



ST MARYS CF10

# AT FACE VALUE

15 VALUE BASED  
SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

DEAN ATKINS

# **AT FACE VALUE**

**15 VALUE BASED  
SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES**

**DEAN ATKINS  
ST MARYS CF10**

# Contents

Introduction .....	3
Forgiveness .....	4
Happiness.....	5
Hope.....	6
Love.....	7
Honesty .....	9
Humility.....	11
Trust .....	13
Endurance .....	15
Friendship .....	16
Responsibility .....	17
Patience .....	18
Ambitious.....	19
Kindness.....	20
Service.....	22
Goodness .....	24

# Introduction

Here's a second volume of School Assemblies, with each outline exploring a particular Value. They can be adapted for use with children and young people across the Key Stages and, like all resources, they can be simply adapted to your own circumstances, individual gifts and ideas.

We've pulled out these resources from our archives and, when necessary, have tried to change some of the cultural references which may be outdated but hopefully you'll forgive us if a few have slipped through the net, and be able to replace them with your own more current observations!

# Forgiveness

*Anyone who has been wronged against will know how difficult it is to forgive.*

*This assembly outline looks at the challenging act of forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35)*

## Opening Activity

Go equipped with a challenge for one or two volunteers. For example: origami! Give them a piece of paper each and ask them to fold it into a giraffe or a hippopotamus or whatever else you think may be rather difficult!). How did they rise to the challenge? Who was the most successful? Can you think of any great challenges that could or have been accomplished? Climbing Mount Everest, running a marathon, swimming the English channel, walking from Lands End to John O' Groats! How many people could do any of those things? Does anyone have any ambitions to do something challenging?

## A Challenge from Jesus

Jesus was once asked how many times we should forgive someone. *(Matthew 18:21-35)* Seven times? 'No,' says Jesus, 'seventy times seven.' That's a great challenge from Jesus. Not only should we forgive someone a certain number of times, we should go *on* forgiving! Now, in reality, if we have to go on forgiving someone all the time it may be because they are doing something wrong to us all the time, and we may think that they are just taking advantage of us! But forgiveness and love have no limits. We either love or we don't love. We either forgive or we don't forgive.

## Forgiveness frees us!

Forgiveness not only frees/liberates the other person, it also frees us. It is easy to withhold our forgiveness, it is easy to keep our love to ourselves, but then we run the risk of becoming bitter and isolated. To share it with others is the big challenge. To forgive someone who has really hurt us is difficult. It may seem like an insurmountable challenge. It may seem like a large mountain to climb but without forgiveness and love the obstacle of sin and bitterness are far bigger. It doesn't mean, of course, that the pain of being hurt disappears. But Jesus has shown us a way of life in which we must give, give, give...and go on giving! Then, we will be able to begin the process of healing and being healed.

## Reflection

Have you ever been hurt by someone?

Were you able to forgive them?

How difficult was it?

Are there things in your life now that causes resentment or bitterness?

Have you ever been forgiven by someone?

How did it feel?

## Prayer

Loving God there are many challenges in life!

Help us to share your forgiveness with others

so that we may be free to serve you

and bring your love to the world.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

# Happiness

*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.**

# Hope

*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 Manila, 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 us: 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

# Love

*The cross of Jesus is central to the Christian Faith. In essence, the cross is not a nice symbol at all: yet Christ has transformed the cross from an instrument of death and torture into a symbol of life and love.*

*This assembly explores the power of Jesus love, and is suitable too for the Feast of St Bridget of Ireland on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1 ( 1 Corinthians 1: 18, 22-24\_*

## **Opening Activity: Transforming**

Ask for some volunteers. Give them some random materials (newspapers, sellotape, twigs, straws, etc.). Invite them to make a cross. Set them against the clock. What have they come up with? How have things have been transformed—from random materials, rubbish even, to make something quite different?

Tell them the story of St Bridget of Ireland (Kildare) who in trying to comfort a dying man took some rushes from the floor and fashioned them into a cross and placed it into the man's hands. Her listener was both comforted and converted. St Bridget's Cross is very popular in Ireland and many households have one above their door. Others also place the crosses in the eaves of the roof, in order to ward off fire. Traditionally a new cross is made each year on her Feast Day (February 1) and the old one burned.

