## It's not about being famous but about living as God wants.

Some of the saints have become famous: not for the sake of being famous, like some people these days who seek fame. They have become famous because they have tried to live as God wants them to live. But there are lots of other saints too whose names have been lost, or people whose lives are unknown to others. When St Terese of Lisieux died her sister nuns said, 'What can we find to say about Terese?' And then they found her diaries which revealed some of the amazing things she thought and did, her amazing faith and life she led. We may not be or become famous but we are all called to follow Jesus, like all the saints who have gone before us. They are our brothers and sisters in the Faith. And we thank God for them: whether they are famous or not!

## Reflection

Who are your role models?  
Why do you look up to them?  
Do you have a favourite Saint?  
What do you like about them?  
How do the saints help us to follow Jesus?

## Prayers

Lord Jesus,  
you invite everyone to follow you.  
Thank you for all the saints  
who have shown us how to live as you want us to live. Amen.

## You may need:

A Celebrity Magazine  
A List of Celebrities

# Teilo's Task

## **Matthew 21:28-32**

*St Teilo may have lived fifteen hundred years ago, and we may not know an awful lot about him, but his story can still teach us a few things!*

### **Opening Activity**

It's often an assembly speaker's ploy to ask for a volunteer and this assembly plays on that ploy more than others! So, ask for a volunteer to help you. How many volunteers did you get? Did hands go up enthusiastically? Or is it an awkward year?! How many are more reserved or unimpressed and really can't be bothered?! What would encourage some people who didn't volunteer? A prize? And what kind of prize would make it really worthwhile? Or would they just prefer to be left alone whatever the incentive?! Have you ever done something begrudgingly? Have you ever been asked to perform an errand and gritted your teeth or sighed as you did so? Maybe you've been dragged away from your favourite TV programme or maybe you were studying hard and didn't really want to be disturbed!

### **St Teilo**

Today we celebrate St Teilo and although the story of his life is smothered in legend there are still a few good stories from which we can gain quite a lot. He was born about the year 500 – and one of his companions in the faith was St David. Whilst Teilo and one of his friends Aeddán were busy studying at the monastery of St David they were asked to fetch some firewood. They weren't impressed at all at being disturbed and didn't take to the task enthusiastically. However, they picked up their axes and went into the wood, probably huffing and puffing and moaning as they went! But it wasn't too long before their discovered that their job was much easier than they thought for two tame stags helped them to carry the wood back to the monastery. In 549, the yellow plague swept through Wales and Teilo took the survivors of his community to Dol in Brittany. There, along with St Samson, he planted a grove of fruit trees which are still there to this day, 1500 years later! Later, he returned to Wales where he was renowned for living a holy life and he became bishop. He died on February 9 although we aren't really sure in what year. His tomb lies in Llandaff Cathedral to the right of the High Altar and his skull is kept in the south chapel.

### **What things do we get asked to do?**

Do we sometimes make too much of the work that we have been asked to do, or the time we have been asked to give? How do we react to the people who 'disturb' us from the things which we think are important? Do we really value the time we have to study? What do we think will be the fruits of our life and work? There is a story that Jesus told. A father had two sons. He asked the first to work in his vineyard. 'I will not,' he said. And then later he thought better of it and did so. The father said to the second son, 'Go and work in my vineyard.' The son said 'I will go' but didn't actually go to do any work at all.. 'Which one did what the father wanted?' asked Jesus. 'The first,' they replied. There are so many different things that we can do with our time. Teilo ultimately decided that it was important to live the kind of life that God wanted him to live. He believed that what he was doing was what God wanted him to do. Perhaps it's not such a bad or mad thing to do to ask God what he wants us to do! We may get an answer that is both surprising and amazing! It may take a while to discover it. We may think that the task is above us or beyond us – but most importantly God won't ask us to do anything without equipping us to do the task. He may not send a stag to lighten the load but he will help us to do what he wants us to do.

