

## Liturgy of the Word for Children

### Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle B

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

#### Opening Prayer:

Loving God,  
soon it will be time to celebrate  
the birth of your Son into our world.  
Thank you for sending him to be our Light.  
Please help us to find ways to be light for others.  
Show us our way to you  
as Jesus has shown us your love. Amen

#### First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

The spirit of God is upon me. God has anointed me and sent me to bring good news to the poor, to comfort those whose hearts are broken, to proclaim freedom to those who are being held captive, and to those who are oppressed by others, and to announce a time of blessing and justice from our God.

My heart is happy and filled with joy, for God has given me the clothes of salvation. God has put on me a robe of justice. I am like a bridegroom wearing a crown, or a bride wearing her jewels. And now, our God will bring justice and glory to all the nations.

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

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

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No."

Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."

This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

**Just Like a Sunrise: Gospel Reflection**

Did you ever get up very early, while the world was still dark, to watch the sky as the sun rises? Little by little, the sky brightens until the sun pops over the horizon. The birds all sing their morning songs. Little animals run about looking for breakfast. Everything comes alive! That's what light does for our world.

In this week's gospel story, John tells the people to get ready because there is Someone coming who will be a Light to all. The Light John is talking about is Jesus, the Light of the World.

Like an early morning sunrise, Jesus makes our world brighter by his love. He came to live on earth to show all of the people how to love God and one another.

That's what makes Christmas so special, when lights of every size and color sparkle from homes and stores. Jesus wanted our world to be a bright, happy place filled with love. By loving God and everyone around you, you can be like Jesus -- a light for your world.

**The Light of Christmas: Gospel Reflection**

Christmas is the season of light.

In our church, candles flicker in the darkness.

In front of the church a manger scene is bathed in a soft halo of moonlight.

Christmas trees twinkle with tiny electric stars.

A single shining ray lights up the holly wreath on our door.

Street lights shimmer in their bright red bows and silver garland.

Store windows sparkle in the glow of flashing neon signs.

All over town, Christmas lights flicker, twinkle, shine, glimmer, shimmer, sparkle, and glow.

And every single light we see reflects the one true Light in our world -- Jesus, the Son of God!

**THE BEST CHRISTMAS LIGHT OF ALL**

Of all the lights you see this season, there is one great Light that shines over all -- that light is Jesus.

Today's gospel story calls Jesus the "true light" who was sent to give light to the world.

Jesus is a light...

...for the poor: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20).

Rachel and Jerome shop for canned goods to give to the food collection at school.

...for the children: "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (Luke 18:16).

Rachel tells her friends all about the real Good News of Christmas.

...for those who are sad: "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh" (Luke 6:21).

Jerome makes a Christmas card for a woman whose husband died this year.

...for those who are worried: "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ... indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32).

Rachel's dad is worried about the bills. Rachel cheers him up with a smile and a hug.

...for the weary: "I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29).

Rachel and Jerome help a neighbor by shoveling the snow in her driveway and clearing off her car.

...for people with faith: "I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness" (John 12:46).

Rachel and Jerome celebrate God's love with family and friends at Mass.

### **Light of the World: Meditation**

*Read the following 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 on a planet in outer space. As you look around, you see that it is a very tiny planet with a few trees and plants scattered here and there. You notice that the planet is dark, it seems to be mostly facing away from the light. As you wander about the tiny globe, you see that there is another person in the distance. This person turns around as you approach, and you see that it is John the Baptist.

John the Baptist and you seem to be together on this small planet. John says that together you have a very special mission -- to prepare the way for Jesus to come -- to prepare this small planet for the Light of Jesus. John asks you if you can help him turn this small planet into the sunlight. John takes your hand and together you raise both your hands to the skies and pray that the way of the Lord will be made straight. You say together with John:

"We are voices in the desert crying out,  
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

As you stand there praying, the planet slowly turns and begins to face the sunlight. When the sunlight strikes the planet, flowers spring up in all colors, the trees turn suddenly green, and bushes blossom in all shapes and sizes. The grass grows quickly and forms a soft carpet under your feet. The small planet is getting ready for the Lord. Take time to enjoy all the beautiful things that are happening to the planet as it turns into the sunlight.

John turns to you and tells you that it is now time for him to go to all the other worlds that are in darkness. His job is to prepare them also to meet the Lord. To turn them toward the Light. John tells you that you must go back to your own world to help the people you know get ready to meet Jesus, who is the Light of the World. So now you and John the Baptist go separate ways. He to other worlds and you back here to your home.