## **Jesus transforms the cross from an ugly to a beautiful symbol**

The cross, of course, is an instrument of torture and execution. It was used by the Roman army to punish and execute people. In itself, it is a rather ugly and repulsive symbol. Jesus was arrested, put on trial, and given a cross to carry to the Hill of Golgotha where he was crucified. Over two thousand years, the cross of Jesus has become one of the most important symbols for Christians. It is challenging and comforting. Jesus has transformed an instrument of torture and death into a symbol of hope and life. He has transformed and overcome sin and evil. He has triumphed over sin and evil, and now we can look at things differently, we look at life differently.

## **The cross shows us how much Jesus loves**

When we look at the cross, we can see:

the cost of Jesus' love for us

How painful love can be.

the power of Jesus' love for the world

how Jesus has transformed the world.

how Jesus suffers with us

How he has overcome death and darkness to give us and life and light

(If you have them available, you may want to show different kinds of crosses and crucifixes to the pupils and think about their different meanings).

So, if you need assurance that Christ loves you—look at the cross. If you need assurance that Christ has triumphed over dark and difficult situations, look at the cross. The cross has become a symbol of life and love, a symbol of Christ's victory over death.



## **Reflection**

What does the cross of Jesus mean to us?

What do we think when we look at it?

How does it challenge us?

How does it comfort us?

## **Prayer**

God,

the cross is a strange thing.

It reminds us of death and torture.

But it also reminds us of how much Jesus loves us

and how powerful you are:

you overcome death to give us life. Amen.

## **What you may need:**

Various materials for the volunteers to make a cross, such as newspaper, twigs, sellotape, string, etc.

Also, you may require a variety of different crosses, maybe a Saint Brigid's Cross (if you have one)

# Honesty

*We can't hide anything from God—he knows us through and through. This assembly looks at what it means to be open and honest to God, and what it means to be ourselves.*

## Opening Activity: Playing Up to the Camera!

Take a camera along. Tell the young people that the headteacher has asked you to take a photograph of them, which will be blown up to 12' high to go across the front of the school in order to promote the school and provide a colourful welcome to visitors. Get them to smile! (What you are actually looking for is people who act up to the camera, people who suddenly start pulling funny faces, etc.

When people see cameras, they often act up to them!. They almost adopt a different personality! They pull faces, lark about, pose for the camera, try to get their 'best side'! Just think about how people behave or compete for attention on reality TV programmes, such as Big Brother, etc. Many people tend to put on a show. Many people are afraid to show their true selves! We all do it at times!

## St Margaret of Cortona and Oscar Wilde!

There is a story told of St Margaret of Cortona who one day got so fed up of people saying how good she was that she climbed up onto the highest building in the town and began to shout out all the terrible things she had done over the years. She wanted people to know what she was *really* like and not just what they *thought* she was like. She may have been a saint but she was a sinner too! She may have been regarded as a very prayerful and holy person but she was also capable of making mistakes and doing things that were wrong. In fact, that's a good thing to remember—'Every saint has a past and every sinner a future.' (Oscar Wilde)

## Being Honest to God

Now no one would expect or encourage us to do what St Margaret did: telling everybody all of our sins! However, there is a sense in which we need to be open and honest to God. Remember, he knows us through and through, and so trying to 'kid' ourselves into thinking that we can 'kid' God really doesn't get us anywhere!

In Psalm 139 we have some lovely words which describe how God knows every part of our lives, that he knew us even before we were born, and that we are surrounded by his love wherever we are or whatever we do.

Like any friendship we need to be honest and open with God We can't hide from him—he knows us through and through. That's nothing to be scared of! It doesn't mean that he is like a secret camera, trying to catch us out. It means that whoever we are whatever we have done, whatever we think, God still knows us through and through and still loves us. He understands us. He is intimate with us. He may not like some or many of the things we do from time to time but he still loves us and wants us to be close to him. There is also a sense in which we need to be open and honest with ourselves. We don't have to pretend to be something we're not. We need to be realistic about our lives. So, let's try to be open and honest to God!

