

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle B

Please Note: All scripture readings must be read from the Children's Lectionary

Opening Prayer:

Forgiving God,
Help us prepare for your coming
by being sorry for what we have done wrong.
Fill us with your power
so that we may know you
and love you more and more,
and let all the world live in peace.
We ask you to do this
through our friend and brother,
Jesus Christ, who lives forever. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Our God says: "Give comfort to my people. Speak tenderly to the people of Jerusalem and tell them that their punishment is over."

A voice proclaims: "Prepare the way for the coming of our God! In the desert, make a straight path for our God! Every valley will be filled in. Every mountain and hill will be made small. The rough and rugged land will be made smooth. Then the glory of God will be seen by all the people, for our God has spoken!"

Our God says: "Go up on high mountain, O herald of good news, and say to the people, 'Here is your God! Our God is coming in power, to rule with strength, and to bring reward and justice to all.'"

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:1-8

(This reading is to be used for personal study. It should not be used in liturgy.)

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

A Very Important Job: Gospel Reflection

John the Baptist is well known in Christian circles as the one who announced the coming of Jesus. If John had not announced that Jesus was coming, the people would not have been able to get ready for his arrival. It is the job of public relations to let others know about important things that are happening. John was Jesus' PR person.

Publicity continues to precede important visits and events. Think about the hoopla that announces a big rock concert in your town, for example. Has the president, or the pope, or any important visiting dignitary ever gone anywhere without publicity advances? If there was no advance notice of a major event or visit, most of us would never know it happened.

Jesus is looking for a few good publicity persons to spread the Good News of his coming. How would YOU like the job? Just think about the many people who don't even know who Jesus is. There are some in every neighborhood -- even yours.

The Man Called John: Gospel Reflection

What a strange and wonderful person was John the Baptist. He lived out in the desert where little could grow. John lived there all alone with only God to keep him company.

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, he ate grasshoppers for his food, and drank honey made by the bees. He had a voice like thunder and a face as fierce as a watchdog.

The people went to listen to John. Every day they came out to hear him. He told them to change their lives, to give up selfishness and sin.

Then he baptized them in the river so they could begin their lives anew. He told them to get ready for the coming of Jesus.

You are getting ready for Jesus too. Soon you will be buying gifts, sending out cards, and decorating the tree. But are you getting yourself ready?

On Christmas morning, the most wonderful gift of all, the gift that will make Jesus smile, is a brand new YOU, ready to live your life for Jesus.

Come Out to the Desert: Gospel Reflection

See the great crowd traveling to the wilderness. The wilderness is a place of hot sand and blistering heat. Why is everyone going to this sad and lonely place? What will they do there? What will they see there? Who will be there to greet them?

Here he is! Here is the one the people have come to see. His name is John. He is called the Baptist. He is dressed in a camel's hair robe tied with a leather strap. He eats grasshoppers and wild honey for his food. Never has there been a man like John the Baptist. John is a messenger from God. He is getting the people ready for the coming of Jesus. "Make ready the way of the Lord," John shouts to the crowd.

The people have sinned. Some have forgotten God. Some have disobeyed God's commandments. Some have done bad things to God's people. John tells the people to stop all that. Someone is coming from God. They must begin right now this very day to change their lives, to become like children of God once more. The people agree. "Yes, yes. We will live good lives. We will remember God's commandments. We will love others."

John leads the people into the Jordan River and baptizes them with the cool river water. They are washed clean of their old sins. They promise to live new clean lives. The people are ready for Jesus. John has good news for them. "I have baptized you, but in water only; he will baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

All About Water: Story

Rachel and Jerome made a poster for their classroom. It was a Christmas scene with houses and snow and red bows tied on the evergreen trees. The sky was blue with fluffy white clouds floating by. The sun was lemony yellow. When they were done, Rachel and Jerome took off their paint smocks. They looked at each other and started laughing.

"You have a green nose," Jerome told Rachel.

"Your hands look like a smudgy Christmas ornament," Rachel said. They had paint on their hands and faces -- even in their hair.

"We'd better go wash," Rachel said. They scrubbed themselves clean. When they were done, every trace of paint was gone from their hands and faces.

"Well," Jerome said, "we'd better not paint any more today."

Rachel agreed. "We'd just have to scrub ourselves clean again." Which was fine, of course, because their poster was finished just the way they wanted it to be.