### **Prayer**

Lord God, help us to discover what it is you want us to do  
And give us the courage and the faith to do it. **Amen.**

# Ughhh!

*This harvest assembly explores how we value all the gifts God has given us—and how we are given the chance to help and share with others, which is itself a gift from God.*

## **Opening Activity: Love it or hate it**

You will need a gift bag containing a jar of marmite. Show the pupils the bag. Tell them that inside your bag you have a gift from God! Can anyone guess what gift it is? Get various suggestions from them. Then give them a clue: even though this is a gift from God, some of you will love it and some of you will hate it. Now can they guess what it is? Show them the jar of Marmite! Ask for a show of hands as to who loves it or hates it! What do they like or not like about it? The look, the colour, the smell, the taste? How do people eat it? On toast, bread, in sandwiches? *(Did you know that Marmite was discovered by accident in the late 19th century when a German Scientist discovered that brewer's yeast could be collected, bottled and eaten!)*

## **How we play with food!**

There are many gifts from God that we choose to love or hate or ignore. I'm not talking about different foods that we like or don't like. *(Perhaps share an item of food that you don't like or can't eat).* Sometimes, we complain about God's gifts. Just think about the weather, for instance, and how we are so good at complaining about it. When it's raining and cold, we wish it was sunny. When it's hot and humid, we wish it was cool and cloudy! And there are other gifts, too, that perhaps we don't even realise are gifts at all. For example, we may be given an opportunity to be kind to someone, or to help someone. After all, Jesus said that we should love one another as he loved us. He said that we should serve one another as he came to serve us. And yet, we may not want that particular gift sometimes. Or think about the beautiful world he has given us to live in—and how we ruin that world by the way we live: through pollution, wasting energy, the amount of rubbish we create, the amount of food we throw away, and so on. Sometimes, we take God's gifts and we ruin or even destroy them!

## **Thank God!**

There are so many people in the world that don't have the gifts that we have. There are so many different people who don't have enough food to eat or who don't have clean water to drink. There are people who live in countries that have terrible droughts and who have no rain to water the crops for food. The lovely gifts we have been given are their gifts too. There is enough food in the world for everyone. God wants us to share all the gifts we have been given. We may not like doing this, but giving to others, having the chance to help others and share with others—well, they are gifts that God gives to us.

So today, we think about ALL the gifts we have been given. We think about how we can VALUE those gifts. We think about how we can LOOK AFTER those gifts. And, most importantly, we think about how we can SHARE those gifts with others.

## **Prayer**

God our Creator,  
help us to value everything we have been given.  
Help us to value our food  
and to share our gifts with those in need.

# Vitamin C

*St Andrew is patron saints of several countries, including Scotland. But he was, of course, the first of the twelve Apostles to be called by Jesus. This assembly looks at how Andre helped to share the good news of Jesus and wonders what the world would be like if faith was as infectious as a cold!*

## Opening Activity: Cold Comforts

Take items such as bottle of medicine, a lemon, honey, vitamin tablets, nasal spray, clove of garlic, hot water bottle, tissues, throat lozenge, etc: all the things we use to combat the common cold! Most of them are just myths, of course, although some things will ease the symptoms.

It's that time of year again, when lots of people have colds. The winter is on its way. It's cold and damp. Yes, it's the time when people catch colds. So, we need to dose up on Vitamin C, wrap up warm, and so on. For most of us, of course, the common cold is just a bit of a bother: coughing, sneezing, a running nose! but there are some vulnerable people for whom a cold can turn into something more serious. How do you catch a cold? By being around other people who have colds, by other people sneezing without covering their mouth! It's easy to catch a cold.

## Catching Faith

Imagine if it was as easy to catch the Christian Faith as it is to catch a cold! Imagine what the world would be like... that Christians, by the way they lived their life would inspire others and spread the love of Jesus to everyone!

Today we celebrate the life of St Andrew. Andrew was the brother of Peter and together they were fishermen, so they were used to catching things: but fish not colds! (Although I'm sure they had a few colds along the way!) They knew how to catch fish. But when Jesus called them, he said, 'Come and follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. They were willing to give up everything they knew for Jesus. And he didn't want them to catch a cold, or catch fish, he wanted them to 'catch' people for him, to gather people in, closer to Jesus.

How do you catch fish? With a fishing rod or a fishing net, or on a fishing boat! Perhaps some of you are great fishers but it takes a lot of patience. And if you work on a fishing boat it's also hard work—and dangerous too.

How do you catch people? Now that's a question that St Andrew must have been asking when Jesus called him. But it wasn't long before Andrew travelled far and wide to spread the good news of Jesus. His faith was infectious! His love was infectious. He brought the message of Jesus to others: by the way he lived, by the way he followed Jesus, by his words and actions, by his teaching and preaching, by his example. Yes, he brought the message of Jesus to the hearts of thousands and thousands of people. His influence has spread throughout the world. He is even patron saint of Scotland, thousands of miles away from where he was born! Imagine if you could catch faith as easily as you can catch a common cold.