## Reflection

Are there things about ourselves that we try to hide from others?

Are there things that we try to hide from God?

How does it feel to know that God knows us through and through?

## Prayer

O God,

you search me and you know me.

You know when I sit down and when I stand up

You know all my thoughts

and all my ways.

Even before I speak you know what I am going to say.

There is nowhere in heaven or earth where I can escape your presence.

O God, how wonderful you are!

## What you may need:

A Camera or your smartphone - *If you're a visitor, explain to the teacher in charge of the assembly that you are not really taking photographs (remember taking photographs of young people will be restricted according to Child Protection Policies)*

# Humility

*This assembly explores the gift of humility. Jesus turns the values of the world upside-down, and helps us to be great by being humble! (Mark 9:30-37; Mark 10:2-16; 1 Corinthians 1:25-31)*

## Opening Activity

Invent various 'School Prizes' that are a bit zany or out of the ordinary. For example: the Most Laid Back Person, the Funniest Person, the 'maddest' person, the Most Quirky Person, the Loudest Person, the Chattiest Person, the Most Friendly Person, the 'Cheekiest' Person, and so on. Ensure that you choose well so that no embarrassment is caused to anyone. Remember it's all to be done with good humour. Prepare Certificates or prizes to give to the winners.

How do those people feel about winning the award? Would anyone like to make an acceptance speech?!  
Have you ever won a prize or an award?  
Have you ever been singled out for affirmation or reward because of something you have accomplished?  
How did you feel?

## A Surprise Prize

In October 2009, the US President Barack Obama was announced as a surprise winner of a certain famous award: the Nobel Peace Prize. He was awarded in after only nine months into his presidency. He was woken early in the morning with the news and in his acceptance speech he said he did not feel he deserved to be in the company of some of the 'transformative figures' who had previously received the award. Previous winners have been people such as such as Mother Teresa, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Lech Walesa, Mikhail Gorbachev, Martin Luther King Jnr, Elie Wiesel, and Nelson Mandella."

I am both surprised and deeply humbled,' he said. 'I do not view it as a recognition of my own accomplishments.' He continued, "I know that throughout history the Nobel Peace Prize has not just been used to honour specific achievements," he said. "It's also been used as a means to give momentum to a set of causes. And that is why I will accept this award as a call to action, a call for all nations to confront the common challenges of the 21st Century."

In one sense you would expect him to say he was humbled by it. After all, we wouldn't really think very highly of him if he said, 'Yes, it's about time I won this! I deserve it!'

## What does humility mean?

In his acceptance speech he said he felt humbled. What does it mean to be humble? What does humility mean? It's word or a virtue that we find quite often in the Bible and in the life of Jesus. Jesus had a few things to say about being humble. One day, as they walked along, his disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest. Later on that day—probably when they had forgotten about the conversation, Jesus asked them what they were talking about on the road. They must have been a bit embarrassed!

Jesus said, 'If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all.' He then took a little child, set him in front of them, put his arms round him, and said to them, 'Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me.'

## Being great means being humble!

In order to be great, you don't have to be physically powerful, intellectual, popular, or be a leader of a nation. You don't have to be a politician or a celebrity, you simply have to put other people before you, and put other people's needs before your own.

Being humble means:

- not throwing your weight around
- not thinking yourself better than anyone else
- giving way to others
- not being arrogant
- not being filled with pride.

It means realising that you can always learn something from other people. Jesus loved the 'little' people: the poor, the hungry, those in need, the sick and suffering, those who are rejected by others, those who are disregarded or overlooked by others. On so many occasions, people expect children to keep quiet or do as they are told. In the story we heard a few moments ago Jesus gives a special place to children. On another occasion, Jesus said, 'Unless you become like a little child you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' In a world where so many people seek fame and fortune, where some seek power and authority, where people want or need to be successful, Jesus tells us to become little people, humble people, not thinking too highly of ourselves, serving one another, looking out for one another.

St Paul once said, 'No place is left for any human pride in the presence of God By God's act you are in Christ Jesus...If anyone must boast, let him boast of the Lord.' (See 1 Corinthians 1:25-31)

## Prayer

Father,  
help us to be humble people:  
always looking for the good in others  
and putting their needs before ours.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## What is the Nobel Peace Prize?