TWO BAPTISMS

John said, "I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." What's the difference?

"I have baptized you with water..." Remember Jerome and Rachel? They were covered with paint. They used water to remove all the paint. They were clean as long as they did not paint again. And if they did paint again, they would have to wash again.

"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Jesus baptizes us in water and the Holy Spirit. In our Holy Spirit baptism, even our souls are washed clean of all sin. Then God's Holy Spirit fills our hearts, to keep us safe from sin, to keep us pure and clean. And we never have to be baptized again!

The Special Water: Meditation

Read this meditation to your class:

Now, children, we are going to take a journey with our minds. To begin this journey, get in a comfortable position, and softly lay your head down. Now gently close your eyes. With your eyes closed, we are now ready to begin our trip.

I want you to imagine yourself in a very bare place, almost like a desert. As you look around, you can see that everything is in need of water. There is an old creek bed close to where you are standing with a small trickle of water edging down the middle of it. There are some trees and bushes by the side of the old creek, but they look dry, with the leaves curled up, needing water. The sky is very clear with no rain clouds in sight.

As you are standing there, a very rugged looking man walks up next to you. This man is John the Baptist. You know that John the Baptist is a very special person. He is the one who will baptize the Lord. John shakes his head at the lack of water in the creek. John asks you to come with him and search for the holy water that he will use to baptize the Lord.

You and John start following the creek to its source. At first the going is easy, but soon it becomes harder and you find yourself climbing over bushes and around thirsty trees. But you are determined to travel with John to find the holy water. As you come around one large tree, there in front of you is a large lake, beautifully blue, with lovely trees growing along its bank. John tells you that this lake is very holy, and when Jesus arrives he will be baptized here in this holy lake. After Jesus is baptized in this lake, the water from the lake will flow into the little creek. The creek will become a great river and will feed all of the trees and bushes along its bank. Jesus will do this because he is the holy water that feeds all peoples.

Sit quietly by the holy lake and ask the Lord to feed you with the waters of baptism so that you will also be full of life. *(Continued on next page)*

Now it is time for you to leave John the Baptist. But before you go, John asks you to step into the lake and receive his special baptism. You walk into the lake. John reaches down, takes a handful of water, pours it over your head and gives you a special baptism that will prepare you for the coming of the Lord. You feel this special water filling you with life.

You now walk out of the lake and begin your journey back to this room. As you do, you bring with you that special love that keeps you watching and waiting for Jesus to arrive.

When you are ready, slowly open your eyes, gently lift your head, and slowly stretch your arms.

Prayers of the Faithful: Allow a few moments for the children to offer prayers aloud for their special intentions. Ask them to end with "Let us pray to the Lord". All respond, "Lord, Hear our Prayer".

Apostle's Creed: You may end the Liturgy of the Word by reciting the Creed as a group if there is time.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

Our God is coming! Prepare the way! Change your lives!

The people of Israel were in exile in Babylon. In their understanding, this was the punishment for their sin. Our reading focuses on their liberation from their exile. It speaks of the "herald of good news" who will be the voice proclaiming "Your God is coming, in power and justice, to save you. Prepare the way!" Israel uses symbolic language: every valley and mountain shall be level. This image tells us that with the coming of our God, justice will reign, all will be equal. Our Gospel passage introduces John the Baptist whose role is to announce the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. He calls us to prepare the way for the one who will baptize in the Holy Spirit, by repenting and changing our lives. John the Baptist calls us to conversion—now!

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

Help the children come to know John the Baptist and his role in salvation history. What was his message? What is the "good news" that he announced? What did he say about Jesus?

Help the children see that we are called now, during Advent, to change our lives in order to prepare to celebrate the Lord's coming. How can we change our lives? It is important that the children focus on their own lives rather than on changes needed in the world at large. Children are not responsible for the problems of the world and have very little to do with the solutions to them. They should see that what they can do in their families, schools, neighborhoods, and so forth, is important. Help the children see that because they have been baptized in the Holy Spirit, they too are heralds of good news for others. God has promised a time when people will know justice and all will be treated equally. ("Every valley will be filled in. Every mountain and hill will be made small. The rough and rugged land will be made smooth.") How can we help that come to be? How can we help bring about justice around us? Help the children see that God calls us to treat all persons politely. Children will readily see the possibilities of this in their own lives.

