

Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B

Sunday, December 13, 2020

Readings & Background

First Reading

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11

The Lord's salvation will be made known to the poor and the oppressed.

Responsorial Psalm

Luke 1:46-50, 53-54

Mary sings praise to God.

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul encourages the Thessalonians to rejoice and pray always.

Gospel Reading

John 1:6-8, 19-28

John gives testimony that he is preaching and baptizing in order to prepare for the coming of another.

Background on the Gospel Reading

This Sunday's Gospel invites us to **continue our reflection on the person and mission of John the Baptist**. Today we depart from the **Gospel of Mark and read a selection from the Gospel of John**.

The Gospel for today combines a brief passage from the prologue to John's Gospel with a report about John the Baptist. As in Mark's Gospel, the Gospel of John contains no birth narrative. Instead, John's Gospel begins with a ***theological reflection that has come to be called the "prologue."*** This prologue places the story of Jesus in its cosmological framework. **It speaks of Jesus' existence with God since the beginning of time.**

In John's Gospel, ***Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the culmination of the Word, the light that is coming into the world's darkness.***

Following this prologue, John reports on the **ministry of John the Baptist**. We learn about the attention that John the Baptist received from the Jewish authorities. Messengers from the Jewish priests, the Levites and the Pharisees **question John about his identity and the meaning of the baptisms that he is performing.**

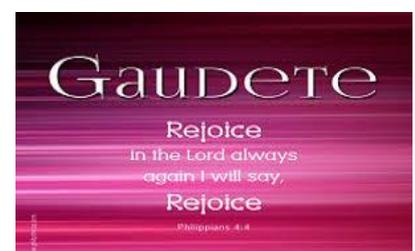
John's Gospel uses these questions to **establish the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist**. ***John the Baptist is not the Messiah***, nor is he Elijah or the Prophet. In John's denials, we hear echoes of the kind of messianic expectations that were common in first-century Palestine.

The only affirmative response that John the Baptist gives is when he quotes the prophet Isaiah. Upon answering the next question, ***John announces that the saviour they seek is already among them, but as yet unrecognized.***



John's response highlights for us an important Advent theme: Jesus has already come into the world as our saviour. During Advent, we pray that we will be able to recognize Jesus' presence in our midst. Advent also reminds us that Jesus will come again to fulfil the promise of salvation. We pray that we will continue to be watchful as we anticipate that great day.

The third Sunday of Advent is also called ***Gaudete Sunday***. ***Gaudete***, a Latin word which means "rejoice," is taken from the entrance antiphon for Sunday's Mass. This theme is echoed in today's second reading from the first Letter to the Thessalonians. **It is a reminder that Advent is a season of joy because our salvation is already at hand.**



Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B
Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)
Gospel Reading
John 1:6-8,19-28

John gives testimony that he is preaching and baptizing
in order to prepare for the coming of another.

Young children accept much of what they believe based upon the witness and testimony of others. We can teach them to trust the Word of God found in Scripture and in the witness of the Church.

Materials Needed

- Several photos from a family holiday

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Show the children pictures from one of your family holidays.
Tell the group about the fun that you had on your holiday.
Then ask if they would like to go to that holiday place?
Explain to them that you have just witnessed to them. We can witness only about something that we have experienced.
2. ***In the Gospel, we hear someone witnessing about Jesus. His name is John the Baptist, and he knows that Jesus is God.***
3. Read today's Gospel, John 1:6-8,19-28.
4. ***Do you believe me about how much fun my holiday was?
Well, the people believed John too because he was talking about someone he knew.
We believe in Jesus because John the Baptist and others have told us what they know about Jesus. We can also know Jesus by reading about Jesus in the Bible, by listening to those who teach us about Jesus, and through our prayers.***
5. ***John the Baptist told the people that the one they were looking for was in their midst; they just had not recognized him.
We can learn to recognize Jesus' presence in our world because we have learned about Jesus from the Bible and from the Church.***
6. Conclude in prayer together that you and your group will continue to grow in our faith so that you will all be able recognize Jesus' presence in the world.
7. Pray together the [Lord's Prayer](#).

Third Sunday of Advent – Year B

The Light of the World

Theme: Jesus is the one true light. We are his witnesses.

Object: Christmas lights or pictures of scenes decorated with Christmas lights.

Scripture: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Key Verses: There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.
John 1:6-8 (NIV)

Our Bible reading for today tells us that **God sent a man, John the Baptist**, to tell about the light so that everyone would believe. **John wasn't the light; he only came to tell others about the light.**

Who was the light that John came to tell people about?

That's right, it was Jesus. The one true light, who gives light to everyone.

There is a song that tells us about that light, "***The Light of the World Is Jesus.***"

*The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,
The Light of the world is Jesus; Like sunshine at noonday, His glory shone in,
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee; Sweetly the Light has dawned upon me.
Once I was blind, but now I can see: The Light of the world is Jesus.*

At this time of year, we **see lights everywhere that remind us of the coming of that true Light that John told us about.** There are trees adorned with lights, streets that are lined with lights, homes and businesses are outlined with lights. One of the favourite activities of the season is to drive around and look at all of the beautiful lights.

***Each Sunday of the Advent season, we light candles on the Advent wreath.
I wonder how many of us remember that the lights of this season are a symbol of the one true Light, Jesus, who brought light into the darkness of this world?***

As we light the candles on our advent wreath, the four candles remind us that Jesus brings hope, love, joy, and peace into the world. It is true, "The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin, the Light of the world is Jesus!"

Let us pray.