As you return, you bring with you the great challenge to prepare our world for the coming of Jesus.

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

**Bethany Preacher Questioned: Gospel Reflection**

The preaching of John the Baptist raised quite a stir among the Pharisees and the priests and Levites of Jerusalem. Some of John's followers were convinced that he was a new prophet from God. Some said he was one of the prophets from old who had returned to proclaim judgment from God. Others were convinced that John was the Messiah, the Savior the people had awaited for centuries. Finally, there were those who said that John was an imposter, a fraud, trying to stir the people to rebellion.

The Pharisees sent representatives to question John about his mission and his purpose. Here is his testimony.

Q. Who are you?

A. I am not the Messiah.

Q. Who, then? Elijah?

A. No, I am not Elijah.

Q. Are you a prophet?

A. No.

Q. Tell us who you are so we can give some answer to those who sent us.

A. I am a voice in the desert, crying out: "Make straight the way of the Lord."

Q. If you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah nor a prophet, why do you baptize?

A. I baptize with water. There is one who is to come after me, the strap of whose sandal I am not worthy to unfasten.

**Do You Know Who You Are?: Gospel Reflection**

In today's gospel, the priests and Levites of Jerusalem asked John many questions, but John never really told them who he was. Why? Perhaps because it was John's mission to tell the people about Jesus, the Savior. The gospel says, "He was not the light, but came to testify to the light."

How would others respond to the question "Who are you?" To find out, we questioned some children at St. Mary's School.

First we spoke to a girl in the ninth grade.

Q. Who are you?

A. Mary Johnson.

Q. What are you doing here?

A. I am going to school.

Q. What can you tell us about yourself?

A. I like math and reading.

Next we interviewed a boy in the sixth grade.

Q. Who are you?

A. John Conners.

Q. What are you doing here?

A. My parents say I have to go to school.

Q. What can you tell us about yourself?

A. I like soccer.

Finally, we talked to a fourth-grade girl.

Q. Who are you?

A. I'm Janie Somerset and I live in the white house on the corner of Lockwood and Elm.

Q. What are you doing here?

A. I'm having a great time. The teachers here are great, and I think learning is a lot of fun. I like being with the other kids all day. My mother says you're only a kid once and you should enjoy it.

Q. What can you tell us about yourself?

A. I have three brothers and a sister. I love playing Monopoly with them. I also like to be with my friends. We have some really neat times together. We laugh a lot. Sometimes I like to be alone, though, to walk in the woods and listen to the birds or just sit by the lake and think about the beautiful things God put in this world for me.

After reading these three testimonies, which child told you the most about himself or herself? When you really want to know someone you need more than a name. You need to know what makes that person special.

What made John the Baptist special was not his name but his message and his mission.

**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:

Good news for the poor! Christ our Light is among us!

Our first reading focuses on justice. The One sent by God is anointed by the Spirit for mission. And his mission is to the poor, the oppressed, the brokenhearted. He will bring justice to the world and the poor will be exalted—bedecked with the jewels of salvation.

The Gospel reading focuses on Christ the Light. Again we hear from John the Baptist who is the witness to the Light. John calls us to see the Light who is already in our midst. That Light is Christ, and he is the God who comes to save.

## REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

The children were introduced to John the Baptist in last Sunday's Gospel. There he was presented as the one who calls us to change our lives. This week, help the children understand the meaning of a "witness." Spend some time on this. Allow the children time to verbalize their understanding of the word. They may be familiar with witnesses on T.V. programs. Perhaps some have personal family experiences of "witnessing" an accident. Help them understand that a witness is one who has seen and then speaks out. How was John the Baptist a witness to Jesus? How can we be witnesses to Jesus? As always, it is important that the children focus on ways that are truly possible at their age rather than on generalities or projects beyond the sphere of their lives. The Gospel will impact their lives only if it is related to their real lives.

Like the prophet in Isaiah, Jesus came to "bring good news to the poor, to comfort those whose hearts are broken. . ." Explore with them the meaning of this today. Who are the poor, the brokenhearted, and so forth? Can we be a witness to Jesus by helping the poor, comforting those who are sad, and so forth?

Above all, this third Sunday of Advent, proclaim the joy that we have because God loves us and sent Jesus for us.