Finally, assure the children of God's great love for us. Even when we have sinned, God sends words of comfort. God always comes to us with mercy and good news.

Second Sunday of Advent

Thought for the day

John the Baptist prepares the way for the coming of the Messiah by helping the people to realign their lives.

Readings

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

2 Peter 3:8-14

Mark 1:1-8

Aim: To hear about John the Baptist and his teaching about watching closely.

Starter

What's different? Get into pairs. Have children take turns hiding their eyes while their partner changes something about the way they are standing or what they are wearing. See if the difference is recognized, then swap roles. Ideas for differences: cross arms in different way, hair tucked behind other ear, shoelace tied/untied, ring on different finger.

Teaching

Sometimes we don't notice things that we are used to seeing. Today we are going to look at someone who got people noticing things they had stopped looking at. (Have two people in conversation for this.)

What was his name?

His name was John. One day no one had heard of him and the next, there he was out in the wild desert outside Jerusalem, drawing huge crowds of people because of what he was saying. They felt he was telling them what they knew they needed to hear. They didn't come because what he said was easy—in fact, it was very challenging—but he made them feel they wanted to go for it with everything they had.

Go for what?

Sorting their lives out. They started to look closely at how they were really thinking and behaving. John helped them notice their own bad habits and the unloving, discontented way they were living. They suddenly wanted to put those things right. John told them it was like road-building.

Road-building?

Yes. He said they needed to build their lives like a good road ready for God to come to them, a road that was straight and true with no mountains of greed or empty pits of cruelty and grumbling. And

they needed to start building it right away.

Why?

Because John said it wouldn't be very long before God's Messiah was coming to live among them, and they all wanted to be ready for that.

So what did they do about their road-building?

Well, like I said, they had a good look at themselves, saw what needed to be changed, told God about it and then John washed them.

Washed them?

Yes, they waded into the local Jordan river, and when they confessed their sins John dipped them right under the water as a sign that their lives were being washed clean.

That's a good idea. You'd really feel you were making a fresh clean start if you were dipped right under water in a flowing river. Now they would feel they'd done what they could to be ready for the Messiah.

Yes, that's right. And we can do the same, you know.

We can?

Oh, yes. If we take a look at how we speak to people, and what we do for them, and what we don't do for them, we'll soon see which bits of our road need changing. Then we can tell God we've noticed them and are sorry.

What will God do?

He'll forgive us and give us a fresh start.

Perhaps we could do that in the bath or shower?

Good idea.

Praying

Loving God, open my eyes to see what needs changing and making right in my thinking, speaking and doing, because I want to turn away from sin and turn toward you.

Amen.

Activities

The children will be making Stage Two of the Christmas pop-up model. There are instructions and outlines for this on the activity sheet. You may like them to mount it all on thin cardboard for extra strength. As with all the Advent sheets, younger children in Explorers may find it easier if it is enlarged to 11x17.

Second Sunday of Advent

Making a fresh start

INTRODUCTION

God sent John the Baptist to prepare the people for the coming of his son. The message he preached then is just as important today, as we prepare ourselves for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

As we light our candles today, the words of the prophet Isaiah remind us that Jesus is the light of the world:

Those who walked in darkness have seen a wonderful light. The light which shines on them chases the shadows of darkness away from their land. (Isaiah 9:1)

SORRY

John the Baptist told the people to ask for God's forgiveness and to change their ways. God is always ready to forgive us and to help us make a fresh start. Sing Sorry Song 4.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Sing the Advent Song.

GOSPEL (MARK 1:1-8)

The prophet Isaiah foretold that God would send a messenger to prepare the people for the Lord's coming. This messenger was John the Baptist, who appeared in the desert telling the people to be sorry for their sins and to make a fresh start in their lives. Many people heard his message and came to be baptized as a sign of their change of heart. John told them, "Someone is coming who is more powerful than me, and I am not good enough to undo the straps of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

DISCUSSION

What was the name of the prophet who had foretold the coming of John the Baptist? What is a prophet? A prophet is someone who speaks in the

name of God and has been allowed by God to know and share a part of his plan for mankind.

John was God's messenger; he was sent to tell the people to change their ways and to turn back to God. He told them to make a fresh start by asking forgiveness for their sins and trying to lead lives filled with goodness and love.

