

SCENE 1

A teacher is talking to his class about some research they are about to do in the library.

Mr Novak: Listen up everyone. We're going to be presenting an assembly about Easter to the rest of the school. We'll start with each group researching a particular day relating to Lent and Holy Week.

(Takes seven sheets of paper from a folder and reads from each one.)

Mr Novak: The days are: Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Simon: Please, sir, Lent isn't a day.

Mr Novak: Quite right Simon. Would you like to tell everyone what it is?

Simon: (nervously) Yes, er, well, it's ... er the time before Easter but I can't remember how long. I just know because last year my mum gave up sugar in her tea for Lent and when Easter Sunday came she was allowed to have it again ... but she almost spat it out because it was too sweet. She doesn't take sugar in anything now.

Mr Novak: Thank you for that, Simon. I'll put your group down to find out about Lent, shall I?

(Mr. Novak distributes all the papers.)

Mr Novak: Now remember, I just want a brief explanation of the days ... and Lent ... and how the Easter symbols we know today are related to them. Organise your information so that everyone has a little bit to say.

When you've finished, we'll come together and talk about how Easter is important to Christians today.

Off you go now and remember to work quietly.

Children exit stage left. Mr Novak exits stage right.

SCENE 2

Children and Mr Novak return to stage.

Mr Novak: So, how did we go?

Children: (Muttering.) Fine, sir. OK. Not bad.

Mr Novak: I'm sure you've done really well. Now put yourselves in order and we'll go once through to see what we've got.

Short discussion as children arrange themselves in the correct order.

Reader 1: For Christians, Lent is a time to think about their lives over the past year and to reflect on how well they have followed the teachings of Christ and how they could improve. It's a sort of spiritual spring cleaning. It reminds them of the 40 days Jesus spent fasting and praying in the desert before he rode into Jerusalem.

- Reader 2:** In the olden days, people used to prepare for Easter by fasting during Lent. They couldn't give up food completely, but they ate only enough to keep them alive ... no rich fancy foods or special treats.
- Reader 3:** On Shrove Tuesday, the day before Lent begins, people cleared their food cupboards of anything they weren't allowed to eat during Lent such as butter and eggs. They used all of these ingredients to make a special feast before the fasting began. For many years now, pancakes have been the traditional food to eat on Shrove Tuesday as they include butter and eggs in the recipe.
- Reader 4:** Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, about six weeks before Easter. On this day, some Christians attend a church service at which the minister marks an ash cross on their foreheads and reminds them to turn their backs on sin and follow the word of the Gospel.
- Reader 5:** The ash used at the Ash Wednesday service comes from the burning of the palms which were used at the previous year's Palm Sunday service.
- Reader 6:** Palm Sunday was when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on a donkey and people threw down palms to make a pathway for him.
- Reader 7:** The people were happy to see Jesus because they believed he was the king who was going to drive the Roman army out of the Holy Land.
- Reader 8:** Lots of things happened on Maundy Thursday. Jesus and his 12 special friends, called the apostles, had their last meal together. Christians call this the Last Supper.
- Reader 9:** It was at this meal that Judas, one of the friends, slipped out and told the Romans where they could find Jesus. For this information, he was paid 30 pieces of silver.
- Reader 10:** The Romans had heard that Jesus was calling himself the Son of God, which they thought was blasphemy. They believed he should be punished for this.
- Reader 11:** None of his friends knew what was going to happen next but Jesus did and he was very sad. He went outside to pray to his father in Heaven. Led by Judas, this is where the Romans found him.
- Reader 12:** Judas realised too late what a dreadful thing he had done, trading a good friend for money. He went away and killed himself.
- Reader 13:** On Good Friday, Jesus appeared in court and, although he was acquitted by the judge, the crowd wanted him convicted. They began to riot so the judge let them take Jesus and do what they wanted to him. They wanted to crucify him.
- Reader 14:** They placed a crown of thorns on his head and made him carry the cross on which he was to be hanged, to a place called Calvary, outside the city walls. When he arrived at Calvary, he was nailed to the cross by his hands and feet. When he was dead, his body was taken down and placed in a tomb.
- Reader 15:** The hot cross buns we eat at Easter time are to remind us that Jesus died on the cross. In years gone by, they were only available on Good Friday but now they are in the shops for much longer.

Reader 16: In times past, Christians were not allowed to eat meat on Fridays so they used to eat fish instead. Today, Good Friday is the only day in the year when Christians are supposed to not eat meat.

Reader 17: On the Sunday morning, two women went to the tomb to attend to Jesus's body, but it was not there. Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead. During the 40 days after Easter, it is said that he appeared many times to his friends before returning to his father in Heaven on Ascension Day.

Reader 18: By dying on the cross, it is believed that Jesus paid the price for all the sins of humankind and, with his resurrection, people now have the chance of a new life, following the word of God.

Eggs and fluffy chicks are symbols of new life that represent this belief.

Reader 19: On Easter Sunday all the fasting was over and people could indulge in all those things they had fasted from during Lent. Today, Easter Sunday is the day when we give chocolate Easter eggs as special treats.

Reader 20: Simnel cake is a light fruit cake with a marzipan layer on the top and in the middle. Eleven round marzipan balls are placed around the edge of the cake. These are supposed to represent the apostles who were left after Judas betrayed Jesus.

Mr Novak: (staring silently for a few moments at the children) What can I say? You have explained it all. We'll add a short introduction and conclusion but there's no need to change anything. Well done class. I'm most impressed!

Children: (pretending to be embarrassed) Oh, gee. Thanks, sir!

Simon: What about what Easter means to Christians today, sir?

