

During this unprecedented time in our world's history, we offer you the following material for your praying and reflecting on God's Word.

In this week's Gospel Reading and next week's, our Advent preparation for Christmas invites us to consider John the Baptist and his relationship to Jesus. John the Baptist appears in the tradition of the great prophets of Israel, preaching repentance and reform to the people of Israel. John directs a particularly pointed call to repentance to the Pharisees and Sadducees. John marks the conversion of those who seek him out with a baptism of repentance. John's baptism can be understood as an anticipation of Christian baptism. In this passage, John himself alludes to the difference between his baptism and the one yet to come. John makes very clear that his relationship to the Messiah yet to come (Jesus) is one of service and subservience. John's preaching of the coming of the Lord is a key theme of the Advent season. As John's message prepared the way for Jesus in the first century, we too, are called to prepare ourselves for Jesus' coming. We respond to John's message by our repentance and reform of our lives. We are also called to be prophets of Christ, who announce by our lives, as John did, the coming of the Lord.

Lectio Divina with the Sunday Gospel

Lectio Divina means 'divine reading'. It is a way to pray using the holy scriptures in a step-by-step process. Gather the entire family around and make the sign of the Cross. Light a candle.

Leader: "Holy Spirit, you inspired the authors of Sacred Scripture to write what you wanted us to know for the sake of our salvation. Inspire us now to hear those words not only with our ears, but our hearts, so that we might know your saving Word for us today."

- Have one person **read** the scripture slowly, out loud and have a few moments of silence afterwards. (It may be helpful for everyone to have a copy of the reading).
- **Read** the scripture again out loud and choose a single word or short phrase that touches, speaks or surprises you. Share with everyone.
- **Read** the scripture out loud one more time and discuss what is happening directly in the text.
- **Meditate** on what God is doing now in our lives through this text.
- **Respond** to what God is doing through prayer.
- **Contemplate** on what God is asking of me through this text and how to use these words as a gift for others through my actions.
- After a period of silence, end with the Sign of the Cross.

(see over)

The Holy Gospel for December 4, 2022

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew.

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

This is the one of whom the Prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,
“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”

Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist,
and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him,
and all the region along the Jordan,
and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism,
John said to them,
“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?
Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’;
for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.
Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees;
every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
I baptize you with water for repentance,
but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me;
I am not worthy to carry his sandals.
He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
His winnowing fork is in his hand,
and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary;
but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

(see over)

Family Activities

- ❖ As you gather around the Advent Wreath, light the first **two** purple candles and recite the prayer below. The evergreen wreath symbolizes eternal life and the never-ending circle, Jesus' never-ending love. The first purple candle denotes **hope**, representing our expectation for the coming of the redeemer. The second purple candle denotes **peace** - the only true peace that Jesus can bring. Purple (or violet) has traditionally been the primary colour of Advent. This hue symbolizes repentance and fasting. The spiritual discipline of denying oneself food or some other pleasure is one of the ways Christians show their devotion to God and prepare their hearts for his arrival. Purple-violet is also the liturgical colour for the season of Lent, which similarly involves a time of reflection, repentance, self-denial, and spiritual readiness.

Purple is also the colour of royalty and the sovereignty of Christ, who is known as the "King of Kings." So, purple in this application demonstrates the anticipation of and reception of the coming King celebrated during Advent.

Heavenly Father, Lord of All,

come and fill this world with your peace.

May there be an end to hatred and division among your people.

Cease all the fighting and war in this world.

Heal the bitterness and hurt in my own heart.

In this season of Advent, prepare my heart for the coming of Jesus,

our Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Fill my heart with your peace which passes all understanding.

Amen

- ❖ On December 8th, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. The Immaculate Conception means that, unlike all the descendants of Adam, who were born stained with *original sin* (the sin of Adam and Eve), the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first moment of her conception, and by a singular *privilege* from God, was preserved clean, immaculate, and exempt from any stain of original sin. The Virgin Mary was perfectly spotless and stainless from the moment of her conception and throughout her life. This special privilege was granted to her, not due to any merit on her part, but because she was predestined to be the mother of the Son of God.

(see over)

(Family Activities continued...)

- ❖ At your home altar, place a statue or a picture of Mary. Decorate it with flowers.
Pray the Hail Mary:

**Hail Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.**

**Blessed are thou amongst women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus.**

**Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.**

Amen