



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Children's Liturgy of the Word

2nd Sunday of Advent, Year B: Prepare the Way!

Theme: Prepare the way!

Summary

Isaiah writes that the people of Israel are returning to their homelands after exile, so there is a feeling that something magnificent is about to happen and that the entire landscape will change to accommodate this coming. By placing the reading from Isaiah with the reading from Mark, we see a picture of Jesus as the New Moses leading the people to a promised land, fulfilling God's plan.

The desert is a place of exile and preparation in the first reading and Gospel. The Gospel describes John as being like the prophets of old in dress and lifestyle. John's baptism was similarly a preparation for the baptism of the Spirit expected to come with the Messiah.

The images in the first reading of ground and landscape and making straight and level paths are metaphors for our hearts and lives.

Objectives

- † Help the children learn about John the Baptist.
- † Help the children point their lives to Jesus.

Leader's Preparation:

- † Pray the Lectionary readings.
- † Review the background.
- † Reflect upon the reflection questions.
- † Prepare the Environment and Materials.

Environment and Materials

- † Two screened adult leaders.
- † Liturgical space; the liturgical colour is **PURPLE or VIOLET**
- † Violet cloth, a Lectionary, a candle, and an Advent Wreath. Light two purple or violet candles.
- † Place the Bible in a prominent location for the children to see.
- † Select volunteers (older children or adults) to proclaim the readings.
- † Display the responsorial psalm refrain lyrics, if possible and desired.
- † Display the Creed, if possible and desired.

Images in the Readings

- † Clearing a path
- † Straight road
- † Mountains and hills
- † The desert
- † Baptism with water
- † The Holy Spirit

The readings of these first weeks of Advent stress over and over that our lives are in the hands of a merciful God, and echo the cry to prepare a way and a place for the Lord within our cluttered lives. In today's Gospel John proclaims the coming of the Messiah.

Background

First Reading: Isaiah

- † The image of preparing the way of the Lord and making the path straight in this passage is in all four accounts of the Gospel.
- † Isaiah uses poetry to tell Israel during the exile that God has forgiven her.
- † The message proclaims repentance and forgiveness.
- † John the Baptist references this reading in the Gospel.
- † We can rejoice because God has forgiven Israel for her sins!
- † Those who were exiled can return home. However, God wants us to do our part to fulfill our covenant with God.

Gospel: Mark

- † The Gospel starts with this title: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God." It is a new beginning.
- † With these beginning verses, Mark lays the foundation for his Gospel.
- † This Gospel has no infancy story or announcement to Mary or Joseph.
- † Mark plunges right in with the call of the Baptist, who proclaims a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
- † Many were coming to John and acknowledging their sins as then, they were baptized.
- † We are also called to prepare and make a space in our lives for God and the things of God by praying and thinking about God and the great work of Jesus.

† Leader's Reflection Questions

- † What is the good news?
- † How will you prepare?

Why do you think Advent is a good time to think about our lives, what we are doing right and what we can improve on?

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: My dear children, today the Gospel introduces you to John the Baptist. God gave him the mission to prepare the way for Jesus. This is our mission as well. Go with the prayers of our parish to prepare for Jesus.

When most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.



Welcome.

The leaders assist the children to sit and prepare. Begin with the Sign of the Cross. Help the children think about and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The Sign of the Cross can be made while seated. It is a liturgical opportunity in itself to help children think about God. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

O God, help us to understand your Word with open hearts and increase our faith. Through Christ our Lord.

Invite the children to listen to the Gospel.

First Reading

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

A voice cries out:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted,
and every mountain and hill made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The Word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Gospel

The children stand for the Gospel. The leader proclaims the Gospel.

✠ **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.**

All respond: Glory to you, Lord.

All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and breast.

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 Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

People from the Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went 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."

The Gospel of the Lord.

The leader concludes the Gospel with The Gospel of the Lord. All respond: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ. The children sit to listen to the reflection.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Please consider the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear?

Allow the children an opportunity to respond in their own words. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following or similar, to stimulate discussion.

What was the name of the prophet who spoke about the coming of John the Baptist?

What is a prophet?

A prophet speaks in the name of God and has been allowed by God to know and share a part of God's plan for humanity.

John the Baptist was God's messenger. God sent him to tell the people to change their ways and return 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.

God sent John 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 telling God we are sorry for our sins to live as Jesus taught us. Advent is an excellent time to look carefully at ourselves and make a fresh start if necessary.

When can we meet Jesus and ask for his forgiveness?

Allow the children an opportunity to respond in their own words.

We can tell Jesus that we are sorry through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Through the priest, God allows us to hear that our sins are forgiven so we can start anew.

John the Baptist tells us always to keep our eyes on Jesus. Let us stand and pray together.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith.

Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.



Children's Liturgy of the Word

Today's Readings

Isaiah 40:3-5

Psalm 85:8-9, 10-11

Mark 1:1-8



We Pray

During this holy season of Advent, O Lord, open our ears to hear the message of Saint John the Baptist. May we turn our hearts back to you. Amen.

The Word of God This Week



Turn Back to God

To prepare the way for Jesus to come, John the Baptist went into the desert and preached, "Turn back to God and be baptized! Your sins will be forgiven." Many people came, listened to John, and were sorry for their sins. John baptized them in the Jordan River. John also told them, "Someone more powerful than I is coming. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!"



Symbols of John the Baptist such as a picture of him in a Hessian cloth wrapped in a leather belt, a stick of honey. Also, a map of the Holy Land and a picture of the wilderness where John lived.

