

# Read

Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd,  
5-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

## LIVING THE WORD

### Third Sunday of Advent

December 12, 2021



#### REFLECTION

It can be easy to think faith is out of reach. We hear about the lives of biblical figures and saints and think, "I could never do that." I can't talk to the Mother of God like St. Juan Diego. I can't found a religious order like St. Benedict. I can't move across the world to serve the poor like St. Mother Teresa.

But faith is not about what we can't do. It's about what we can—and must—do to spread Christ's reign of love to the world. People enter into this call in different ways. In today's Gospel, John the Baptist gives the crowd a simple task when they ask what they should do. He says, "Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise" (Luke 3:11). John is not asking for a miracle here! He's saying to look in your closet and pantry. Give away your extra resources to people in need. It's better if everyone has some than if some have nothing at all. This is faith lived out in daily life, and it's well within reach.

#### ACTION

This week's action step is about as straightforward as it gets! Take a lesson out of John the Baptist's playbook: donate your extra coats to someone in need. Have a pair of jeans that's too small or a hoodie you rarely wear? Give those away as well. Then take your actions a step further. Instead of simply dropping off the clothes at the nearest homeless shelter, bring your donations inside and strike up a conversation.

*"It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving."*

—Mother Teresa 

#### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who needs your extra clothes and food in your community?
- ❖ Do you ever take more than what you need like the tax collectors? Could you take less next time so others can have their share?



December 12, 2021

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## LECTIONARY #9C

Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6

Philippians 4:4-7

Luke 3:10-18

## 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

We are called to justice and mercy. Those values are central to the Gospel, central to John the Baptist's message to the people, and central to Jesus' life. The foundation of the importance of these qualities is found deeply embedded in the heart of Jewish tradition. John, like the prophets before him, emphasized the role of God's people in the care of others. That care is part of creating a just and merciful society. Besides calling people to justice and mercy, John warns that people mustn't use excuses to cheat others of justice and mercy. John made the way ready for Jesus, and he taught the people to ready their hearts for the coming of the Son of God.

**Q FOCUS:** *We must care for others, treating them with mercy and justice.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

On December 17, the O Antiphons begin. These antiphons (or short phrases) are sung in the octave (eight days) before the liturgical season of Christmas begins. They have been sung and used in prayer since about the eighth century. The O Antiphons should be familiar to many young people because they were adapted in song form in the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." All of the O Antiphons begin with an Old Testament reference to the coming Messiah. This week there are two antiphons, and they are "O Sapientia" and "O Adonai." The former means "O Wisdom," and the latter means, "Lord of

Israel." While the latter may be a familiar title, "O Wisdom" is a reference to Jesus being the wisdom of God, something that is found in the Wisdom literature of the Bible. Both of these titles have roots in the writings from Isaiah, the ancient prophet.

### Church Teaching Connection

"Charity is at the heart of the Church's social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36-40). It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbor; it is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones). . . . Love is God's greatest gift to humanity, it is his promise and our hope" (*Caritas in veritate*, 2).

## 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 3:10-18

**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.*

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax

collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

**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:*

► **How do we respond to the poorest among us? Who are these poor?**

Jewish tradition—and in turn Christian tradition—calls the faithful to love and care for the poor. In today's Gospel we hear John the Baptist encouraging the people approaching him for baptism to care for the poor. Caring for the poor and helpless is a central tenant of Jewish law, tradition and life. John reminded the people that they must live by these rules, and that they must be ready to share with others. Likewise, we

are called to do the same. John calls us to charity, and Jesus, for whom John prepared the way, calls us to radical charity.

► **What are some acts of charity that the Catholic Church calls us to?**

John prepared the way for Jesus by helping people ready their hearts and lives to welcome the Lord. One of the ways he did this was by baptism. John's baptism wasn't a Trinitarian baptism like we use today in the Christian faith; instead, John's baptism was more like a ritual cleansing, which was (and still is) an action familiar to those who practiced Jewish law regarding cleanliness and purity. So many people went to John for baptism—and today's reading specifically mentions tax collectors and soldiers.

You may wonder why tax collectors and soldiers are specifically mentioned. Tax collectors had the job of collecting taxes for Caesar. They were unpopular characters because of the dishonesty most of them had in their work. Instead of simply collecting taxes and giving the money to Caesar, they charged people extra money and kept the difference. For this reason, tax collectors were despised by the people. Soldiers were representatives of the occupying Roman government. They carried out harsh punishments and were the enforcers of the unwanted and cruel occupying Roman force. John asked soldiers and tax collectors to stop hurting the people as they carried out their work. He saw that even in the midst of their work, there were ways for them to act with charity toward others. This would have been a radical change in behavior for many of them, but that is what God was calling them to.

What does God ask of each of us? Surely we too are asked to feed the hungry and provide clothes for the poor. We are also asked to show others the love of God through our actions.

► **How can you act charitably as a young person involved in social activities, jobs, and school work?**

## 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.

**John asked the people to care for the poor, which is part of Jewish tradition.**

**People should not take advantage of others for their own gain.**

**John the Baptist was sent by God to make way for Jesus, and to prepare people for his coming.**

## Act on the Word

### *Caring for the Poor*

*For this activity, you will need to do some research on charitable organizations that your parish supports and/or other charitable organizations in your community. It will be helpful to have a list of these available for the young people to review. You should also have markers, pens, paper, poster board, and other advertising materials ready.*

What are the needs in your community? Work together as a group to choose a charitable project based on the needs of your area. As you make this decision, reflect upon the talents and time the young people have to contribute to this project. Perhaps you live in an area that is cold, and people may be in need of coats. Perhaps you live in an area that has had a recent influx of immigrants or refugees, and household items like towels, flatware, and cooking tools are needed. Perhaps many of the young people are outgoing and can share their time with the elderly by visiting nursing homes or care facilities. Once everyone has decided on a project, guide the young people in organizing their response to the need.

Perhaps they can organize a donation drive for certain items. They should take into consideration how they will advertise their drive and invite people to participate. If they did not choose a project that needs donations, what other important planning

pieces are needed? Make lists and assign tasks to different people, making use of their creative and interpersonal skills. Schedule when the event will happen. Create advertisements and write up announcements to include in the parish bulletin.

As you work, remind the young people of our Christian duty as followers of Christ to act with charity toward our neighbors and those whom society ignores. All of our actions toward others are grounded on the fact that God created all people in his image and likeness. We show our love of God by our loving actions toward others.

## Closing Prayer

*God our Father,  
people flocked to John the Baptist  
seeking an answer to their  
deepest longings.*

*In time, they would turn to Jesus  
as the answer to their prayers.*

*As we seek the truth this day,  
help us to look beyond our wants  
to see the needs and the sufferings  
of others.*

*Like the Baptist,  
may we proclaim the coming of the Son  
of Man,  
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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*