

Read

Baruch 5:1-9

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

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

LIVING THE WORD

Second Sunday of Advent

December 5, 2021



REFLECTION

A former Old Testament professor dubs today's Gospel, "The tragedy of the omitted comma." John the Baptist harkens back to the words of Isaiah, written today as: "A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord'" (Luke 3:4). My professor suggests the original text uses different punctuation: "A voice of one crying out, 'in the desert prepare the way of the Lord.'" See the difference one comma makes?

In the modern translation, the fact that John is located in the desert only impacts himself. Once we place the comma after "crying out," the desert location suddenly becomes part of the message. John is telling the people to go to the desert to prepare the way of the Lord. Let's consider that for a few moments. Why the desert? What's so significant about this space?

The desert offers the spiritual seeker silence and solitude in which to focus on God. The desert is also simple. All excess frills get built in town. There are no big distractions in the desert, at least in terms of worldly possessions. The desert offers ample space for the difficult work of preparing our sinful hearts and broken world for the coming of Christ.



ACTION

Most of us can't easily get to an actual sandy, hot desert. Instead, create a "desert corner" in your room. Clear out any distractions from this space: electronic devices, homework, trinkets, etc. Create space to simply sit and meditate in prayer for a few minutes each day. See what you learn from this desert space and time.



Listen to John Michael Talbot's version of "Sacred Silence" to help declutter your mind at the beginning of your prayer this week.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX_EJEGCYgo

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Why could it be valuable for you to spend time "in the desert"?
- ❖ What is one action you can take to "prepare the way of the Lord"?



December 5, 2021

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LECTIONARY #6C

Baruch 5:1-9

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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

John the Baptist and Zechariah are not like the politically powerful men introduced at the beginning of the Gospel. John and Zechariah were not known to be powerful men, and they followed the Lord and his ways, faithfully clinging to him. John puts God's purpose before all things. Like John, we are called to a holy life, albeit not likely one in a desert eating locusts and wild honey. God asks us to prepare our hearts for Jesus' coming, and to prepare the world around us as well. We are called to seek holiness. Advent is our time of preparation for both Christmas and for Jesus' coming at the end of time. Today, help they young people consider what it means that our actions should point to Christ.

Q FOCUS: *Our lives should be a faithful witness of Christ.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week we will remember St. Nicholas on December 6. In the fourth century, Nicholas was a bishop of Myra, which is in modern-day Turkey. Nicholas is a beloved saint in the Eastern and Western churches because he is a shining example of Jesus' deep love and rich generosity toward his people. On December 9 we remember St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin, who lived in the sixteenth century and was a native Mexican. His vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary inspired a renewal of faith throughout Mexico. As a sign of her special care for the people, Mary's image

was miraculously imprinted upon Juan Diego's cloak and fresh roses appeared as a sign of life in a dormant growing season. This image is known as Our Lady of Guadalupe; she is the patron saint of the Americas and we celebrate her feast on December 12.

Church Teaching Connection

As Christians and members of the Church, we are share in its purpose and work to fulfill it in our own activity. "Whether it aids the world or whether it benefits from it, the church has but one sole purpose—that the kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished. Ever benefit the people of God can confer on humanity during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the church's being 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for humanity" (*Gaudium et spes*, 45).

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:

Tiberius, Pilate, Herod, Philip, Lysanius, Annas, and Caiaphas. These men's names are recorded in history books, and at the time of their leadership, they were powerful and feared men. Herod, who wanted to protect his place as king, had the Jewish boys under age two slaughtered because he feared the kingship of the infant Jesus. There was Pilate, who later played a role in Jesus' crucifixion. Annas and Caiaphas were high priests who were part of Jesus' trial; they also were part of the chief priests who gave blood money to Judas to betray Jesus. The people we hear about in today's reading figure prominently in the life of Christ, but not for good reasons. The earthly power of these men was such that we can hardly fathom.

