

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 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 afresh and try again.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 2:
Light up our hearts.

GOSPEL (cf 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 baptising 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 baptise 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.'

DISCUSSION

Who did the priests think that John might be? – At first they thought that this extraordinary man

might be the Messiah, the saviour promised by God. Then they wondered whether John was Elijah or another prophet.

How did John help the crowds to 'prepare a way for the Lord'? – John explained that true happiness comes from pleasing God and leading lives filled with goodness. 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.

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

Is water still used at Baptism today? – Most people are baptised as babies, and some as grown-ups, but water is always used at Baptism. All life needs water and the water used at baptism reminds us that as we are welcomed into the family of God, we share new and everlasting life with him.

Each of us does something wrong sometimes, spoiling our friendship with each other and with God. How can we find our way back to the path which leads to him? – Do just as John the Baptist told the people! Say *sorry* to God for all the things we have done wrong and have a *change of heart*.

ACTIVITY

If the group is small, photocopy the picture and ask the children to colour 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 coloured. Spend some time with the children discussing the picture and the event it depicts.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

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.