

# ***Encounters with holiness***

## ***Introduction:***

Children enter the room to the music “Be still for the presence of the Lord...”

**Leader:** Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here... But what is holiness? What do we mean when we say that God is holy? *(Take suggestions from the children)*

We are going to hear three stories of encounters with holiness *(Children divide into three groups to rotate around the stories)*

## ***1 Moses: Holiness as glory***

*(Two pictures at either end of the space, one of the burning bush and one of Mount Sinai. The group sits to face the burning bush)*

I’m Adah. I’m one of the People of God. Yes, that’s us - the people who were slaves in Egypt. The people who walked through the water to freedom.

*(Picture of Moses leading the people of God through the water)*

We’re wanderers now. Wanderers in the wilderness. Freedom is harder than you think. You have worries that you don’t have when you’re a slave. Food, drink, shelter. Which way to go.

You’ll have heard of our leader. Moses. Yes, that’s right. The baby hidden in the bulrushes because the Pharaoh wanted to kill all the Israelite baby boys. Discovered by the princess and brought up in the Pharaoh’s palace. *(Picture of Moses in the bulrushes)*

You might have heard other stories too. Moses was on a mountain once and he saw a bush that didn’t burn. It was on fire but it didn’t burn. He told us about it. God spoke to him, he said. *(Picture of burning bush. If using an LED tree turn on the lights)*

“Take off your shoes for you are standing on holy ground.” At this Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God.

“Who are you?” asked Moses.

“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. I am calling you to go to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and tell him to let my people go.”

Moses protested of course. He wasn't up to it, he wasn't good at speaking to people, God had chosen the wrong person. But he went in the end. He had to, he said. He had stood on holy ground in the presence of the Holy One. It changed him forever...

“What shall I call you?” he asked at the end “Call me I AM,” was the reply.

*(Move group to other end of the room to face the mountain)*

So here we all are, all the people of God. You know the story. Moses went to Pharaoh and we did escape. Through the waters to freedom.

And now we are here in the wilderness, at the foot of Mount Sinai. We're waiting for Moses. He went up the mountain. This is what it looked like when we first arrived. You can see it clearly. But since then it has been wreathed in cloud.

This is the second time that Moses has been up the mountain. When he came down the first time he told us we needed to wash our clothes and make ourselves ready to meet with God. We could go to the foot of the mountain but no further. Anyone who went further would be killed.

On the third day the cloud came. It covered the entire mountain. We could not see through it. Thunder and lightning crashed around us. Then the trumpet sounded. It got louder and louder. We had never heard anything like it. We shook in fear. *(Picture of people of God and Mount Sinai)*

Then Moses spoke and we heard the voice of God answering him.

Moses led us to the foot of the mountain. None of us would have dared to go any further. Smoke billowed out of the mountain like fire. The Lord had descended and the whole mountain trembled with his presence.

Only Moses was allowed to enter the cloud and go up the mountain.

So now we are waiting. Waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain...

Look! Look! He's coming. Everyone is shouting. He's bringing something with him. But look at his face. It's transfigured. It's transfigured by glory. Oh... it's too

bright... it's too bright for us to look upon... we're all turning away and covering our eyes.

### **Questions**

I wonder what is the biggest thing that you have ever seen?

I wonder what is the most glorious thing that you have ever seen or experienced? What was special about it?

### **Response**

Clouds of glory to decorate and put on display

Sand tray, people of God

## ***2 Isaiah: Holiness as goodness***

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne...

The prophet Isaiah was in the temple in Jerusalem. (*Show model (or picture) of the temple*). The people of God believed that they had built a holy house for God in the holy city of Jerusalem. At the end of the temple was the place that is called the Holy of Holies. Only priests were allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and even they were only allowed in once a year on the Day of Atonement. The golden ark, holding the stone tablets - the 10 best ways to live - was kept in the Holy of holies.

This is Isaiah's story of what happened to him in the temple.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on his throne. The hem of his robe filled the temple... (*Throw long length of material down*)

Above him were seraphim, mighty six winged angels of fire. Each had six wings. With two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet and with two they flew. (*Show pictures*) These are how different artists have shown Isaiah's vision. Which of them do you like the best?