Our Father, on this third Sunday of Advent, we light the candle that symbolizes the joy that Jesus brings. May each and every one of us know the joy that Jesus, the Light of the World, brings. In his name we pray. Amen.

The *LIGHT* shines in
the darkness and
the *darkness*
has *NOT* overcome it.

John 1:5



Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B
Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

Gospel Reading

John 1:6-8,19-28

John gives testimony that he is preaching and baptizing
in order to prepare for the coming of another.

Older children are beginning to question the things that people tell them. Likewise, they may have begun questioning and testing the words of faith. We can help them to understand that it is natural to question the words of other people. We can also show them that the words of others can be trusted and that our faith in Jesus is credible because it is founded on our experience of Jesus.

Materials Needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. ***There are many things that we accept on the word of other people. For example, we believe our parents and grandparents when they tell us what about what life was like when they were children. We believe the scientists who report to us the results of their observations and experiments. We believe our teachers when they teach us about the facts of history. What are some examples of things that we accept on the word of others?*** (Accept all reasonable answers.)
2. ***Why do we believe what people tell us? What makes the word of another person believable?*** (They have actual experience with the things that they are explaining, they have learned something we have not, or because their word to us has previously proved trustworthy.)
3. ***This is also the way it is with what we believe about Jesus. Today's Gospel talks about John the Baptist and how he gave witness to Jesus.***
4. ***Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.***
5. Invite one or more volunteers to read John 1:6-8,19-28.
6. ***What did John the Baptist tell the Jewish leaders when they asked about his authority and preaching?*** (John said that he was not the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet.)
What did John the Baptist say when they asked about the baptisms that he was performing? (John said that he was baptizing in preparation for another person.)
John offered this testimony about himself and about Jesus because he knew Jesus was the Son of God who was coming to save the world. He told the people that Jesus was among them even though they did not yet recognize him.
7. ***The people who came to see John the Baptist believed his words to them. If we were to continue reading in John's Gospel, we would hear how John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the Son of God when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. John then announced to the people that Jesus was the Lamb of God.***
Where do we look to hear testimony about who Jesus is? (the Bible, the Church, the people of faith in our lives)
We believe these witnesses to Jesus because they have proven themselves to be trustworthy and because they witness to a person they know, Jesus.
8. Conclude in prayer together that you and your group will continue to grow in faith and in your ability to recognize Jesus' presence in all aspects of life. Pray together the [Act of Faith](#).

Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8 and 9)

Gospel Reading: John 1:6-8,19-28

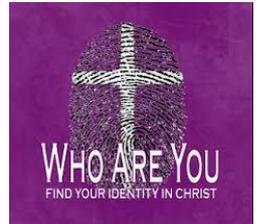
John gives testimony that he is preaching and baptizing
in order to prepare for the coming of another.

Making the Connection

Young people at this age are learning to evaluate and judge the information they receive from others. We can help them to appreciate the importance of Scripture, the Church, and the witness of others as they learn to recognize and believe in Jesus, the Son of God.

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. **Who would you ask if you wanted information about a place you would like to visit?** (a travel agent, someone who had visited this place before)
Who would you ask if you didn't understand your math homework? (my teacher, my parent, a friend who is good at math)
Who might you ask if you needed help to fix a computer? (a computer technician, a friend who knows about computers)
2. **When you ask for a person's help, what might you want to know about him or her?** (the person's experience with the subject that he or she is explaining, if the person has knowledge or expertise that we do not, whether or not the advice the person gives has helped others) Observe that knowing about a person helps us to trust that person and to believe what he or she tells us.
3. **This Sunday's Gospel helps us to know more about John the Baptist, the message he proclaimed, and the witness he gave to Jesus. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.**
4. Invite one or more volunteers to read John 1:6-8,19-28.
5. **What was John the Baptist's reply when asked, "Who are you?"** (John said that he was not the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet; he quoted the prophet Isaiah, saying that he was "the voice of one crying out in the desert, make straight the way of the Lord.")
6. **To help people understand who he was and the message he wanted to communicate, John the Baptist quoted from the prophet Isaiah. Then he spoke about the greatness of one who would come after him. John the Baptist preached and baptized so that people would recognize Jesus, the Son of God, and believe in him.**
7. **We can recognize Jesus' presence in our world because we have learned about Jesus from the Bible, from the Church, and through the words and example of others.**
8. **As we prepare for prayer, think about the people who are like John the Baptist for you, those who help you to recognize and believe in Jesus, the Son of God. As we pray, thank God for these people and for the ways they have helped you recognize Jesus**
9. Conclude by praying this Sunday's Responsorial Psalm, the [Magnificat](#).



Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour;
for he has looked with favour on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him, in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B
Making the Connection Family Connection

Gospel Reading: John 1:6-8,19-28

John gives testimony that he is preaching and baptizing
in order to prepare for the coming of another

In family life, we learn to trust other people for protection and care. This experience of ***trust within the family enables children to believe us when we testify about our faith in Jesus.***

John the Baptist was believed by those who heard him because he helped them to recognize Jesus in their midst. In our family life, we hope and pray that we lead one another to recognize Jesus' presence in our world.

As you gather as a family, ***recall that during the Advent season we are invited to pay particular attention to the signs of Jesus' presence in our world.***

Consider some of the signs of Jesus' presence that you have experienced.

During Advent, we remember how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus.

Read together today's Gospel, John 1:6-8,19-28.

Discuss the signs of Jesus' presence in our world that you named and explain what ***these signs tell us about God and God's love for us.***

Pray together that your family will be led to recognize that Jesus is present among us.

Read and pray together the psalm for today's Mass, the [Magnificat](#) (Luke 1:46-55).

