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## Third Sunday of Advent, Year A, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



### Junior High Session

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

Matthew 11:2-11

## Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, prepare our hearts to celebrate your birth.

Help us bring the light of your presence into the world.

In the name of Christ our Lord we pray.

Amen.



## Opening Life Reflection

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On this Third Sunday of Advent our focus is the gift of prophecy. Begin by brainstorming with the young people the many ways that God speaks to us. Write down their responses. Invite them to reflect on how they can spread God's message about Jesus this Christmas. Provide newsprint paper and markers and have the young people design Christmas wrapping paper with their messages about the birth of Jesus. Discuss:

- How does God speak to us?
- How can you tell others about Jesus?
- How can you listen for God's message today?

Allow time for discussion. A prophet is one called by God to speak in God's name. As we get ready to celebrate Christmas we remember those who have prepared us for the coming of Jesus.

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# Listening to the Word of God

In the Old Testament reading today listen to God's message of redemption.

Read Isaiah 35:1-6,10.

Allow for silence.

## Scripture Discussion Starters

- How is the redemption of Israel described?
- What is the prophet's message?
- How does the reading end?

In the Gospel today listen to find out about the prophet John the Baptist.

Read Matthew 11:2-11.

Allow for silence.



- Where is John the Baptist?
- What message does Jesus give to John?
- Why does Jesus tell the crowds that John is a prophet and more?

## Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings.

The Old Testament reading today gives a joyful account of Israel's redemption. The prophet's message is "fear not" because God will come and save. Today's passage was written to let the people who were sent into exile know that they would be brought back into their own land. The people will be helped on their journey by the saving power of God. Today's Old Testament reading ends with a message of gladness and hope. The Lord will come and bring the people everlasting joy.

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The Gospel today focuses on the arrival of the Messiah who brings healing and life and who—brings good news to the poor. Jesus' response to John the Baptist's question about whether or not he is the Messiah, is one that tells what kind of Messiah Jesus is. This Messiah's reign is one of mercy.

This Gospel passage goes on to describe John the Baptist. John is identified as a prophet, a messenger sent by God with the highest mission—to prepare for the coming of Jesus. Like all prophets, John the Baptist is a model of faithfulness. The Gospel today reminds us to be faithful and spread the good news about Jesus throughout the world today—a world in need of healing and mercy.

## **Questions for Deeper Reflection**

- What do you find hopeful about today's readings?
- How does John the Baptist inspire you?
- Who are some people that spread God's healing and mercy in the world today?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

RCL Benziger  
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## **Doctrinal Discussion Starters**

### **The Charism of Prophecy**

We see in the Old Testament scriptures that a prophet is one called by God to speak in God's name. The prophet Isaiah tells the people about God's future kingdom, which will be accomplished through the coming of a messiah. The prophets in the Old Testament challenge the people by speaking God's truth. They also bring God's message of hope. Prophets let the people know of God's promise of mercy and faithfulness in times of fear and confusion. The prophet's message was frequently unwelcome, and they were often persecuted for following God's call.

Catholics consider John the Baptist to be the last great prophet in the Old Testament line. He called for the people to turn away from sin and he pointed the way to Jesus, the Messiah.

After the time of the Old Testament and John the Baptist, people continue to be called by God



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to speak God's truth. In the New Testament Scriptures Paul names prophecy as a charism, or a gift of the Holy Spirit. By our baptism, all Christians share in Christ's identity as priest, prophet, and king. We are called to listen for and speak God's message in the world.

- What is a prophet?
- Why are prophets often persecuted?
- Who are some modern day prophets?

## **The Gospel in Life**

How can you announce the good news about Jesus this Christmas?

### **Connecting to Faith First® Legacy Edition**

At Home Family Guide, theme 24