Mr. Novak: Of course, Simon. Any suggestions?

Simon: I'm not sure, sir, but when you hear the story of Easter and all the pain and suffering Jesus went through, it sort of makes you feel guilty for not always being good.

Mr. Novak: I do understand what you mean, Simon, but don't be too hard on yourself. Nobody's perfect.

Harry: Sir, is it like you know the rules of how to behave and live properly but even though you might try your best you don't always get it right, so you say sorry?

Mr. Novak: Yes, that's the sort of thing, Harry.

Sally: Easter's like spring cleaning and New Year's resolutions isn't it, sir. You clear out all the bad stuff from your heart and promise to make a real effort to do better next year.

Mr. Novak: That's a lovely way of putting it, Sally. Any more ideas from anyone ... ?



BELIEVING IS SEEING



'Did you make an Easter basket at school this year?', Mum asked 10-year-old Hannah.

'Sure', Hannah grumbled. 'Mrs Charles likes making crafty things so we had to make lots of stuff — a card, an Easter Bunny, an Easter Bilby and a basket. We even had to make some 'churchy' stuff.'

'Didn't you like making them?', Mum asked. 'You usually like making things.'

'Yes, I guess, it's just that it's not real! Is it? It's just make-believe for little kids so that they don't know that their mum and dad buy the eggs and hide them', said Hannah.

'What's so wrong about make-believe?', countered Mum. 'Its not much fun being sensible or practical all the time. What about all the great people who did things just because they believed that they could? Imagine how many things wouldn't have been invented or created if people didn't believe.'

'That's different', replied Hannah.

'Is it?', queried Mum. 'Go and wash your hands. Dinner will be ready soon.'

As Hannah washed her hands and ate dinner, she thought about what Mum had said. She really was too old to believe in the Easter Bunny. It was fine for little kids to believe. She wasn't going to spoil things for her little brother and sister but she knew better. They'd find out soon enough when they got older. It was better to believe in things you could see — real things.

'But what about things you can't see!' echoed the little voice in her head. 'You can't see love, but you know that your parents love you. So you must believe that it exists. You can't see the wind, but you can see what it does. So it must exist.'

'That's different', thought Hannah. 'That's still real stuff. Who would honestly believe that some big fluffy rabbit runs around hiding eggs for every kid in the world?'

'It's just not possible!', she finally declared.

Early the next morning, Hannah and her family packed the car for their Easter camping trip. They were going to spend four days in the bush at their favourite spot near the river. They planned to fish, bushwalk along the trails and swim in the river. The camping spot was a popular one so other families used it as well, which meant that there were always lots of new kids to get to know and hang out with. Meals cooked over the camp stove and eaten in the fresh autumn air always seemed to taste better. Maybe this year, they'd even roast marshmallows again over a real campfire.

On Good Friday morning, Hannah and her family arrived at the camping spot and set up their tent, camp beds and sleeping bags. They stacked their cases in their corner of the tent and stored the food in a safe place and put out the table, chairs and stove.

Hannah made friends with Jada and her family and the two girls were soon exploring the river bank and surrounding

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camping area. After lunch, the weather had warmed up enough to venture into the river for a swim and a paddle in the kayak. 'That's funny,' thought Mum as she prepared the rolls for the barbecue. 'I thought I'd packed more vegetables than this.'

'That's odd', thought Hannah. 'Mum's usually so organised. She writes enough lists to sink a battleship.'

On Saturday, the whole family placed sandwiches, water bottles, sunscreen and insect repellent in their backpacks, donned their hats and set out along the marked trail. It was the longest one in the area and it meandered and twisted through the bush and up the mountain where a spectacular view of the area could be seen.

'This year the rangers have opened up a new section', Dad explained as they trudged along. 'They've put up barriers to protect regeneration areas and signposts to identify special trees and places. There's supposed to be a sacred Aboriginal site up here as well. Who knows we might even see a bunyip or two', he joked.

When they finally reached the viewing area, they all agreed that the climb had been worth it. They found a comfortable spot to rest while they ate and drank and rested their legs. Mum even drifted off to sleep while Dad kept an eagle eye on the children as they poked around investigating.

'Hey, Dad! Look at this!' yelled Tanner, Hannah's younger brother, as he pointed to a group of holes hidden in the bush. 'What sort of animal lives in a hole like this? A snake? It's fairly big. Maybe it's a wombat hole!'

'It could be,' replied Dad, 'but I didn't think there were wombats in this area. Maybe the ranger will know. Take a picture and we'll ask him.'

'Funny,' thought Hannah as she studied the holes in the ground, 'they don't look like any animal holes I've ever seen before either.'

On Easter Sunday, when Hannah and her brother and sister woke up, there were chocolate eggs on the end of their camp beds. There was even a trail of little eggs leading out of the tent and into the bush from Hannah's camp bed.

As her brother and sister ran to show Mum and Dad their goodies, Hannah quickly dressed, put on her socks and shoes and began to track the trail of tiny eggs into the bush.

'Mum and Dad have gone to a lot of trouble this Easter', she thought to herself as she trekked along in the early morning air. But then she remembered the missing vegetables and the strange-looking holes in the ground. And wasn't it odd how her brother and sister hadn't noticed the trail of eggs from her camp bed?

The eggs were getting further and further apart as she rounded a curve in the trail. No-one could be seen and it was quiet and still all around. Suddenly, she heard a rustling behind her to the left. She spun around just in time to see a large fluffy tail disappearing into the bush.

For an instant she wanted to rush after the animal, but then she thought, 'People say that seeing is believing, but maybe it really should be "Believing is seeing" instead.'