On 27 November 1895, Alfred Nobel signed his last will and testament, giving the largest share of his fortune to a series of prizes, the Nobel Prizes. As described in Nobel's will, one part was dedicated to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses".

The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 89 times to 119 Nobel Laureates between 1901 and 2008 (96 times to individuals and 23 times to organizations) Winners have included Mother Teresa, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Lech Walesa, Mikhail Gorbachev, Martin Luther King Jr, Elie Wiesel, Nelson Mandela.

# Trust

*This assembly explores what happens when things don't turn out as planned and that if we trust in God we can know that, whatever happens, he is always with us guiding and leading us.*

## Opening Activity: Accidents do (make it) happen!

Take a bag of crisps and open them in front of the pupils and start to eat them as you greet them and introduce the assembly. Did you know that potato crisps were invented by accident. Chef George Crum created the perfect snack in 1853 when (to spite a customer who complained that his fries were cut too thick) he sliced a potato paper-thin and fried it to a crisp. Lots of wonderful and important things have been discovered by accident.

- Scottish scientist Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928 when a bacterial culture became accidentally contaminated with mould.
- The principle behind inkjet printers was discovered by an engineer working for Canon. After putting his hot soldering iron by accident on his pen, ink was ejected from the pen's point a few moments later.
- Corn flakes were accidentally discovered by the Kelloggs brothers in 1898, when they left cooked wheat unattended for a day and tried to roll the mass, obtaining a flaky material instead of a sheet.
- Luigi Galvani founded modern neuroscience when a charged scalpel slipped against the sciatic nerve of a frog to provoke convulsions.

Lots of important discoveries have been made by accident—when people have been working on or towards something else altogether and suddenly something happens that gives them an even great discovery!

## What have we discovered by accident?

There are occasions in life when we are so focussed on going in one direction that we fail to see so many other great opportunities. Sometimes, circumstances beyond our control may take us in a different direction, or help us to make new discoveries. This is even true when disappointing or difficult things happen to us. We may not have had the grades we wanted in our exams, we may have to make choices in life that we didn't think we would ever need to...but somehow they sometimes open up new possibilities. It may be difficult at the time but something good has, in some way, come out of them.

Sir Hugh Walpole an English novelist of the nineteenth century, said: 'The most wonderful of all things in life is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a growing depth, beauty and joy as the years increase. This inner progressiveness of love between two human beings is a most marvellous thing; it cannot be found by looking for it or by passionately wishing for it. It is a sort of divine accident, and the most wonderful of all things in life'

He was talking about falling in love being a divine accident. It happens when you least expect it or are not looking for it. Sometimes, God too takes us by surprise. Sometimes, we may be surprised at how God has been working in our life, or how he has enabled good things to come out of bad situations, how he has spoken to us in the most surprising of ways. We may not realise it at the time. Sometimes, it is only by looking back that we can see what God has been doing in our lives. Jesus promised to be with us always. Jesus told us that he is the Good Shepherd., guiding us and leading us and protecting us. If we trust in him, we will know that, however life turns out, he is always there alongside us, guiding us and leading us.

## Refection

Can the pupils think of any instances in their life that was unplanned but actually turned out all right?  
Is it possible to have life planned out?  
How open are they to different situations and experiences?

## Prayer

God,  
help us to know that you are with us,  
guiding us through life.  
Help us to know that, even when we don't know where we are going,  
You bring us along the right path.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## You may need:

A Bag of Crisps

# Endurance

*This assembly can be used during Lent or adapted to any time of year. Despite difficulties, we are called to persevere, to endure, and to recognise that although we are fragile, we carry a great treasure! (2 Corinthians 4:7)*

## Opening Activity: Packing for a journey

Provide a bag (such as a rucksack or holdall) and various miscellaneous items—too many to fit comfortably into the bag. Ask for a volunteer to pack it as well as they can. The likelihood is that they won't be able to pack it or if they do it will be a tight squeeze! It may be like this when packing for holidays...you don't know what to take and what to leave behind! (Alternatively, perhaps you could take various holiday items and ask them which items they would take and which they would leave behind if the bag was too heavy when checking in at an airport)

## Weighed down and distracted on our journey through life

Sometimes, our lives are bit like that—so full of so many things that it's a problem to squeeze it all in! We are setting off on our Lenten journey, a journey which takes us to the cross of Jesus and beyond. The danger is that we can be distracted by so many other things, we can carry so many things along with us, that even Jesus can be squeezed out. One reason that people give up things during Lent is in order to create more space in their lives, a space that enables them to grow closer to Jesus: not that Jesus is or should only be allowed a part of our lives, but it does provide room for us to focus on what's really important.