Contrast these powerful men who wielded supreme earthly authority to the next two people mentioned in the reading—John the Baptist and his father, Zechariah. John wasn't a wealthy man accustomed to splendor and comfort. John lived in the desert, and as we hear other Scripture passages, lived on wild honey and locusts. Zechariah was not king, and he was not a man who wielded a sword, nor was

on anyone's political radar. Zechariah was a humble and faithful Jewish man married to Elizabeth, a humble and faithful Jewish woman.

► **Who are some other powerful political figures in the Bible? They can be from the Old Testament or the New Testament.**

► **Who are some other faithful figures in the Bible? They can also be from the Old Testament or the New Testament.**

► **What are the differences from between these two types of figures?**

In some cases, those who are powerful in a political arena are also full of faith. One does not necessarily negate the other. In today's Gospel, however, when we see the contrast between those who desire power over everything else and the faithful, we see where God has placed his message—it is with John, the faithful man, devoted not to his own power, but to God and God's Word who came to earth. Even when he gained a large following who were spiritually hungry for his message, John didn't point to himself—he directed his efforts to preparing the way for the Lord, as we hear about in the book of the prophet Isaiah.

This Advent, let us join with John the Baptist as we prepare the way for our Lord. We prepare our hearts, minds, and souls for Christmas, when we celebrate Jesus' birth. We remember the wait that the Jewish people had for Jesus' arrival, and we remember how John helped them to be ready for Jesus. Lastly, we prepare ourselves for the return of our Lord when he comes in glory.

► **What are some ways young people can prepare the way of the Lord? What might it mean in your social situation to make a straight path for God?**

► **How do make a straight path for God in our hearts?**

We do these things by spending time with our Lord, and by serving our Lord in the ways he has called us to serve. We make our hearts ripe for God's grace by participating in the sacraments, and committing ourselves to God's ways and his work for us.

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 76.

In Scripture, God allies himself with the poor and the humble.

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus.

We must prepare our hearts and our world for Jesus.

Act on the Word

God Speaks through the Prophets

For this activity, you will need Bibles and pens and either journals or paper.

Throughout Scripture we hear about God's promise to bring a savior to his people. Since the time of the Fall—the first sin—such a savior was needed, and God's amazing love for us would be revealed in him. Though the books of the Bible were written over a long period of time, the Holy Spirit brought them together to highlight the harmonious way that God works throughout salvation history.

When we read some parts of the Gospel accounts, we are reminded of the words of the prophets who spoke during the times of the Old Testament. The prophets were speaking to their own people in their own time, but their words also foretold the way through which God would provide the ultimate salvation for his people—through the messiah, Jesus Christ. When people in the Gospel accounts recall the words of the prophets, they are helping the Jewish people make the connection between what their ancestors foretold and the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation in Jesus.

Have the young people break into four small groups. Assign each group one of the following readings: Matthew 1:18–25; Matthew 2:1–15; Matthew 2:16–23; and Matthew 3:1–12. Although our readings for this liturgical year's Advent are from Luke, we will look at Matthew for this activity because of the abundant references to the words of the prophets. Have the groups read their assigned passage and then look up the following Old Testament passages.

✧ For Matthew 1:18–25, look up Isaiah 7:10–16

✧ For Matthew 2:1–15, look up Micah 5:1–3 and Hosea 11:1

✧ For Matthew 2:16–23, look up Jeremiah 31:15 and Exodus 4:18–19

✧ For Matthew 3:1–12, look up Isaiah 40:3–5 and Isaiah 42:1

Encourage the young people to read some of the passages around the citations given for the Old Testament to get a better understanding of their context. Also, have them discuss the following questions.

✧ How are the Old Testament and New Testament passages connected?

✧ How does an awareness of these connections help you to better understand the story surrounding Jesus' birth?

✧ How might these reflections help you understand why it is important to prepare for the coming of Christ?

Have the groups come back together as one and share any insights they gained from their conversations.

Closing Prayer

*Almighty God,
you sent John the Baptist into the world
to prepare the way for your Son.
May the testimony of the Baptist's preaching
and the example of his life
continue to draw the world
into the mystery of your Kingdom.
Open our hearts to your wonders this day.
We ask all this through our Lord,
Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
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.