# Third Sunday of Advent

Thought for the day

In Jesus, God will be fulfilling the Messianic prophecies about the promised Savior.

Readings

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

*Aim:* To know that the prophets foretold the coming of Jesus, and Jesus fulfilled these prophecies.

Starter

*The next object is...* Have a number of objects hidden from view. Give a short description of an item, such as: "This object is black and white and re(a)d." The children raise their hand when the item matching the description is shown. Show several other items before showing a newspaper, which fits the description, even though it may be slightly different from what was expected. Here are some other ideas:

- The next object has a face all the time (a clock)
- The next object is for the heads of li(e)rs (a pillow)
- The next object is to play with when you get around to it (a ball)
- The next object is put up at the down times (an umbrella)

Teaching

Talk about how we knew what to look out for in that game, so we could recognize the object when it appeared. And sometimes we understood the description better after we'd seen the object.

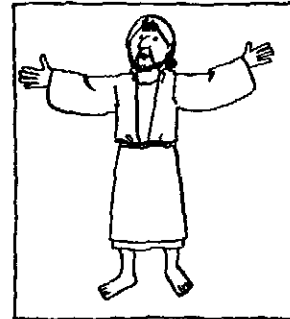
Today we are looking at some of the things the prophets said to describe the coming Messiah, long before Jesus was born. When Jesus did appear on earth, those things came true, and people found they understood them better than they had before.

On a large sheet of colored paper, draw an outline of Jesus, his arms stretched out in welcome, based on the picture below, and lay this on the floor. On top of it have a sheet of the same size but different color, which has been cut into sections. On each section have written out the different sections of Isaiah's prophecy. Across all these lay a title on white paper that says "Messiah" on one side and "Christ" on the reverse. It should all look like the pictures opposite.

Explain how the prophets were sent by God to prepare the people for the coming of his chosen one. The Hebrew word for this anointed, chosen person was "Messiah." The Greek word was "Christ." (Turn the title over and back as you say this. Leave it on the Messiah side.) As the Old Testament is writ-

ten in Hebrew, we'll stick with their word, Messiah, while they are waiting for him to come.

In order to help the people get ready, God spoke through the prophets to tell them what the Messiah would be like when he came. That way they could recognize him, and be ready for him. Let's look at some of the things they said about this Messiah.



Tell the good news to the poor	Comfort the broken-hearted
Set free those feeling imprisoned	Announce the time when God would show his merciful judgement.
Give people clothes of praise and joy to replace their sadness	Be fair to everyone
Makes what is right grow strong	Put wrong things right

## MESSIAH

Lay the Messiah title at the side, and look at the sections, one by one, with all the readers reading them out. In turn take each section off and lay them all around the emerging picture. Gradually we can see that all these descriptions fit the Jesus we know from the gospels. And as the New Testament was written in Greek, we'll use the Greek word for him: the Christ. (Reverse the title.)

