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INTRODUCTION

Our Easter Play is an easily produced play for use with Foundation/Reception and Key Stage One pupils. The Easter story is seen through the experiences of Jesus' disciple Peter, although the narrative is carried by an adult narrator. The play introduces the events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day, ending with the story of Jesus meeting with his disciples after the resurrection and preparing breakfast for them on the shores of Lake Galilee.

THE NARRATION

In the play, the story is recounted through narration, mime and singing. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the narration is one of the most important features of the play. There may be a temptation to entrust it to a 'good reader' but, more often than not, even 'good readers' cannot be heard, and the presentation will be spoiled by inaudible narration. For this reason, it is essential that an adult acts as narrator.

THE PRESENTATION

Easter is a time of year when a special celebration is appropriate. The play may be used as part of a whole school presentation, as a class or year group assembly, as a school production with parents and visitors present, or as a celebration in church. The songs may be used on their own as a part of other assemblies during the season of Easter. This is a good way of learning them and teaching them to other children.

THE SONGS

The four songs are all written to popular tunes, and children will learn the songs very quickly.

All the words and music carry permission to photocopy, so there is no problem in providing the words of the songs to all attending any sort of performance. The participation of the audience is a vital and enjoyable aspect of the play, which both encourages the children and helps to generate a sense of sharing in the experience. In some places, in addition to the scripted songs, it is suggested that seasonal songs or recorded music are used.

THE CHILDREN

Schools come in different sizes! *Our Easter Play* is designed for use with either large or small numbers of children. Older children may be formed into a supporting choir. Younger children can mime the drama as indicated by the narration.

STAGING

The word 'stage' has been used throughout to indicate the acting area. If possible, there should be access from either side. All movement is given in the stage directions, which are shown in italics.

COSTUMES AND PROPS

Decisions over the use of costumes and props must be made locally, but the safety of the children is of prime importance. Traditional biblical costume can be suggested through the provision of pieces of fabric, dressing-up items, simple cord belts and so on. The two friezes or collages can be organised as a class project, using large sheets of sugar paper or lengths of paste-free lining wallpaper and paint or collage materials. Alternatively, they can be designed in the way of stage 'flats' and simply painted. The imitation fire for the trial and beach scenes can be made with strong brown card, and red and yellow cellophane paper.

PUPILS' WORK

The children might be encouraged to write their own verses to some of the songs. There are a number of places where pupils' own work can be incorporated, including the making of the friezes, items to be placed on the collage, signs, paper fish for the beach scene, and so on.

THE PLAY

The story for the play is based on the narratives in the Gospels of Luke and John. Where the actual words from the Bible are used, they are taken from the Contemporary English Version.

THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

At the Foundation Stage, the play contributes to the following early learning goals identified in the Framework:

- Personal, social and emotional development
- Communication, language and literacy
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Creative development

At Key Stage One, the play contributes to many of the requirements, especially:

- 1b** name and explore a range of celebrations, worship and rituals in religion.
- 1d** explore how religious beliefs and ideas can be expressed through the arts.
- 2a** reflect on and consider religious and spiritual feelings, experiences and concepts such as worship, wonder, praise, thanks, concern, joy and sadness.
- 2d** reflect on how spiritual and moral values relate to their own behaviour.
- 3f** story: how and why some stories are sacred and important in religion.
- 3g** celebrations: how and why celebrations are important in religion.

3n using their senses.

3o using art and design, music, dance and drama to develop their creative talents and imagination.

OUR EASTER PLAY SCRIPT

BIBLE LINK

The story is taken from Luke 22:7–20 and 39–62; John 13:3–9; Luke 23:38 and 47; John 20:1–8; John 21:1–17.

This play follows the events of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day as seen through the eyes of Jesus' disciple, Peter. The drama is carried

by the story narrative, which needs to be read by an adult. If required, it is possible to draw the lines given to the cast members back into the main narrative so that the children enact the drama without speaking parts.

No props or scenery are required for the stage area other than where indicated in the script.

Cast

(In order of appearance)

Adult narrator
Peter (speaking part)
Jesus (speaking part)
John
Man carrying a jar of water
Passover crowd
Other disciples
Crowd for garden of Gethsemane
Woman who recognises Peter (speaking part)
Small group round fire
Mary Magdalene

Props

(Earthenware) jar of water
Low table
Bread (for the foot-washing scene and the beach scene)
Wine
Towel
Bowl
Large wooden cross or picture of an empty cross
A piece of purple fabric
Sign printed with the words 'This is the King of the Jews'
CD player (for Easter music)
Imitation fire (for trial scene and beach scene)
Frieze or collage of the Easter garden, showing the tomb with the stone rolled away
A large fishing net
Paper fish hidden inside a large plain paper bag (for fish template, see page 28)

Narrator: This is the story of a young man called Peter. Peter used to be a fisherman until, one special day, he became one of Jesus' friends. That was three years before our story begins. Today, Peter wants to tell you what happened at the time we now know as Easter. It all began with Passover. The Passover festival is one of the most important celebrations in the Jewish year. Everyone wants to be in Jerusalem for Passover and the city is always crowded with people. Peter and Jesus' other friends were wondering what Jesus wanted to do about preparing for the special Passover meal. But, as usual, Jesus had it all planned.

Jesus and Peter enter the stage.

Jesus: Go and prepare the Passover meal for us to eat.

Peter: Where do you want us to prepare it?

Jesus: As you go into the city, you will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him into the house. The owner will take you upstairs and show you a large room. Prepare the meal there.

Jesus and Peter exit. The children playing the Passover crowd come on to the stage. In the middle of them is the man (child) carrying the jar of water. John and Peter enter and push through the crowd. They follow the man carrying the jar of water slowly around the stage as the song is sung by all.

SONG 1

Follow the man

(Tune: Here we go round the mulberry bush)

Follow the man with the water jar,
The water jar, the water jar,
Follow the man with the water jar,
On Passover Day in the morning.

Don't lose the man with the water jar,
The water jar, the water jar,
Don't lose the man with the water jar,
On Passover Day in the morning.

Push your way through all the crowds,
All the crowds, all the crowds,
Push your way through all the crowds,
On Passover Day in the morning.

Up the stairs to prepare the feast,
Prepare the feast, prepare the feast.
Up the stairs to prepare the feast,
For Passover in the evening.

At the end of the song, the crowd and water carrier leave the stage. Peter and John get ready for the Passover meal. The low table is brought on to the stage. Peter and John put bread and wine on the table. Nearby they place the towel and bowl.

Narrator: Later that day, Jesus and the others came to the house where Peter and John had prepared the meal.

Jesus and other disciples enter the stage and sit down.

Narrator: During the meal, Jesus did an amazing thing. He stood up and tied a towel around his waist. Then he filled a bowl with water and knelt in front of each one of his friends. Slowly and carefully he washed everyone's feet. Well, you can imagine what their feet were like with all the dust from the roads. It was a job for a servant—not for God's Son.

SONG 2

The foot washing song

(Tune: Ring-a-ring of roses)

During the following song, Jesus enacts the foot-washing.