

# Read

Baruch 5:1-9

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

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Luke 3:1-6

## Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2024



### REFLECTION

If you have ever prepared the wrong material for a test or focused on the wrong things in a major project, you know how important it is to double check what you are actually expected to prepare for. Otherwise, no matter how hard you worked, your efforts won't accomplish the desired outcome.

During Advent, we prepare for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. Unfortunately, a lot of effort can be put into preparing things that aren't geared toward helping us welcome Christ into our hearts and lives. When John the Baptist called upon people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, he wasn't asking them to check their gift-giving lists for the must-have material things. Instead, John preached a message of repentance to help people prepare their hearts to receive Christ. We can apply that message to our lives by examining our actions and words for the ways in which we have and have not lived up to what Christ has called us be. We ask for forgiveness and reconcile ourselves with the Church and with others so that our hearts are ready to welcome Christ.

### ACTION

Instead of just buying a gift, consider also giving the gift of service. Brainstorm a list of helpful acts of kindness that you can do for those you love. Using notecards or something similar, create a coupon book of loving actions to gift to each important person in your life. Commit to completing these actions with a joyful heart. Include a coupon with a commitment to pray for a special intention for them.

**“Love is shown more in deeds than in words.”**

—St. Ignatius of Loyola



### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How does John the Baptist's message of repentance apply to your life?
- ❖ How can you bring a focus on Christ into your traditional preparations for Christmas?



December 8, 2024

## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### LECTIONARY #6C

Baruch 5:1-9

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

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

Today's Gospel passage begins with a long list of names. Luke is taking time to establish that Jesus is not a mere myth, but a historical fact. He is from a real time and place, and we can cross-reference all of these sources to know when and where he lived. Moving beyond this, we see that Luke's purpose is to show us that Jesus lived for us, and by our choices, we can live for him. The young people will be invited to apply John the Baptist's words to their own lives. This Advent, how can we prepare the way for Christ? How can we straighten out the paths in our lives to find him and encounter him in a very real way?

**Q FOCUS:** *We must prepare ourselves for a real encounter with Jesus.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week there are two Marian celebrations. The solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is celebrated on December 8 but is moved to December 9 this year because the eighth falls on the Second Sunday of Advent. You can learn more about this solemnity on pages 87-90. Then, on December 12, we celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas. In December 1531, Mary appeared to a native man named Juan Diego who lived near Mexico City and asked him to go to the local bishop and have him build a church in her honor. As a sign to prove her appearance, Mary filled Juan Diego's cloak with roses, which he

presented to the bishop. His cloak also bore an image of how Mary had appeared to him, looking like a young Aztec woman.

### Church Teaching Connection

"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 Jn 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: "We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us". *We have come to believe in God's love:* in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 1).

## 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:*

Have you ever wondered if Jesus was a real person? St. Luke, the writer of today's Gospel passage, is writing to a group of Gentile Christians several decades after the resurrection of Jesus. Unlike most of us, Luke's audience might not have ever heard of Jesus and were likely unfamiliar with the traditions and writings of the Jewish faith. As they heard about the amazing things Jesus did, some might have wondered if he was too good to be true.

Before writing about Jesus' public ministry, Luke gives his readers the context of the time. This is what we hear today, as Luke mentions the names of important political and religious figures. In doing so, he locates Jesus in a specific time and place in history. We might even recognize some of these names, since several of them are mentioned later in the Gospel as well. This format, of mentioning the reigning political or religious figures, was used by many people during this time to help set the date of their writing. This is why we read about the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar and so on and so forth.

Luke's message is clear: what I'm about to tell you is real. Jesus is no myth or simple story. He truly lived. He truly died. He truly rose again. To celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas is to recognize his actual presence in human history.

► **Why is it important that Jesus was born into human history?**

Our salvation is possible because Jesus offers himself as the bridge between humans and God. He was both fully human and fully divine. Through his paschal mystery (his life, death, resurrection, and ascension), we are invited into a salvific relationship with God. This is so important to the Christian faith because, as Pope Benedict XVI talks about in his encyclical letter *Deus caritas est* (see the "Church Teaching Connection" above on page 84), at the heart of our faith is an encounter with the love of a person, God. We believe in a person. He has a name. His name is Jesus.

After the historical setting, our reading from Luke goes on to provide more context for the sharing of the story of Jesus. We are introduced here to the ministry of John the Baptist. John prepared people for their encounter with Jesus by preaching a message of repentance. His message was challenging, full of passion and fire: Turn away from sin! Straighten your path! Prepare for the Lord who is on his way!

► **How would doing the things John said have helped people be ready for an encounter with Jesus? How might it have helped the community Luke was writing his Gospel to?**

By turning away from sin, people emptied their hearts of the things that would have prevented them from seeing who Jesus truly was. They would have found that their hearts were searching for healing and freedom, things which could only be found in Jesus. With their hearts thus prepared, people were more ready to meet Jesus, hear his message, and experience the generosity of his heart.

The echo of John's voice reaches our ears today: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." We are invited to examine our lives and prepare our hearts for the birth of Jesus. The rough edges of our lives need to be smoothed out. We need to look at our own history and see where Jesus has

been truly present in our lives. Let's continue to invite him into them.

## 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.

**Jesus was both truly human and truly divine.**

**Being a Christian is about encountering Jesus.**

**John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by preaching repentance.**

## Act on the Word

### John the Baptist Password

For this activity, you will need several notecards and a pen.

The goal of this activity is to create a fun and engaging way for the young people to recall the life of John the Baptist. This is a variation of the classic game Password. (You can find clips of it online if you are not familiar with the game's format.) Before the teens arrive, you should prepare several notecards, each one with its own password written on it. These words should be relevant to John the Baptist's life and ministry. They could be words like *honey*, *camel*, *desert*, *repent*, *baptize*, and so on. For inspiration, you can read through the beginning chapters of the Gospels.

When the teens have gathered, divide them into two separate teams. From the two teams select two players from each team. For each two-player grouping, there will be one "clue giver" and one "guesser." You will have four teens competing at a time.

Using your stack of prewritten password cards, select one card and show it to the clue givers. The guessers and the rest of the people on the teams are not allowed to see the card. This will be the word that the clue givers are trying to get the guessers to

say. Taking turns, have the clue givers give their teammate (who is the guesser) one-word clues to the password. The clue cannot use any part of the word that is on the notecard.

The guesser's goal is to guess the password. Each time the guesser's clue giver gives a clue, the guesser has one chance to make a guess. If the guesser is correct, that team earns a point and the round is over. Four more young people are selected and another round begins. If the guesser is incorrect, the other team's clue giver gets to give his or her guesser a clue. That team's guesser can make one guess, using the new clue and the knowledge he or she gained from any other clues that had been said before by either team. Game play continues until the password has been correctly guessed. Then the round is over, and the process begins again with four new young people.

### Closing Prayer

*O God of all ages,  
you sent John the Baptist to announce  
the coming of the Messiah,  
and to prepare your people for the coming  
of your Son;  
grant that we who have known his birth  
in our time,  
will open our hearts to his presence and  
his abundant grace.*

*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.