We would have an epidemic of love! And what a world that would be!

## Prayer

Father, help us to be caught up in love of Jesus.

Give us an enthusiastic and infectious faith that others may believe through us.

We make our prayer through Jesus the Lord. **Amen.**

# When you Pray

*Many people find it difficult to pray and lots of people think that praying is just asking God for things. This assembly outline explores what prayer really is! (Matthew 7:7-8)*

## **Opening Activity: What happens when we pray?**

Begin by inviting the young people to pray by saying 'Let us pray.' Depending on the age group or the circumstances you may ask them to close their eyes. Leave some silence, don't say anything. And then break the silence, and ask them—'What's the point of praying?' Why don't things happen when we pray! What can we expect to happen when we pray? What is prayer anyway? Is there any point to it? Why do people pray? How do people pray?

## **A Bird in the Hand**

There is a story told about St Kevin who lived in Ireland many years ago. He was a very prayerful, holy man. Each day he would set out to a quiet place and sit or stand with arms outstretched. One day he was praying and a small blackbird came to rest in his hand. Kevin stayed in the same position praying. The story goes that the bird started to make a nest in the hand and Kevin was afraid to move in case he disturbed the bird. Kevin stayed there until the bird lay his eggs, the eggs hatched and the young birds flew the nest. That's what happened when Kevin prayed!

## **What about when we pray?**

And you never know—when you pray what will happen, but you have to be patient and wait on God, with open hands—you may not get what you asked for, but if you expect God to answer your prayer, let him give you what he thinks you need! Jesus said, 'Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find.' (Matthew 7:7-8) In the letter of St James, (4:3) we read: 'Why you don't have what you want is because you don't pray for it; when you do pray and don't get it, it is because you have not prayed properly, you have prayed for something to indulge your own desires.'

So, now, let us pray!

## **Reflect:**

Do we pray?

How often?

What do we think Prayer is?

Prayer is more than asking: it is about seeking the will of God

## **Prayer**

*(which you may want to get the young people to participate by holding out their arms in prayer)*

God our Father,

help us to be open to you,

to reach out with open hands

to receive the good things you want to give us. **Amen.**

# X marks the spot

*The wise men were in search of a great treasure. This Assembly explores that great Epiphany of Jesus to the world.*

## **Opening Activity: Great Discoveries**

What would you do if you found a £20 note? Would you keep it? Would you try to find the owner? Take it to the Police Station? Give it charity? Spend it? Some people go out of their way to find things, to discover treasures. There are about 20,000 metal detectorists in England and Wales, and some of them really do find hordes of treasure buried hundreds of years ago. In 2020, backyard archaeologists in the United Kingdom have recorded discoveries of more than 47,000 objects (says the British Museum), and more than 1.5 million objects have been discovered since 1998 by the general public rather than by professional archaeologists.

## **The Magi are moved by Jesus and guided by a Star!**

The Wise men – or Magi - could have been a number of different things—astrologers, magicians, sages, Zoroastrian priests. They certainly weren't metal detectorists but they were on the search of a great treasure. We know from the gospel story that a star led them to the place of Jesus. It must have been a long and difficult journey, but they knew that something special had happened, they knew that their journey would be worthwhile. They didn't wait for things to happen. They had to go out of their way to find Jesus. They had to move on to discover Jesus. And when they found him, they worshipped him.

## **Jesus is for everyone: our lives are moved by Jesus!**

The name given to the feast that celebrates the arrival of the wise men is The Epiphany. Epiphany is a word that means 'manifestation.' It is a significant event because it showed that Jesus is not just for one group of people or one nation but for the whole world: east and west, north and south, Jew and Gentile. The whole world is moved by Jesus, our lives are or can be moved by Jesus. Sometimes, though, we have to seek him out, or rather have our eyes opened to his presence in the world today. So, let's pray that we may be led closer to Jesus and discover the one who moves the world, discover the one who comes to share God's love with everyone, the one who comes to show us how to live.

## **Reflection**

Invite the young people to think about what direction their lives are going in.

Who inspires and influences them?

Do they feel their lives being led closer to Jesus?

Do they want to be led closer to Jesus?

Why would they want to be led closer to Jesus?