Praying

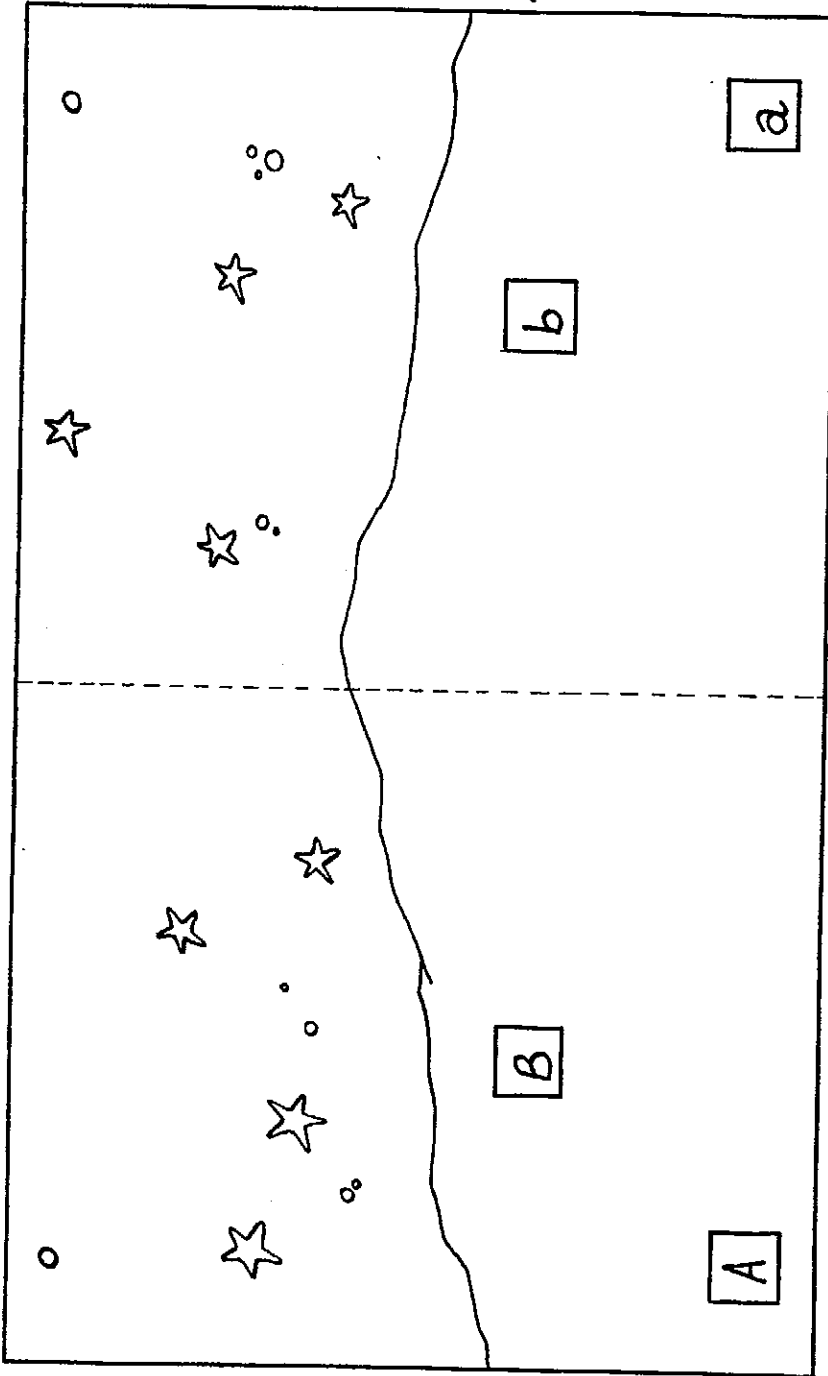
Jesus, Jesus, we have come to see  
that you must really be  
the Son of God our Father.  
We've been with you and we all agree  
that only in your service  
can the world be truly free!

Activities

On the activity sheet the preparations continue for the third stage of the Christmas pop-up model. Instructions and outlines are provided, but you may wish to strengthen the models with thin cardboard. Also, if time permits, look at how the Bible is split into Old and New Testaments, and look at the names of the prophets, flicking through the Old Testament to find the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and the others.

To pray this week

Jesus, Jesus,  
 we have come to see  
 that you must really be  
 the Son of God our Father.  
 We've been with you  
 and we all agree  
 that only in your service  
 can the world be truly free!

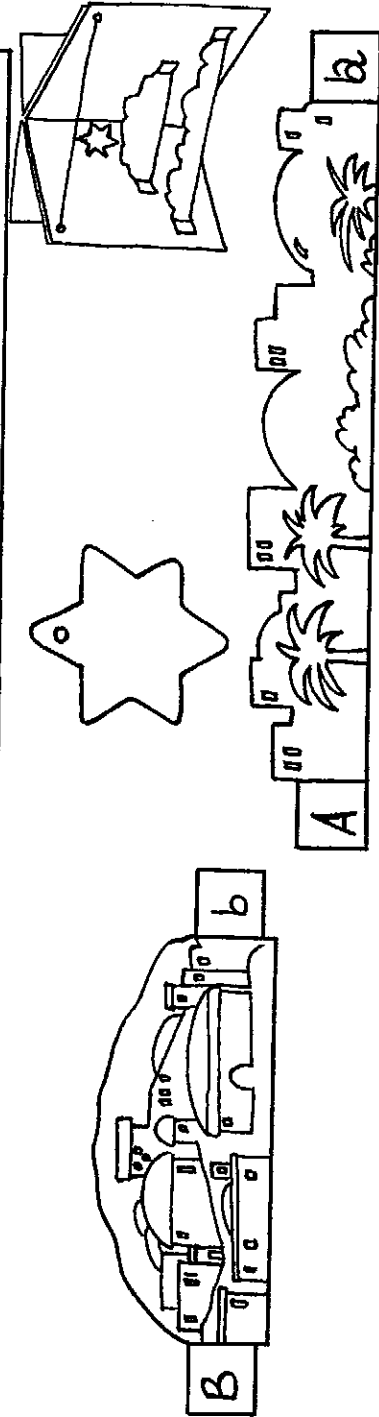


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Can you find the Hebrew  
 and the Greek names for  
 God's chosen one?