## The journey through Lent

The journey to the cross is a difficult one but it ends in new life and the glory of God as Jesus is raised from the dead. St Paul (in his second letter to the Corinthians) says we are like earthenware jars, fragile and sometimes easily broken, but we carry a great treasure within us, the treasure of Jesus. So Lent provides an opportunity to get rid of some of the less important things and focus on what's really important: the treasure of knowing Jesus.

## Prayer

Father, the journey through life is sometimes hard going.  
Help us to get rid of everything that weighs us down and trips us up,  
everything that distracts us from what's really important.  
Give us strength through the difficulties of life,  
and set our eyes on the joy of Easter.

## What you may need:

Holdall or Rucksack, and either a number of different items too big to fit into it or holiday items: book, sun lotion, sun glasses, swimming trunks, toiletry items, etc



# 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.**

# Responsibility

*Joseph was the foster father of Jesus, who accepted God's invitation to care for Jesus and stand by Mary. His responsibility was great. We too are called to be responsible for all that God has given us.*

## Opening Activity: Trusting others

Give various people things to look after whilst you give your talk. What you give them will depend, of course, on the age group. Young children could be given your 'favourite' teddy bear, for example, whilst older teenagers could be given your newspaper, a box with an 'imaginary' pet gerbil, your sandwich box, your watch, etc. Can they be trusted? Are they responsible? All of us are given different responsibilities. How do we deal with them? Do people trust us? Do we care about our responsibilities? What responsibilities do people have: in school, at home, elsewhere?

## St Joseph is given a great responsibility to look after Jesus

St Joseph was given a great responsibility—to look after and care for Jesus. Jesus wasn't his child and there were lots of different reasons why Joseph may not have accepted the responsibility—but he did it all the same. Why? Because he loved God, he trusted him, he obeyed him, he listened to him. He may not have quite understood what was happening but he knew that it was something special and that he was required to be responsible and dependable.

## We are called to be responsible: to look after what God has given us

Joseph was just an ordinary carpenter—in the whole scheme of things he didn't stand out or appear to have any significant gifts or features. But he did a great thing. He stood by Mary and he stood by Jesus and played his part in bringing him up. We too are called to look after the things God has given us. We are called to be responsible, trustworthy, dependable. St Joseph has given us an example of how to do this. Now, where's your newspaper and watch?

## Prayer

God our Father,  
help us to be responsible with the things we have been given.  
Help us to attend to Jesus,  
to listen to his voice.  
Help us to be responsible and trustworthy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen,

## What you may need:

Various items for the pupils to look after

# Patience

*Many Christians struggle with prayer. This assembly outline explores the simple heart of prayer – being attentive and patient! 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?

## Kevin and the Blackbird in the hand

There is story told about of 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.

# Ambitious

*The Presentation of the Lord (or Candlemas) on February 2nd is a lovely celebration, with tender themes of joy and love, surprise and sacrifice, intimacy and glory: it allows one last glimpse at Christmas before we begin to move onto Lent! This assembly, though, can be used at any time, and focusses on the ambitions of Simeon. (Luke 2:22-40)*

## Opening Activity: What are your ambitions?

Ask for 5 or 6 volunteers. Provide each with a postcard and a pen. Ask them to write an ambition they have: something they want to be or do when they are older, but ask them not to show it to or share it with anyone. Collect the cards, shuffle them up, read them out one by one, and ask the rest of the young people to guess which ambition belongs to each person. Alternatively, deal the cards out to the volunteers and ask them to share their ambition, pretending that it is theirs, and the rest of the young people have to decide whether it is true or bluff. It's good to have ambitions. Something to work towards and strive for, something to aim for and achieve, something to hope for!

