

The Gospel at Home

This Week's Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

In this Sunday's Gospel, John the Baptist urges people to turn toward God. He baptizes people when they want to change their lives. John insists that Baptism expresses a real change of heart and not a shallow safeguard against God's judgment. Note: The Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, normally a Holy Day of Obligation, will not be one this year and it moves to December 9.

Exploring the Gospel Message

Seeds (Preschool): Your child is continuing his or her journey to Jesus' birth by learning more about the Christmas story. Spreading the story out over a longer period of time helps children make the story their own. The class learned about Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Ask your child to tell you about Jesus' human mother. Talk with your child about how we receive messages from others. Ask your child to show you the map to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Promise (Grades K-1): In the spirit of John the Baptist's preaching, your child's class discussed their experiences of preparing for an event, such as the arrival of guests. They shared ideas of what it takes to get ready for a new baby in the family; they also talked about how Mary and Joseph got ready for the coming of the Baby Jesus. Your child made a booklet about that preparation. One page of the booklet is a day-by-day calendar. Starting on December 6, the Feast of Saint Nicholas, remind your child to outline one of the boxes on that page each day until Christmas. Discuss how each image relates to your celebration of Advent and Christmas.

Good News (Grades 2-3): This week the class learned how the prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. Ask

your child to tell you what a prophet does. Talk about how your family can prepare the way for Jesus by making good choices and doing what is right. Your child can tell you how he or she is committed to making peace.

Venture (Grades 4-6): Ask your youngster to share with the family how the prophet Isaiah described the "peaceable kingdom." Discuss the importance of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the people of the Americas, and invite your child to recount the story of her first appearance. Let your child lead the family in choosing things to do for the coming feast of Christmas. He or she can use the suggestions from the Week 2 Calendar List featured on Page 5.

Visions (Grades 7-9): The lesson this week started with an explanation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We celebrated that feast day, and your youngster should be able to tell you what the Immaculate Conception refers to. This week your youngster's class also created a Jesse Tree. This activity can help your family focus on the season as a time to prepare for the birth of Jesus and for the rebirth of love in your hearts. Ask your son or daughter to explain the significance of the Jesse Tree to your family, and lead everyone in creating one for your home. Be sure to spend some time talking about John the Baptist's call for all people to have a change of heart as they prepare for the coming Savior.

Pray Together

To celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, add the Hail Mary prayer to your Advent wreath prayer this week. You may even want to place a statue or picture of Mary in the center of your wreath.