

# Greasley St Mary Reredos



heritage learning welcome

**Aim:** To explore the importance of the Gospel writers to Christians

**Objective:** Pupils will learn something of the background of the Gospel writers and why they are remembered in the reredos at St Mary's and consider who they have learnt from.

**Curriculum links:**

KS1 Leaders and teachers

KS2 Inspirational people

PSHE

**Activity:** Thinking of people who have been influential in the children's lives. Learning about the characters on the reredos and their importance for Christians.

**Resources:** Worksheets and pens/pencils



## Information for Leader

This lesson is based on the reredos. The word reredos comes from the Anglo-Norman *arere* meaning *behind* and *dos* meaning *back*. This reredos contains images of the four gospel writers (known as evangelists) – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

When the children are sharing the people who are important to them, their contributions need to be treated with respect.

Younger children may need to be told that the images on the wall are not what the men actually looked like, but are what the painter thought they might look like.

## Introduction (5 mins)

- Start with the children sitting in the choir stalls. After they have taken off coats and settled down introduce yourself and ask them what books they can see in the church.
- Focus on the Bible. Briefly explain that it is split into the Old and New Testaments, and, if the children are old enough ask one to find the beginning of the New Testament. What are the first four books of the New Testament called? There are pictures of these four characters in the church – can any of the children see them?

## Activity (20 mins)

- Explain that where the pictures of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are is a very important place for Christians – by the altar. So these must be thought of as very important people for their pictures to be here.
- Explain to the children that the exact writers of the Gospels are not known, but that lots of people have looked into this and have a pretty good idea who they were. Nor do we know what they looked like.
  - Matthew is thought to have been a Jewish tax collector.
  - Mark's mother lived in Jerusalem and in the early days of the church they met in her house. He went on journeys with Paul and knew Peter well.
  - Luke was a doctor, and so was well educated. He went on journeys with Paul telling people about Jesus.
  - John was a fisherman and is often described as the disciple Jesus loved, so he would have been special to Jesus.

- Why are they here? Bring out that they are important to Christians because they wrote the stories of Jesus' life and without them we wouldn't know as much about Jesus as we do. Ask a few children which stories about Jesus they know and explain that they came from one of the books written by these four men. These four men have made a huge difference to Christians today – without them Christians wouldn't know as much and wouldn't understand what Jesus taught in the same way, and so would live their lives differently.
- We all have people we have learnt a lot from, as Christians have learnt a lot from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Obviously we learn a lot from our teachers, but who else do we learn from? This could be friends, relations, people on the TV, authors . . . (you might like to give an appropriate, brief, personal example here). Ask the children to think about who they have learnt from (this can be someone they know or someone who has influenced them in some way) and a special place where they would put a picture of that person. If they are willing a few children might like to share their ideas – encourage them, thanking them for sharing and expressing what a wonderful person they have described and how they have been important to the child. Give out the sheets and ask the children to draw their person, or something to represent that person.

## Plenary (5 mins)

- If appropriate all the sheets could be placed on the altar, or held carefully by the children and either have a short period of quiet when the children remember the person they have drawn and think about how important they have been and what they have learnt, or say a short prayer, such as (with the children joining in with the Amen if they agree with the words:
  - Heavenly Father, we thank you for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and for the books they wrote and all we are able to learn from them. We also thank you for all the people we have been able to learn from, and for all they have taught us. Amen

## Extension

- Looking at the reredos – what are the differences between the figures? Why might these be so? (particularly bringing out the differences between Jesus and the other four – aura with additional gold, facing the front rather than facing Jesus, more intricate pattern round the painting, IHS instead of name (either the first three letters of Jesus in Greek, or referring to *Iesus Hominum Salvator*, Jesus saviour of mankind))
- Look at other examples of a reredos on the Church History Project website (<http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk>). What do they represent? Why were they put in such an important place? Good ones to look at would be:
  - Whatton, St John of Beverley – Nativity with three kings  
<http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk/whatton/hfitting.php>
  - Thrumpton, All Saints – Jesus on the cross  
<http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk/thrumpton/hfitting.php>
  - Hyson Green, St Stephen – modern wooden with simple carved dove  
<http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk/hyson-green-st-stephen/hfitting.php>
  - Bleasby, St Mary the Virgin, tiled with 'I am the Bread of Life', cross, IHS and chi-rho  
<http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk/bleasby/hfitting.php>
  - Newark, St Mary Magdalene – St Mary Magdalene, the Risen Christ and scenes from John's Gospel  
<http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk/newark-st-mary/hfitting.php>
  - Daybrook, St Paul – The Last Supper  
<http://southwellchurches.history.nottingham.ac.uk/daybrook/hfitting.php>



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