

Second Week of Advent



Prayer of Thanks for John the Baptist

God, our loving Father,
we thank you for sending Saint John
the Baptist
to do the vital work of preparing people
to hear the words of your Son, Jesus Christ.
Help us to heed John's message,
to see where we need to repent in our lives
and so produce good fruit.
Give us an urgent desire to
live out of our Baptism
and to listen attentively to the Good News.
Move us to follow the Baptist's example,
to lead people to your Son
and then step out of the way,
listening with them to his teaching.
We ask these things ever confident of your
work in our lives.
We ask them in humility and gratitude.
We ask them through Christ our Lord. Amen.

December 9, 2007 **Preparing the Way**

This Sunday we hear the very beginning of the Gospel according to the evangelist Matthew (3:1–12). Here we find John the Baptist preparing the way of the Lord. With his wild appearance and strident style, John preaches strong words of repentance to everyone who will listen. Some of the people who come to John think he is the messiah. But John is very, very clear in his denial. He steps aside for Jesus.

John teaches an important message about the role of Christ's followers. We are to get out of the way—to keep our own agendas in the background—so that Christ can act *through* us. We lead people to the teacher and then let the teacher teach. We are careful

to keep the spotlight of credit for any good works not on ourselves but on the Lord. "I have baptized with water," John said. "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." We have been baptized with the Holy Spirit, and like John the Baptist we can also be a witness to the one who came to this earth the first Christmas.

At our Baptism we were anointed with oil to be members of Christ who is Priest, Prophet, and King, so we are called continually to prepare the way of the Lord as the Baptist did. John knew Jesus; he listened to him, and he told his followers to follow him. We need to know Jesus as a friend; to listen to his words as he teaches, and to follow his way.

This Week at Home

Monday, December 10

Gifts for Today and Tomorrow

In today's First Reading, Isaiah 35:1-10, the prophet gives us a joyful picture of what we can look forward to. He says that when the Lord comes the blind will see and the deaf will hear. We will see the glory of the Lord and the entire earth will be transformed! Though we look forward to that future glory, we are also grateful now for the many gifts God is giving us. Name the blessings and gifts you enjoy, especially those you usually don't think about. Write these down and put the list where you will see it each day, and continue your prayer of thanks.

Tuesday, December 11

The Gift of Scripture

Today we remember Saint Damasus I, Pope from 366 to 384. He asked Saint Jerome to translate the Gospels (then in Greek) into Latin, so that for the first time, ordinary people in the western Roman Empire could read them. Commit yourself to reading the Bible regularly, and thank God for Damasus, along with many Church leaders since him, who have encouraged all of the faithful to read the scriptures.

Wednesday, December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

In 1531 a poor farm laborer, Saint Juan Diego, saw a vision of Our Lady who asked him to tell the Bishop that she wanted a church to be built in Guadalupe, Mexico. Mary wanted the church to welcome people who felt hopeless and alone. How can we make our own home and our parish places where people can feel welcome and valued? Can the way we treat others be a sign of hopefulness just as Our Lady of Guadalupe is?

Thursday, December 13

Saint Lucy

Today we remember Saint Lucy, a young girl who died for her faith during the persecution of Christians in Sicily in 303. Legends about her are especially popular in Italy and Scandinavia. They tell of miracles performed after her death when she brought food to villages during famines. She is often invoked in prayer to cure diseases of the eyes.

Share some Saint Lucy buns in the spirit of this day! Whip together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar and 1 cup butter; add 2 tablespoons vanilla; gradually add $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups

flour and knead together. On a floured surface break off about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pieces of dough, roll into strips, and makes "L" shapes for Lucy. Bake at 350°F on a greased sheet for about 10 minutes or until golden. If desired, decorate with raisins dipped in a mixture of water and powdered sugar.

Friday, December 14

Timeless Wisdom

Saint John of the Cross, whom we remember today, was a Carmelite monk, a mystic, and a poet who lived from 1542 to 1591. He endured suffering for long periods of time from which he has given us useful lessons and inspiration. From him we learn that self-denial, especially in a time when many people are spoiled by a materialistic "good life," can bring riches of a much more important kind. Focusing on what is important in God's eyes can give us wisdom that cannot come any other way.



Saturday, December 15

A Jesse Tree

The Jesse tree is an Advent symbol that honors many of the people who waited for Jesus to come into the world. You can make a Jesse tree from a bare branch and paper or cardboard cutouts. Each cutout represents someone who waited for the Savior. You could make a harp for King David, a ladder for Jacob, a staff for the shepherds, an apple for Adam and Eve, a boat for Noah, a saw and hammer for Joseph, and can you think of others? The Jesse tree encourages us to patiently wait and watch for the Savior.

