

# Read

Baruch 5:1-9

Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3,  
4-5, 6

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

## LIVING THE WORD

### Second Sunday of Advent

December 9, 2018



#### REFLECTION

Today's Gospel tells of John the Baptist, the voice who cries out in the wilderness, the one who points to the coming of Jesus. As daunting as it may sound, each of us is called to be voices crying out about our faith in the world, by word and by action. We can do that in many ways by using the gifts that God has given us—on service trips, or through our witness when we attend Mass or pray before meals in public, or even as simply as giving a sincere smile to someone. God asks us to take a good look at ourselves and be open to his creative Spirit, taking opportunities that arise to do something good for another. Every word and action of our lives can be a proclamation of Christ! Think back to today's Gospel reading. Notice how John the Baptist is described as crying out in "the desert" (Luke 3:4). Desert is an interesting choice of words. A desert is not home-like; it is desolate, barren, forsaken, and confusing. Calling our world a desert implies first that this is not our true home, and second that the world is in need of what we have to say. If you lived in a hot desert and someone came along and taught you how to find water, I bet you would listen very closely to what he or she had to teach you! In the same way, all people need is the Gospel in their hearts in order to give their lives meaning and purpose. Never doubt the importance of your message or your responsibility to share it with others, for, as St. Teresa of Avila said, "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours."

#### QUESTIONS

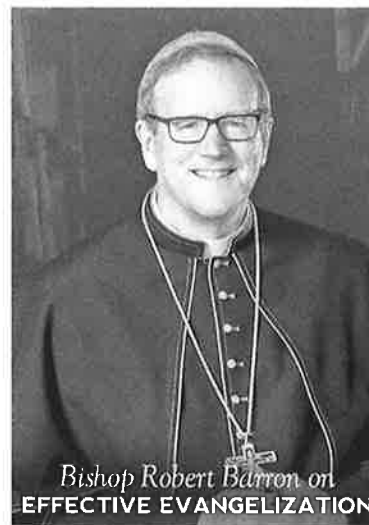
- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What areas are the "deserts" in your heart that Christ needs to heal?
- ❖ In what ways can you share the Gospel with people you encounter?



#### ACTION

Go out of your way to consciously spread the Gospel this week. Look for an opportunity to perform an extra act of kindness—you could call a friend and promise to pray for him or her; befriend someone at school who seems to be left out; volunteer for a charitable cause in your area; or invite someone to go to Sunday Mass with you. It may feel scary to step outside of your comfort zone, but Christ's power is greater than anything else in the world. He will help you. Take a deep breath, ask for his help, and then go for it! The message you have is of infinite value. It is transformative, life-giving, and greater than any one person or situation. You don't have to worry about failure, because God's Word will transform the hearer if you just plant the seed.

Watch this short video by Bishop Robert Barron to learn more about evangelization.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfpdpvZPwrg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfpdpvZPwrg)  
to learn about evangelization.



December 9, 2018

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### LECTIONARY #6C

Baruch 5:1-9

Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6 (3)

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

## 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

This week's readings remind us that the things of this world are not what is most important. Scripture tell us "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy" (Psalm 126:3). We hear about raising valleys and lowering mountains. In God, we are all equal. A good focus for this week's activities and reflection is *justice*, a topic that will help teens understand what it means to live the message of God. Justice as a virtue implies taking action toward making sure everyone's basic needs are being met. Too often, in our society, the word *justice* implies a sense of "getting even." This is very different from justice as a virtue. Sunday's readings show us how focusing on God helps us support justice as a virtue. As you prepare to lead teens, consider the following questions:

- ▶ What is God saying to me in these readings?
- ▶ Do I focus on the positive aspects of my life or do I focus more on those things that seem negative? How does society feed into those negative things?
- ▶ In what ways am I called to practice justice in my own family, community, work place, and elsewhere?

**Q FOCUS:** *Justice is a virtue.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12, the Patroness of the Americas. With our focus on justice this week, this liturgical observance presents a great opportunity to focus on the inequalities we often see in our country toward our brothers and sisters from other countries and other faiths. Share the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe and of St. Juan Diego's involvement in this story, and invite students to share stories regarding relatives who have struggled with acceptance. Allow students to share their own stories of injustices they have experienced in all areas of life.