## Simeon had an ambition

Simeon was an old man who for years had an ambition. I'm sure through the years he had many things he wanted to achieve but only one thing was really important to him: to see the chosen one promised by God. God had promised him that this would happen before he died. And so he kept looking forward, kept hoping, for this to happen.

## Is God in your plans and ambitions?

Whatever you want to do, whatever your ambition is in life, I hope that Jesus is in there somewhere. It may be, at this moment, that he doesn't fit in with your plans...you may not have any plans, you may not know what to do. When you are making plans and dreaming of and working towards your ambitions do you ask God what he wants you to do? I hope that one day, within all your plans and ambitions, you will discover Jesus in there somewhere!

## Reflection

Invite the pupils to think about:  
What ambitions do they have?  
What dreams and ambitions do they have for the world?  
What do they think the future holds for them?  
Do they think they have anything to look forward to?  
Where is Jesus in their plans for the future?

## Prayer

Father, as we prepare for the future  
and hold onto so many plans, ambitions and dreams,  
help us to discover Jesus, who gives us so much to look forward to.

## What you may need:

Postcards or paper, and pens for 5 or 6 volunteers

# Kindness

## Opening Activity

Take a bag of tortilla crisps/chips. Open them in front of the pupils and start to look inside the bag, examining each crisp carefully before you eat it. After a few crisps, ask them to excuse you but that you are looking for Jesus. Every now and again, some person somewhere in the world discovers the face of Jesus in a tortilla chip. Of course, it's not 'Tortilla Chip Specific' although it seems it's often a favoured snack. People claim to discover the face of Jesus in all kinds of convenience foods: from cheese and chive crisps to Toasted Pitta Bread! Some crisps even bring a few hundred dollars on ebay, while others create a shrine for others to come and see! One person who said they discovered the image of the Virgin Mary on a toasted cheese sandwich sold it for \$28,000! Now that's what I call convenience food! And it's not just American's who embrace it! A family in Wales in May 2009 claimed to discover the face of Jesus in the lid of a Marmite pot!

## The Serious Point is...!

These rather bizzare and funny stories actually bring us to a serious point! Where, really, do we discover Jesus? Where does he choose to reveal himself to us? And how do we recognise him?

## St Martin of Tours

There is a story about St Martin of Tours (whose feast day is November 8th). He was born in what is now known as Hungary in 317. He joined the army at the age of 15 but by the age of 18 years he was preparing for Baptism. It was whilst preparing for Baptism that one of the most famous stories told about him occurred. Whilst he was still a soldier, he was at the gates of the city of Amiens when he met a scantily dressed beggar. Immediately, he cut his own military cloak in half and shared it with the beggar. That night he dreamed of Jesus wearing the half-cloak Martin had given away. He heard Jesus say to the angels: "Here is Martin, the Roman soldier who is not baptised; he has clothed me." In another story, when Martin woke his cloak was restored, and the miraculous cloak was preserved among the relic collection of the Merovingian kings of the Franks.

It reminds us of an incident in the gospels (Matthew 25:31-46) when Jesus said:

*I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'*

When we serve other people we serve Christ. We discover Christ in the poor and needy, the homeless and hungry, those who are imprisoned. When we serve these people, we are serving Christ. When we ignore these people we are ignoring Christ. We don't need to look for Jesus in convenience snacks or breakfast spread. If we really are serious about finding and recognising Jesus we should look for him in the broken people of the world, in the poor and those who are in need. That's where he is—waiting to be clothed and comforted. (SAFETY: Of course, we have to be careful. For example, it's not particularly appropriate to encourage for young people to start trying to physically help certain individuals: it could be dangerous. But

*they can be involved in charities or organisations that help such people. They can treat such people with respect.)*

Jesus' words are a call to:

- Treat all people with respect
- Not overlook others because of how they appear to us
- Look for ways in which we can serve Jesus in others
- Treat others as we would treat Jesus

## **Reflection**

Think about the people we have seen that we have ignored or avoided

Have there been times when we have mistreated people?

Have there been people in need that we have overlooked?

