

Mary, Queen of Peace: The Story of Fatima



LEADER'S NOTES

This presentation lasts up to 20 minutes. We recommend you deliver the whole story. **However, if you wish to shorten it you may omit the writing in italics and in brackets.**

This presentation has been prepared by **Mission Together**, the Pope's official children's charity for overseas mission. The story encourages children to pray for peace. Mission Together children pray and fundraise for children living in poverty overseas. 97% of money raised by children for Mission Together goes towards its work with children. Although all projects are Church-backed, **Mission Together** follows Christ's example – helping everyone in need, regardless of background or belief.

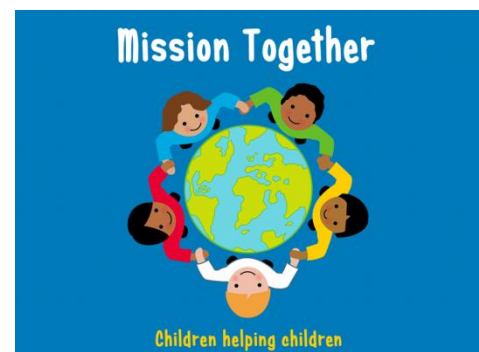
SLIDE ONE

Welcome to your Mission Together assembly!

Explain to the children that the slide shows the **Mission Together** logo. Draw their attention to the words and images.

In the logo you can see that children are holding hands together and smiling. They are 'children helping children' and they look like they are giving the whole world a great big HUG!

When children help children, the world feels God's love in a special way. Today we will hear an important way that Mission Together children like you bring God's love to children all over the world.



SLIDE TWO

First, we are going to hear a story about Jesus and the children who came to see him.

Listen carefully to what Jesus said.

Read the words from St Matthew 19:13-14



'Some people brought their children to Jesus, so that he could bless them. His disciples told the people to stop bothering him. But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Anyone who is like these children belongs to God's kingdom."

The disciples thought that Jesus didn't want to be with the children but they were wrong! Children are very important members of God's great family. And here are some reasons why:

Jesus loves children for their joy and fun. He loves how they listen and learn. He loves them for the ways they care for one another. He loves them when they are sad or hurt. He even loves them when they are angry. And Jesus loves them when they take the time to pray to him and grow in friendship with him.

Yes, Jesus loves YOU.

You belong to God's great family and, like all the children in the world, you matter to him.

SLIDE THREE

The story we heard about Jesus happened over 2,000 years ago when he lived on earth. Now we will hear about some other children who lived 100 years ago, and who were also very special. These children were living during a sad time when many countries around the world were fighting one another.

It was a terrible war that lasted for four years. Today, we know that war as the First World War. The children we will meet lived in a country that is not far from here. Some of you may even have visited it. The country is called Portugal.



SLIDE FOUR

The children's names (from left to right) are Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta. When this photograph was taken Lucia was 10 years old, Francisco was 9 and his sister, Jacinta, was 7. Lucia, the eldest, was Francisco's and Jacinta's cousin.

The children were very poor and their parents could not afford to send them to school. Nevertheless, they were happy and contented children who enjoyed each other's company.

Lucia liked dancing and organising the younger ones. Francisco was musical and he was the quietest of the three. Jacinta was clever and she liked to dance and sing.



[Look at the photograph: Their clothes are typical of the clothes poor children in the countryside wore in those days. Can you spot Francisco's woolly hat and the girls' veils? Also, Francisco is carrying a stick. Can you guess why?]

The children were shepherds! Every day, they went out to the meadows near their homes in Fatima where they looked after the families' sheep.

[The walking stick helped them to pull themselves over the hills and their headgear kept them warm when the cold wind blew.]

SLIDE FIVE

Before the children left home, their mums would remind them to say their prayers while they were out. They were told to pray a special prayer called the Rosary.

The Rosary is a prayer we say to Jesus' mother, Mary. Mary is our mother, too. She wants us to turn to her with our worries and upsets and she is always ready to listen and to ask her Son, Jesus, to help us.



As it is a long prayer made up of many Hail Marys people often use Rosary beads like the ones on the slide to help them count their prayers. But remember, Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta were only small. Often they forgot to count the beads and, like all children, what they really wanted to do was play, run, dance and sing.