## **Prayer**

Father, our lives take so many different directions.

Help us to focus on Jesus,

so that we may be led closer to him.

## **What you may need:**

a banknote – or maybe something that you have found!

# Your Destiny

*Sometimes the future may look bleak or dark or certainly uncertain. This assembly outline explores the hope of Christians!*

## **Opening Activity: Looking forward to...a holiday?**

Take a holiday brochure—tell them you are looking to book a holiday—where should you go? Where do they think you should go? Where would they go if they had the chance? Do any of them have any family or holidays or school trips to look forward to? It's nice to have things to look forward to so that you know that even when things are difficult, or there is so much work to do, that there is something to look forward to, something nice that will happen, something to work towards.

## **Jesus gives us something to look forward to**

Jesus came to us and he helped us to look at our own lives, which means looking back at what we have done to spoil things, and to see how we can put things right. But he also gives us so much to look forward to! In a packed square to thousands of young people in Manilla, Pope John Paul II said, 'You are made to live with God for ever.' Imagine that—all those young people with all their hopes, ambitions and dreams of the future, all those young people with their whole lives ahead of them, and he says 'You are made to live with God for ever.'

## **Jesus wants to spend eternity with you: he is our future!**

That is why we are made—to live with God for ever. Our future is with Jesus - that is our hope—that is something to look forward to. He has given us a taste of the future, indeed we begin the future now! Jesus loves us so much that he wants to spend eternity with us! So whatever your plans are for the future, whether you think the future looks bright or bleak, remember that we are made to live with God forever—now that really is something to look forward to!!

## **Reflection**

What things have you got to look forward to?

Do you have plans or ambitions?

Do you think there is much for young people to look forward to?

What do you think the future holds for you?

Are you confident about the future?

## **Prayer**

Dear God,

help us to look forward to being with you for ever.

Help us to look towards the future with confidence  
with Jesus leading us forward.

## **What you may need:**

Holiday Brochure

# Zombies!

*Around the time of Halloween (October 31<sup>st</sup>), the church celebrates the Feast of All Saints (November 1) followed by the commemoration of All Souls (November 2<sup>nd</sup>) All Saints celebrates all those holy people, followers of Jesus, who have gone before us and are now in heaven. All Souls remembers everyone who has died and we commend them to God. This assembly can be used around that time or is suitable for any time of year.*

## **Opening Activity: Scared to death!**

Around the time of Halloween, people spend a lot of time and money decorating the homes with scary things, and dressing up in all kinds of weird and frightening costumes, wearing ghoulish masks, dressing up as Zombies and monsters to scare each other whilst also trying to have a bit of fun. Ask the children or young people if any of them have dressed up in such costumes? We often like being scared – just think, for example, of fairground rides that both frighten us and exhilarate us all the same time.

Perhaps talk about things we are scared of. Spiders, insects, etc. What kind of things are young people scared of? Why are we scared of them? Some fears are logical. Some fears are illogical. Is there a difference between having a fear and a phobia? A phobia is usually illogical? For instance, to be afraid of spiders or birds is a phobia because, in general, they can't or don't hurt us.

## **We are often scared of death**

Death is often something that people are scared of, yet Jesus has shown us that there is no need to be scared of death. Death is sometimes portrayed as scary or ghostlike, bloody or awful, yet Jesus has shown us that it is none of these things. Of course, it is sad that people whom we love die. It is sad when people die young or in tragic or painful circumstances. It is sad and distressing when people suffer. But Jesus has shown us that death is nothing to be scared of because through his death and resurrection he has promised that we will live with him forever.

## **All Souls Day is when the Church remembers those who have died.**

We do that in the confidence of the resurrection. St Francis, in a great Canticle (Hymn of Praise) of Creation referred to death as 'Sister Death.' St Paul said, 'Death where is your victory, death where is your sting?' There is no need to be scared of dying and death. 'Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.' It's ok to be sad...even Jesus cried at the grave of his friend Lazarus. Today we remember all who have died, knowing that Jesus calls us to live with him forever, and we pray that one day, all of us will be able to enjoy each other's company in Heaven.

## **Reflection**

Have we experienced the death of someone close to us

Does the thought of death frighten us?

Are there any special people in our lives we want to remember (and pray for?)

## **Prayer**

Father, we remember all who have died,  
and pray that they may enjoy the eternal life of heaven,  
which you have promised to all who love you.

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