And as the seraphim flew they cried out to each other: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty. The whole earth is full of his glory." (*Pause*)

At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. *(Shake wave drum, touch door posts)*

Isaiah said, "There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

Then one of the creatures flew down to me, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. *(Take a coal from the brazier with the tongs)* He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, "This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven."

Then I heard the Lord say, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

### **Questions**

I wonder what Christians mean by sin?

I wonder if it is possible to be sinless?

God asked Isaiah to take a message to the people. What do you think the message might have been?

### **Response**

Making spectacles with different kind of lenses to see in a different kind of way

## ***3 Holiness in action: The woman with bleeding***

*(Start in the corridor, with children sitting beside the hessian road)*

This is the beginning of my story so we shall start here. It is many years ago now but I remember it as if it was yesterday.

Unclean! Unclean!

12 years I'd been unclean. Bleeding, bleeding that didn't stop. Every day I got weaker. Every day I saw people turning away from me. If they touched me they would become unclean too. Until sunset. Then they could wash and become clean again. But I couldn't. I stayed unclean.

I tried things. So many things. I went to the rabbis, the leaders of the synagogues. They told me that I was sinning, that I wasn't keeping the rules

properly. I did my best. I kept all the rules, every single one. But nothing changed.

Doctors? I spent all my money on doctors. They didn't do any good either... I ended up worse, actually worse, than I was before.

Healers? Yes I went to a few healers. Con men mostly...

But this one. This one sounded different. I don't know why... there seemed to be something real about him... I thought I'd go and see him... Jesus, they called him. Jesus of Nazareth.

Follow me...

*(Enter the room, ask children to sit down by the side of the road.)*

What a crowd there was! I don't think I'd ever seen so many people. They didn't know me in this strange town so it didn't matter that they couldn't help touching me. I kept my head down though. They wouldn't notice me then. All I could see was their feet.

I could see Jesus... But he was talking to someone else. Someone important. They said he was the leader of the synagogue. Jesus wouldn't have time for me now, I thought. *(turns away sadly, then stops as an idea strikes her.)*

But then I thought... Jesus didn't need to see me... or talk to me... If I could just touch the hem of his robe... *(She creeps forward, reaches out and touches the robe. She stops and straightens up. She flexes her arms, legs etc, skips?! She is healed. She starts to make her way back through the crowd, then stops and looks over her shoulder )*

I was healed! Instantly! I couldn't believe it. I wanted to slip away but then I heard him saying something.

"Who touched me?"

And his friends were laughing and saying, "Look at the crowd around you! Everyone is touching you! How can you ask who touched you?"

And he answered: "I felt the power go out of me."

I knew then. I had to go back. I was afraid of what he would say but I had to go back.

*(Goes back and kneels down)*

I told him everything. All those years. All those years of suffering.

And he said to me: "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and suffer no more."

*(Get up and move to chair.)*

And now? It was many years ago... but I wonder...

What was this power that he had? Where did it come from?

What did he mean when he said my faith had healed me?

What did it mean to be healed?

*(Ask children the questions.)*

*(Optional pictures could be shown throughout the story)* **Response:**

Use model magic to make symbols of power

## ***Ending and Response***

This is the vision of St John the Divine as he wrote it down for the Book of Revelation that ends the Bible. It is a vision of the holy city the new Jerusalem.

I wonder what you think a vision is? *(as children for suggestions)* Why

do you think John's vision was about Jerusalem?

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and there was no sea anymore. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It was prepared like a bride dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Now God's presence is with people, and he will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain, because all the old ways are gone."

I wonder what you think this holy city, the new Jerusalem would be like? *(Ask children for ideas)*

We have a strip of paper here for you to draw or write or graffiti your thoughts for the new Jerusalem. You may want to write words or phrases. You may want to draw and cut out something to stick on. You may want to use the

collage materials. You may want to use the 3 dimensional materials – the blocks, materials, shimmer stones etc

As well there will be a chance to have a drink and a biscuit and to choose 5 little things that to you symbolise holiness to take home with you.

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