John was sent to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus. Do we still need to prepare for Jesus' coming today? Jesus could return at any time (recall last week's discussion). We can prepare ourselves just as people did in the time of John the Baptist, by putting right what is wrong in our lives and living as Jesus taught us.

Advent is a good time to look carefully at ourselves and to make a fresh start if we need to. When can we meet Jesus and ask for his forgiveness? Through the sacrament of reconciliation we can tell Jesus that we are sorry and receive his forgiveness. Through the priest, God allows us to hear that our sins are forgiven so we can start anew knowing that God loves us very much.

Can you think of anything that needs to be put right in your life?

ACTIVITY

If the group is small, hand out copies of the picture and ask the children to color it. If you have a large group, enlarge the picture on a photocopier and cut out the individual elements of the picture. Reassemble these on a large sheet of paper after they have been colored. Spend some time with the children discussing the picture and the event it depicts.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly father, help each of us
to make a fresh start this Advent,
to put right what is wrong,
and to truly live as Jesus showed us.

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Second Sunday of Advent

1. Christmas Card Poster: Class or Family Activity

Do you have any old Christmas cards, from last year? Go through the cards together, and pull out any that have parts of the Christmas story on them (Mary, Joseph, Jesus, angels, shepherds, star, and so forth). Each member of the class or family can have their own small poster board or sheet of construction paper, or you can have one large one that everyone can work on collectively. Cut out your Christmas story pieces, arrange them into a collage of the Christmas story, and glue them into place. Now you have a class or family Nativity!

2. Holy Spirit Ornament: Class or Family Activity

Last week, we began an Advent project of making ornaments for your Christmas tree. These can be made with construction paper or with dough art. The dough art recipe may be doubled or tripled so that all can participate.

DOUGH ART

You will need:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1/2 cup water

Mix ingredients together until the mixture is firm and easy to mold. It should not stick to your fingers. Test it to see if it can be molded easily into shapes. If the dough is too soft, add more flour; if too stiff, add more water -- a little at a time.

Use waxed paper under your dough as you mold it. The dough can be rolled into long thin pieces and shaped into geometric designs. It can be stacked to make a three dimensional effect. Be sure to leave a hole at the top of each ornament so you can insert a hook or string for hanging.

The ornaments take about a week to dry without baking or can be baked at about 400 degrees until light brown. Before baking, hard candy (lollipops or sour balls) can be crushed into small bits and placed in the open spaces of your ornament. When cool, the candied areas will be transparent. Paint, shellac, or glitter the ornaments -- use your imagination!

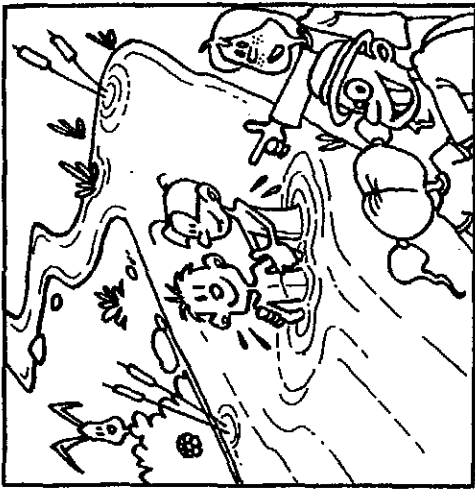
THIS WEEK'S ORNAMENT -- A DOVE

In today's gospel, John the Baptist tells us: "I have baptized you with water; but he (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