### Church Teaching Connection

*Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2003, provides information regarding how our Catholic faith calls us to treat immigrants and refugees:

Migrants and immigrants are in our parishes and in our communities. In both our countries, we see much injustice and violence against them and much suffering and despair among them because civil and church structures are still inadequate to accommodate their basic needs. (5)

We judge ourselves as a community of faith by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us. The treatment of migrants challenges the consciences of elected officials, policymakers, enforcement officers, residents of border communities, and providers of legal aid and social services, many of whom share our Catholic faith. (6)

# 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

Luke 3:1-6

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

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

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: / *A voice of one crying out in the desert: / "Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths. / Every valley shall be filled / and every mountain and hill shall be made low. / The winding roads shall be made straight, / and the rough ways made smooth, / and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."*

**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:

Today's readings focus on justice. Justice is one of the cardinal virtues (four moral virtues). Justice, along with prudence, fortitude, and temperance, is the foundation of morality. The word *cardinal* comes from the Latin word *cardo*, which means "hinge." As a virtue, justice has to do with making sure everyone's basic needs are met and that all are treated equally and fairly. In our society, however, justice is widely known as "getting even" or "giving someone what they have coming to them" (not in a positive way!).

► How would you define justice?

► What television shows or commercials portray justice and how?

In addition to justice, this week's readings remind us once again, that the things of this world are not what is most important. We hear much about power, money, authority, titles, and yet we know from Scripture that these things are not what is most important. We hear in today's Psalm: "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy" (Psalm 126:3; *since only the Gospel was proclaimed at the beginning of this session, you might need to recap the other readings for the teens if you refernece them in today's reflection.*) However, if you focus only on the news, TV commercials, and social media, you would not think this is the case. We hear messages of fear, negativity, and competition. We hear about those who have much and have succeeded and we hear of those who have little and have failed.

► How do you measure success?

► What do you consider a failure in your life or in others'?

In God, success and failure are not measured by what we have or have done.

► What we have or have accomplished or have been recognized for in society is not what matters in God. What do you think matters most to God and why?

The Gospel speaks of valleys being raised and mountains being lowered. This gives us a sense of equality. In the Second Reading, St. Paul reminds

us of our partnership with the Gospel (the Good News) and that he is confident we will continue to do good works through God (*you may need to recap the Second Reading for the teens*). St. Paul's prayer is that our love will increase and that righteousness that comes through Jesus will all be for the glory of God. Such a hopeful message.

- ▶ Do you think this is lost in our society and in the focus of our media?
- ▶ Where and how do you see hope in our society?
- ▶ Where do you find hope?
- ▶ What is the difference between hoping and wishing? (*Wishing does not usually include any effort from us [we make a wish when we blow out candles] whereas hope implies action, us working toward something.*)

In the Gospel we hear John the Baptist proclaim: "*Prepare the way of the Lord*" (Luke 3:4). He speaks of making the paths straight and the rough roads smooth. All this is possible if we continue to focus on God as our light and our hope. If we take our eyes off the path and shift our focus to the power our society values, we will undoubtedly lose our way. Of course, the hope of Advent reminds us that God as light is always available to us. We just need to open our eyes.

## 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 88.*

John the Baptist reminds us to "*Prepare the way of the Lord*" (Luke 3:4). He calls us to recognize the need to prepare for God's presence in each and every moment of life—not just for the end of time.

As our love increases we are more equipped to bring God's love to our world. God's love is what enables us to do justice and to be aware of the fairness and equality that we are called to do and be throughout our lives.

# Act on the Word

## Stay the Path: Part II

*You will need construction paper, pens, markers, scissors, and old magazines for this activity.*

Add to the path you created last week (see the directions on page 82). Divide teens into smaller groups and invite them to share their responses to these questions:

- ▶ In what ways did you bring God's light to the path or respond to God's light on your path?
- ▶ Think of a time when an injustice was done to you or someone you know. How did that make you feel? Did it change you or your future thoughts and actions in any way?
- ▶ During the week, in preparing the way for God, how can you bring justice to our world? How can you make things equal or fair? What is one way you can help others have their basic needs met?

If that seems insurmountable, remember that knowledge is the first step. Find an article and begin to learn about the inequalities that exist in our country and in our world (maybe even in your own school!). (*Prepare a list of resources ahead of time to share with teens so that they can easily research this topic.*) Share with the group next week and together decide if there is anything you can do collectively to work toward justice. There is always prayer and education!

## Closing Prayer

*Almighty God,  
you created all people in your image.  
Help us to treat all people with justice and love,  
and to stand up for those who are treated unfairly  
and with judgment.  
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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*