Q: So what do you think they used to do?

A: Sometimes they rushed their Rosary or even cut it short!

SLIDE SIX

[Each day was much the same as the last for the children. All year long, they prayed and played whilst tending their flock, until one day something unexpected happened. What happened was so wonderful that it changed the lives of the children and, later, the lives of millions of people around the world.]

On Sunday 13 May 1917 the children were playing in the meadows as usual when a bright beam of light suddenly burst through the air. The children thought it might be the start of a storm, but the sky was clear and there was no sign of rain. Scared, they headed for home. But another flash of light made them stop in their tracks.



There, standing by a small tree, they saw a beautiful lady dressed in white. The children described her as “more brilliant than the sun, shedding rays of light”. The lady spoke to them very gently and told them not to be afraid. She said that she had come from heaven to ask the children to do something special. She asked them to:

“Pray the Rosary every day for peace in the world and for the end of the war.”

She also asked them to return to that same place at the same time every month for the next six months when she would see them again. Then the lady disappeared.

The children realised that they had been given a very important job to do - one that had been entrusted to them and **not** to the grown ups! So they did what the lady had asked and each time they met her they listened eagerly to what she said. They concentrated hard and they even managed to pray the Rosary more carefully. The children learnt how important it was to pray for peace.

SLIDE SEVEN

Word spread quickly and each time the children kept their appointment with the lady, crowds joined them. Even though nobody else could see the lady, many people came from all over Portugal to pray the Rosary for peace and an end to the war.

[There were others who were not happy that so many people believed the children and they accused the children of telling lies but the lady always encouraged them.]

Eventually, at their last meeting, the lady told the children who she was.

Q: Have you guessed yet who it was the children had seen?

A: Yes, it was Mary, our mother and Jesus’ mother.

Jesus had chosen these little shepherd children to help his mother to bring peace into the world. Mary also told the children many other important things about how to make good choices in life.



SLIDE EIGHT

A year later, the First World War came to an end. Peace was established and the soldiers returned to their homes.

Sadly, a few years later, Francisco and Jacinta died but Lucia lived until she was aged 97. She became a nun.



That means that she left her home and family in Fatima and spent her life in a convent with other women called sisters, loving God and praying for peace every day.

Today there is a huge church in Fatima and people visit from all over the world, you can see a photograph of this church on the screen. In 2017, 100 years after Mary had visited the children, Francisco and Jacinta were made saints by Pope Francis. This means that the Church believes that these two little children who played and prayed, just like you, are now with Jesus and Mary in heaven. Today they are called Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta.

[The photograph on screen was taken at the special Mass during which Francisco and Jacinta were made saints. Can you spot the images of St Francisco and St Jacinta?]

SLIDE NINE

Do you remember how you heard at the start that you are very important to Jesus and he loves to hear your prayers?

He also wants you to pray to his mother, Mary for peace, just like Lucia, Saint Francisco and Saint Jacinta did. Maybe you can join with the Mission Together children all over the world who pray the Mission Rosary, like the one on the slide?



The coloured beads represent the different continents so that when you have prayed a whole Mission Rosary you have prayed for children everywhere in the world.*

If you are too small to pray a whole Rosary you can pray one Hail Mary every day of the school week. After five days and by the time you get to Friday you will have prayed for all the children in the world to live in peace.

**For more information on how to pray the Mission Rosary please visit: <https://missiontogether.org.uk/mission-rosary>*

SLIDE TEN

As we come to the close of this story, we can begin our prayers for peace by saying together one Hail Mary and the Mission Together Prayer shown on the slide. Let's start today:

Mission Together Prayer:

May all children

In the world

Share love

Share friendship and live

In the peace

Of God's love.

Now and forever. Amen



LEADERS' NOTES

Mission Together also encourages children to help other children, through sharing what they can so that children in poor countries do not go hungry, so that they are able to go to school and so that they can receive medicine if they are sick and know that they are God's children who are loved and valued. All these things are happening with the children's help. To find out more please visit:

<https://missiontogether.org.uk/teachers-resources/>