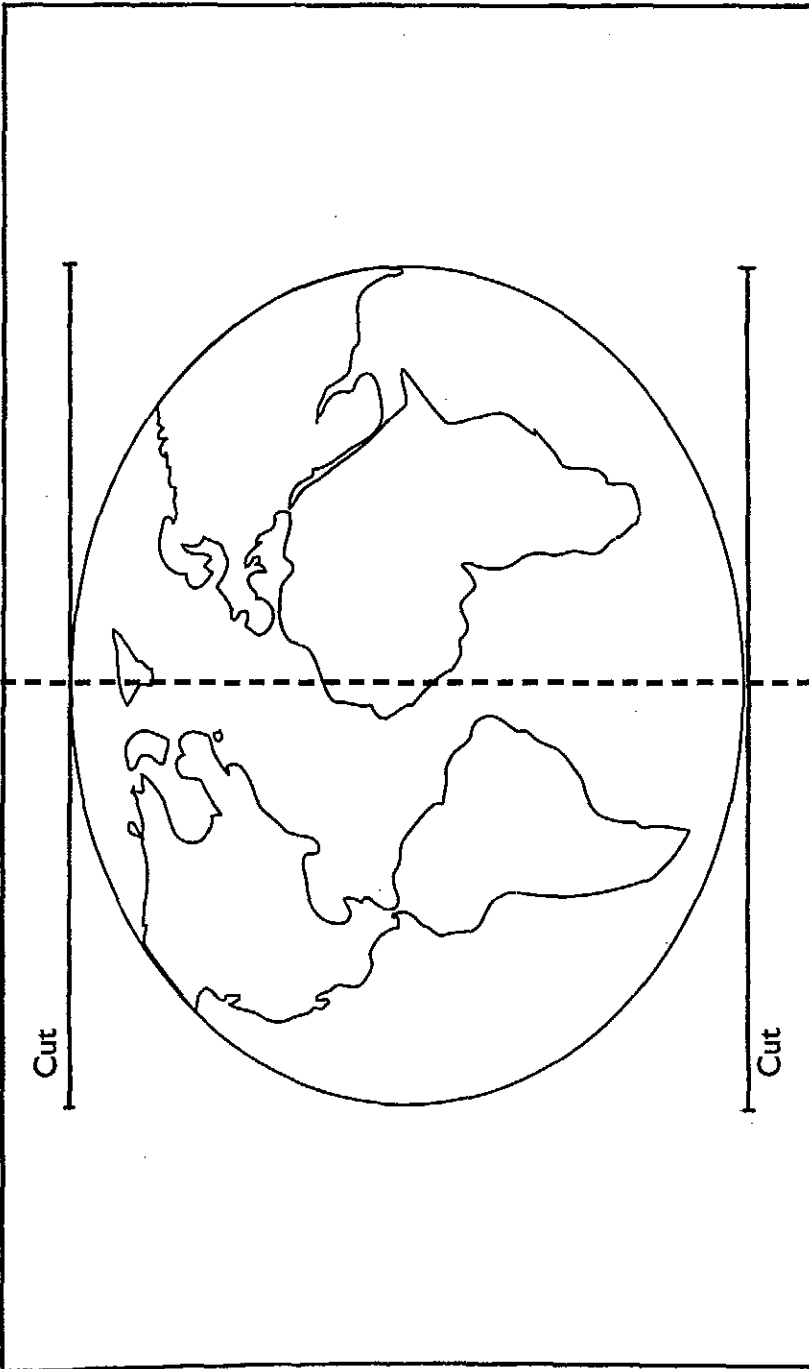
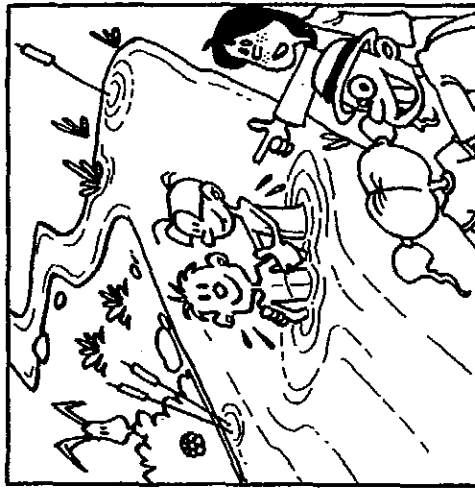
The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. It will remind you that Jesus has prepared a place for you in the kingdom of heaven and that you serve him on earth by serving others.

To make a dove:

1. Cut a bird pattern out of paper or dough. If you have a bird cookie cutter, use that to make your dove.
2. If you are making a paper dove, color it and cut it out.
3. Glue short strands of yarn or bits of curling ribbon to your dove, to look like feathers. (Don't do this until after baking if you plan to bake dough doves!)



Can you spot the 6 differences?



Sorting out time!

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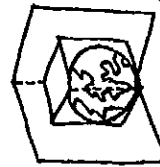
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1. Color in the picture

2. Cut along the slits

3. Fold the world forward like this:



4. Stick onto last week's section like this:

To pray this week

Loving God, open my eyes to see what needs changing and putting right in my thinking, speaking and doing, because I want to turn away from Sin, and turn towards you. Amen.