

December 16, 2018

Third Sunday of Advent

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Today's Readings

Zephaniah 3:14–15
Isaiah 12:2, 4bcd, 6
Philippians 4:4–7
Luke 3:10–16, 18

The People Listen to John the Baptist

Preparation

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



Prepare with Prayer

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; They rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest, as they exult when dividing the spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, The rod of their taskmaster, you have smashed, as on the day of Midian. (Isaiah 9:1–3).

Scripture Background

This week's reading from Zephaniah concerns the same events as last week's reading from Baruch. After a long exile in Babylon, it is finally possible for the leading citizens of Jerusalem and Judah to return home. The time of punishment for sin is over, and a new era is about to begin.

Although written almost 700 years later, Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians is filled with a similar spirit of joyful anticipation. But it's the Second Coming of Christ that will inaugurate the new era Paul foresees. In a real sense, Paul is asking the Philippians to live each day as if it were their last, for when Christ returns, he will take to himself all those who have remained faithful to him right up to the day of his return—or the last day of their lives, whichever comes first.

In the Gospel, we see that John the Baptist also senses the dawn of a new era, one destined to bring the first coming of Christ with his emergence into public view. Jesus will bring

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a rose cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary -colored
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a green plant or fresh flowers
- ▶ a beach ball or another object easy for young children to throw and catch

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

Gathering: "Jesus Is Coming" (Seeds CD-1, Track #7) or "The Promise Part 2" (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #2)

Gospel Acclamation: "Alleluia" (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

blessing, however, only to those who give up their sinful ways and return to God.

John's preaching challenged any Jew who believed that simply tracing his lineage back to Abraham and Sarah would give him a "free pass" into the messianic kingdom. Chastened by John's warning to prepare for the Messiah's arrival, people began asking him, "What should we do?" It is a question that believers of all times and places need to keep asking themselves.

Children's Connections

It's always fun to hear how first-graders complete old proverbs. Their answers offer proof positive that kids can say, in the words of the late Art Linkletter, "the darnedest things."

Young children enjoy noncompetitive games that invite everyone's participation, so be sure to ask at least one question of each child. Some questions are suggested, but if needed, add extras.

Encourage the children to respond with speed and spontaneity, perhaps saying the first thing that comes to mind. Offer no judgments or critiques on their answers. The time for serious commentary will come later, during the homily. At that time, clear up any misconceptions about each question, and concentrate on how a true peacemaker would respond to the situation. Do not make any child feel uncomfortable or "on the spot" for an answer that he or she gave earlier.

The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about being ready for Jesus, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

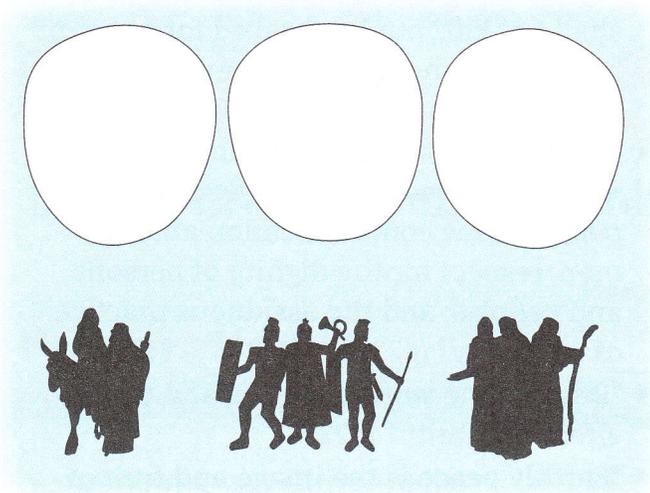
More About ...

The Catechism on Peacemaking

- "By recalling the commandment, 'You shall not kill,' our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral." (#2302)
- "Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity." (#2304)
- "Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity." (#2304)
- "Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic 'Prince of Peace.' " (#2305)
- "All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war." (#2308)
- "Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride raging among men and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars. Everything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building up peace and avoiding war." (#2317)

Leaflet Activity

This week, the children will learn that all people are called to live in a way that invites Jesus in our midst.