How can we help people?

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus,

Help us to discover you in the broken and needy people of the world.

Help us to clothe you and comfort you.

Help us to raise you up and quench your thirst.

Help us to discover you in the poor

and in the lives of people on the edge of society.

# Service

*In every generation, if you ask children or young people what they want to do be later in life, you'll get all kinds of answers – many of them predictable, and some of them reflecting current trends. So if you asked the same question to the assembled children or young people, you may get the answer, 'I want to be a Youtuber!'*

## Opening Activity

Depending on the age group (remembering that there are age restrictions to certain online platforms) as the young people who uses particular social networking sites? Do any of the young people blog or vlog (video blog)? Are there any youtubers? Blogging and vlogging is used for lots of different reasons: to share thoughts and ideas, as a diary, to let people know what's happening in your life, to entertain, to make money!

(Before the assembly find out some of the amazing success stories of young people who have millions of online followers, who make a lavish amount of money, and who have done significant things. Just do an internet search for something like “young successful youtubers”)

It's amazing what influence they can have without going far at all

## The story of Saint Martin de Porres

Today we are thinking about a Saint who born before there were computers or phones or vlogging, before trains or planes or electricity.

Saint Martin was born in Lima, Peru in 1579. He wanted to be a missionary and to travel the country and the whole world sharing the good news of Jesus but he never left Peru. At the age of fifteen he entered a community of Dominican Friars. Here he was happy to do all the little tasks, such as sweeping and cleaning and cooking, which is why he is often represented holding a broom. He cared for orphans and the poor, and those who were sick, but he never left the city of Peru.

However, there are weird and wonderful stories told about him: how he could appear behind locked doors and seem to be in two places at once! One story tells us about an African slave who said he had known Martin when he came to care for him and many others in chains. Some time later the slave saw St Martin in Peru, and he was very happy to meet him again and asked him if he had had a good journey; only later did he learn that Saint Martin had never left Lima!

Another story tells us about a merchant from Lima who was in Mexico and fell ill. He said aloud: “Oh, Brother Martin, if only you were here to care for me!” and immediately he saw Martin in his room. Again, this man did not know until later that Martin had never been in Mexico! And there are other strange stories of Martin showing up in China and Japan.

These stories may be weird and wonderful but they simply show us that nothing would stop St Martin from looking after the poor, caring for the sick, and helping slaves. His life and ministry brought healing and love to so many people—wherever they were! His influence extended beyond Lima, beyond Peru

## What can we do?

Sometimes, when we read the stories of the saints we may think that we have to travel great distances, or do wonderful and amazing things. St Martin shows us that there are so many people around us every day who need our help. And also that there are so many people around the world who need our help. We may think that we can't help them. After all, they are thousands of miles away. But we can do so much to help them.

The young people who started vlogging now influence millions of people around the world. What can we do to influence people around us and indeed the whole world?

- We can support organisations that work with the world's poor, such as Christian Aid or CAFOD
- We can take part in their worldwide campaigns and apply pressure to world leaders to make important decisions to help the poor and underprivileged.
- We can be involved in missionary organisations
- We can treat people around us with kindness and compassion.
- We can buy fairly traded products to give people in developing countries a better way of life and a fair deal.
- We can stop making excuses about why we can't do certain things and concentrate on what is possible
- We can be involved in voluntary work in our own community, church or school to help people around us.

There are simple, little ways in which we can begin to help to change the world and bring the comfort and healing of Jesus to so many people. It may not mean blogging, but it may mean that something we do here, in the place where we live, can transform the life of someone thousands of miles away.

## Prayer

Lord God, you are present everywhere.

May distance not get in the way of us helping others.

Help us to embrace the opportunities of helping people everywhere. Amen.



# Goodness

*In one of the letters of St Paul, when he was writing to the church in Rome about how they should be living together, respecting and valuing one another, making one another feel important and loved, he said 'Love with all sincerity. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good.'* (Romans 12:9)

## Opening Activity: Empty your pockets please!

Go to the assembly with your pockets full of various items, the usual things that seem to clutter our pockets and prevent us from finding our keys! For example, mobile phone, wallet, various bunches of keys, MP3 player, pen, paper, loose change, handkerchief, diary, fluff (where does it come from?!) and other random items such as a piece of string, boiled sweet, till receipts, and, most importantly, a small tea light (also have a cigarette lighter!)