# Liturgy of the Word for Children

## Third Sunday of Advent

### **1. Candle Ornament: Class or Family Activity**

This is the third week of our ornament-making project. This week's ornaments will need some additional supplies, but only a small amount of dough art.

#### **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 dough will take up to a week to dry without baking. Today's ornament will not be baked.

#### **THIS WEEK'S ORNAMENT -- A CANDLE**

John "came to testify to the light." This week's ornament for your Advent project will be a candle to represent Jesus, the Light of our world.

##### You will need:

- Cardboard rolls from bathroom tissue.
- White poster paint, magic markers, glitter.
- Yellow or pink facial tissues.
- Small amount of dough art.

1. Mold dough art around the top of the cardboard rolls to resemble dripping wax. Let dry.
2. Paint your cardboard rolls white. Let dry completely.
3. Using magic marker, draw a Chi Rho on each candle.
4. Decorate your candles with glitter, sequins, anything to make them look festive.
5. Tuck one facial tissue into each candle, drawing it up so that just enough shows to resemble a flame.

### **2. Getting Ready for Christmas: Family Activity**

Here is a list of things to do that will help get ready for Christmas. If there are other things your family needs to do, add them to the list. Each evening between now and Christmas, each member of the family can choose something from the list that he or she promises to do the following day. When a project has been completed, it can be crossed off the list.

1. Pray for someone else.
2. Send a Christmas card or note to a friend.
3. Help clean the house.
4. Bake some cookies.
5. Wrap some presents.
6. Read a Christmas story.
7. Put up some Christmas decorations.
8. Call or visit someone who is sick.
9. Go to Mass.
10. Thank God for your family.

## Third Sunday of Advent

### Prepare a way to God

#### INTRODUCTION

News of John the Baptist had spread throughout the land, and crowds of people were flocking to listen to him. The leaders of the Jews decided to send some of their priests and elders to find out who this man really was.

#### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and read the following prayer:

Jesus is the light of the world.  
Help us to live as children of the light,  
sharing Jesus with the whole world,  
by keeping our belief in him  
and all that he taught us  
alive in our hearts.

#### SORRY

John the Baptist taught the people that the first step on the way to God was to say "I'm sorry" if they had done wrong. Help us to remember this as we listen to the words of this prayer:

Lord, help us to choose what is good  
and to follow you by living as you taught us.  
Forgive us if we have done wrong  
and turned away from your love.  
Help us to change our hearts  
and make them new,  
knowing that through your love  
we can start fresh and try again.

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 2.

#### GOSPEL (JOHN 1:19-28)

The Jews sent some priests to John the Baptist to ask him, "Who are you?" "I am not the promised one," he answered.

"Are you Elijah or a prophet?" they asked.

"No, I am neither of these," he replied.

"Well who are you then and why are you baptizing these people?"

John answered using the words of the prophet

Isaiah, "I am a voice crying out in the desert, prepare a way for the Lord!"

"I baptize you with water, but there is one you do not yet know, who stands among you, one who is coming after me. I am not fit even to undo his sandals," he said.

#### DISCUSSION

Who did the priests think that John might be? At first they thought that this extraordinary man might be the Messiah, the savior promised by God. Then they wondered whether John was Elijah or another prophet.

John helped the crowds prepare a way for the Lord by explaining that true happiness comes from pleasing God and leading lives filled with goodness. By being sorry for the mistakes they had made and the wrongs they had done, and by changing their lives, they could make a fresh start on the way to God.

When people asked for God's forgiveness and made up their minds to live as God wanted them to, John would baptize them in the river. As they came up out of the water, it was as though a new life was just beginning for them.

Most people today are baptized as babies rather than as adults, but water is still used at baptism. All life needs water, and the water used at baptism reminds us that as we are now welcomed into the family of God and share in new and everlasting life.

#### ACTIVITY

If the group is small, copy one picture each and ask the children to color it. If you have a large group, enlarge and cut out the individual elements of the picture, and 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

Dear God, give us the courage  
to change our hearts  
and make us grow strong  
in love and faith.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.