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

Ask the children to form a circle. Stand in the middle and tell the children you will throw the ball to someone while asking a question. The person who catches the ball must answer the question, throw the ball back to you, then sit down. Accept any answer. The game ends when all the children in the circle are sitting down. Each question begins with “What should you do if...” Here are some starter questions.

What should you do if...

- ▶ you see a full trash can somewhere at home?
- ▶ you see someone in a store drop a wallet?
- ▶ a playmate falls down and starts crying?
- ▶ you are called for dinner in the middle of an interesting movie?
- ▶ a storm comes and you feel afraid?
- ▶ your mother won't buy you a toy you want?
- ▶ you have two candy bars and your little sister

Tell the children that you will have more to say about this game during the homily. Then note that each question concerned a situation in which someone's actions could add peace and love to the world or take away some of its peace and love.

Collect

Leader: Invite the children to stay in the circle, bow their heads, close their eyes, and pray in their hearts as they listen to the song “Come, Lord Jesus.” Play “Come, Lord Jesus.”

And so we say together now, “Come, Lord Jesus, come.”

Children: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: Come in peace and make us people of peace.

Children: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Leader: Come and make our hearts like yours.

Children: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

Leader: In today's First Reading, the prophet Zephaniah has joyful news for the people of Jerusalem. War is over; peace has returned to their land.

Read *Zephaniah 3:14–15*. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce this response.

Leader: Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Children: Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Leader: Read *Isaiah 12:2, 4bcd, 6*.

Second Reading

Leader: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul gives us some advice on how we can make the world a better place.

Read *Philippians 4:4–7*. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”

Children: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

Leader: In today's Gospel, Saint John the Baptist has just finished telling a crowd to get ready for Jesus' coming. People are excited and ask him, "What should we do?" Listen closely to John's answers—because we, too, must get ready for Jesus. That's what it means to get ready for Christmas.

The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Luke.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

Leader: *Read Luke 3:10–16, 18. Then say, "The Gospel of the Lord."*

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

First, review John's teachings in the Gospel. John said:

1. Everyone who has extra food and clothes should share with those who have none.
2. Tax collectors should do their work honestly and not cheat anyone.
3. Soldiers should not be bullies who force people to give them money.
4. Everyone, in short, should try to be a peacemaker in everyday life.

Then review the questions used in the opening activity, and explain what a true peacemaker would do in each situation.

PEACEMAKERS WOULD:

1. Empty the trash can (Philippians 4:5).
2. Return the lost wallet (Luke 3:13).
3. Help a hurt playmate (Philippians 4:5).
4. Stop watching the movie and go to dinner. (Luke 3:16).
5. Do what Saint Paul said: "Don't worry...but pray" (Philippians 4:6).
6. Be content with what they have (Luke 3:14).
7. Share their candy (Luke 3:11).

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand for the profession of faith, and answer each question with the response, "Yes, I do believe." Do you believe that God, the loving Creator, sent us Jesus to show us the ways of peace?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Leader: Do you believe that Jesus, God's only beloved Son, is the Prince of Peace?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Leader: Do you believe that God the Holy Spirit helps you perform works of peace?

Children: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: As a symbol of our unity and peace, let us once again form a circle, join hands, and pray. To each petition, please respond, "Let there be peace on Earth." For Pope _____ and all leaders of the Church, that they will show the world the ways of peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Let there be peace on Earth.

Leader: For leaders of all the nations of the world, that they will work together for peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Let there be peace on Earth.

Leader: For ourselves and for the members of our parish, that we will be true peacemakers and share what we have with others, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Let there be peace on Earth.

Leader: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Let us pray. Loving God, when Christmas comes, we will celebrate that day long ago when you came to live among us as a little baby. Out of love for you and concern for all the babies being born into today's world, please help us make our world a kinder and gentler place. This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to complete the Family Corner activities as a family.