Empty your pockets in front of them commenting on how much stuff you gather, how many random items clutter your pockets, how many ridiculous things you carry around with you! Some of those things are really valuable and you look after them because, for example, to lose your phone or your wallet would, not only, be a great bother, but could also mean losing money! Other things are completely random and you may wonder why you carry them around with you and how they got into your pocket at all!

And it's not only in our pockets that we gather so many things: we have so many things (some really important, some completely unimportant) in our lives. Perhaps ask the young people if they have tidy or messy bedrooms—is their bedroom neat or full of mess and clutter? But what things do we really value? What things in life would we hate to lose? What do we really love? What would we miss? What wouldn't we care about losing? Can they share some ideas of what kind of things are important to them?

## Cling to what is good

In one of the letters of St Paul, when he was writing to the church in Rome about how they should be living together, respecting and valuing one another, making one another feel important and loved, he said 'Love with all sincerity. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good.' In other words, let your concern and love for one another actually mean something. Let other be people be important to you. Don't be attracted to things that are bad for you or other people.

Only hold onto the good things: things that help others, things that build up the community and have good consequences. Not those things that may appear to be fun and harmless but are perhaps dangerous or harmful to people, not things that are selfish or just pure self-indulgence with no thought for others.

The Christian story, the story of Jesus, is (amongst many other things) about Good versus Evil, about Light overcoming Darkness, about Life being stronger than Death. Christians believe that by Jesus coming into the world to love us and show us how to live, by dying and rising from the dead he has overcome evil, he has lighted up the darkness, he brings us life.

However, despite all of that, there are still bad things that happen in the world. There are still evil things that happen. People still choose the wrong things. People still do bad things. Can anyone think of bad things in the world? They may come up with things such as: racism, homophobia, bullying, different kinds of abuse, murder, wars, crime.

## What can we do?

Sometimes, we seem to be surrounded by so much bad news and so many bad things. And that's where we come in. There are, of course, times when we do bad things rather than good, when we make mistakes. But fighting evil in the world is not just for world leaders or superheroes, it's down to us, too! Faced with such awful things we may think, 'Well, what on earth can we do?'

Simon Wiesenthal was a survivor of the Jewish Holocaust (when 6 million European Jews were murdered during the Second World War under the Nazi regime). He spent his life trying to seek justice, and trying to fight against anti-Semitism. He said, 'For evil to flourish it is only required that good men do nothing.' So, if we sit back and do nothing at all, and allow these bad things to happen, then we are actually helping evil to flourish in the world. You see, it's all very well for us to complain when bad things happen, it's all very well to shake our head and say how awful something is, but what are we going to do about it? But still you may be thinking, 'Well what on earth can we do?'

There is another old saying. 'It's better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness.' Which takes me back to the clutter in my pocket. The little candle I emptied onto the table with everything else just seemed like rubbish. It seemed very insignificant. But imagine you were in a very dark room, where you couldn't see your hand in front of your eyes. It would be far better to light a small candle than to complain about how dark it is!

*Light the candle in front of them.*

So, if you think something in the world or in your community or in your school is bad, then rather than just shaking your head and complaining about it, or turning away and thinking it has nothing to do with you, why not do something? Why not think about the small things you can do? Whether it's a smile or a good morning or a helpful hand or whether it's joining an organisation that fights against injustice or helps to promote peace or help those in need. Whether it's standing up for someone who is being bullied by telling a teacher or going out of your way to help someone who is going through a difficult time...we all have the power to choose good, to help good to flourish, and to stamp out evil.

## **Prayer**

God our Father,  
you created the world and saw this it was good  
but there are so many bad things in the world.  
Help us to choose only good things  
and to fight against evil  
So that your world may be filled with only good things. **Amen.**

If you'd like to find out more about St Mary's CF10 then please check out our website at [www.stmaryscf10.com](http://www.stmaryscf10.com) where you'll also find a growing number of freely available resources.

If this resource has been of help then please feel free to share with others.