

Read

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8,
12-13, 17

Romans 15:4-9

Matthew 3:1-12

LIVING THE WORD

Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2019



REFLECTION

It is never easy to hear that we are wrong, especially when it means we have to do something differently. This was true for the followers of John the Baptist, as well. John told his followers to repent and change their ways in preparation for the coming of the Kingdom of God. As would probably be the case today, some heard John's proclamation and transformed their thoughts, words, and deeds. Others might have heard the proclamation and ignored the call to conversion. The power of conversion is that it cannot be forced or coerced. Conversion must be freely chosen.

As we continue our journey through this Advent season, how do you respond when you hear the words of John the Baptist? Do you take notice of the areas in your own life where you might need conversion? Are you aware of the ways God calls you to growth and transformation? The choice is yours as you prepare for the celebration of the Incarnation.



ACTION

Take the opportunity during this Advent season to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. As always, do not be afraid. Rather, use this as a chance to continue your transformation as you prepare the way of the Lord.



This short resource by Paul Turner will help you prepare to celebrate the sacrament. It is available from www.LTP.org.



? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What does *repentance* mean to you?
- ❖ What spiritual goals do you have for the remainder of Advent?



December 8, 2019

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LECTIONARY #4A

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Romans 15:4-9

Matthew 3:1-12

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In the Gospel we remember John the Baptist's ministry to the Jewish people, and we recall how he prepared the way of the Lord, as written in the Book of Isaiah. John called people to turn away from sin and bear the good fruits of a holy life. Calling out the Pharisees and Sadducees for empty practice, John worked to correct the wrongs in his society.

Q FOCUS: *We are called to bear good fruit for the Lord.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

There are many observances this week—the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (which is moved from December 8 to December 9 this year), the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the Memorial of St. Lucy. Reading about these stories of Mary and the saints are a wonderful way to inspire holiness in our everyday lives. We are reminded that the Christian life is frequently filled with challenges, but that God gives us strength and courage to face these challenges.

Church Teaching Connection

“Each individual lay person must be a witness before the world to the Resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus, and a sign of the living God. All together, and each one to the best of his or her ability, must nourish the world with spiritual fruits (see Galatians 5:22). They must diffuse in the world the spirit that animates the poor, the meek, and the peacemakers whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed blessed (see Matthew 5:3-9). In a word: ‘what the soul is in the body, let Christians be in the world!’” (*Lumen gentium*, 38).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 3:1-12

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: / *A voice of one crying out in the desert, / Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths.* / John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being

baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

We frequently think of prophets as people who can tell the future, or perhaps people who can predict important events. In the Bible, prophets are portrayed as people who preach and work to help people become obedient toward God. Prophets recognized the wrongs committed by communities, and worked to right those wrongs. Warning the people that their sin displeased God, prophets were, in general, not very popular people.

In the Gospel, we hear about John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord. Clad in camel hair clothing and a leather belt, John the Baptist consumed locusts and wild honey, and he was the man about whom Isaiah had spoken—"a voice of one crying out in the desert, / prepare the way of the Lord, / make

straight his paths" (Isaiah 40:3). John, a prophet, preached so that people might turn from their sin and embrace that which is truthful and good. People in Judea traveled to be near him, to hear him preach, and to be baptized by him. Driven to turn away from sin and embrace goodness, the people acknowledged their sins.

John criticized two groups of people who arrived to watch his preaching, teaching and baptisms. The Pharisees and Sadducees were hailed by John as a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 23:33). He warned them that they "must produce good fruit as evidence of [their] repentance" (Matthew 3:8). He warned them that identity as Abraham's children was not enough to save them. These strong words served as a warning and a promise—people were warned that they must turn from sin and not depend on affiliation alone. Being a child of Abraham doesn't negate the requirement that they bear good fruit for God. They were promised that the One who is coming would offer Baptism of spirit and fire. This promise is, of course, about the coming of Jesus.

► As we consider this Gospel reading, we must ponder John's message.

► Are we turning from sin, and are we concentrating on the fruits we bear?

► What does it mean to turn from our sin?

Turning from sin means that we must identify that which is against Church teaching and strive to eliminate it from our lives. If a person struggles with laziness, for example, he must first admit his sin and struggle, and then work to overcome it. If you struggle with laziness, then challenge yourself to complete all of your necessary tasks without a teacher or parent reminding you to do it. Make a list, and make it happen. While you may be driven to perfect endeavors, remember that your effort is a good thing, and that if you fall short, you try again the next time.

An absence of sin is not the only goal in the spiritual life. Certainly we are called to avoid sin, but we are also called to embrace goodness and bear good fruit. Bearing good fruit can take many appearances. We bear good fruit when volunteering at a local food bank or hospital. We also bear good fruit in our families and at school.

► How do you bear fruit?

Even in the smallest interactions we can bear fruit. Lean over, and pick up someone's dropped item just to be kind. Offer to buy lunch for your teammate who forgot her wallet. Do some chores for your parents or siblings. We bear fruit when we serve one another, following in Jesus' example.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 84.

What sins and shortcomings do you need to address? How do you plan to address them this Advent?

When you try to overcome a sin and are not successful, what do you do next? How do you try to overcome it again?

What fruits are easy for you to bear? What fruits are harder for you to bear? What fruits do you appreciate most from others, and have you told them about your appreciation?

Act on the Word

Bearing Fruit in Every Environment

What fruits will you bear in Jesus' name? This week, read about St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and her "little way." St. Thérèse was born and raised in France, and entered a Carmelite monastery as a teenage girl. It was there she wrote about finding her "little way." Young Thérèse was not a world-traveling missionary, nor did she preach to enormous groups of people, bringing them into the Church. She was not famous during her life. In her community, the young nun was not called to roles of high leadership or power; nonetheless, she led her community in her acts of kindness, giving, and charity. Thérèse focused on the people in her everyday life—she saw her community as her mission. Instead of feeding the hungry in drought-stricken savannas or poor urban streets, the young woman focused her attention on acts of service for those closest to her. After reading about St. Thérèse, decide how you can bear fruit in small acts of goodness to those closest to you.

Closing Prayer

*Lord of all,
you provided John the Baptist the courage to live
in your truth.
Purify us that all we do may be pleasing to you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.