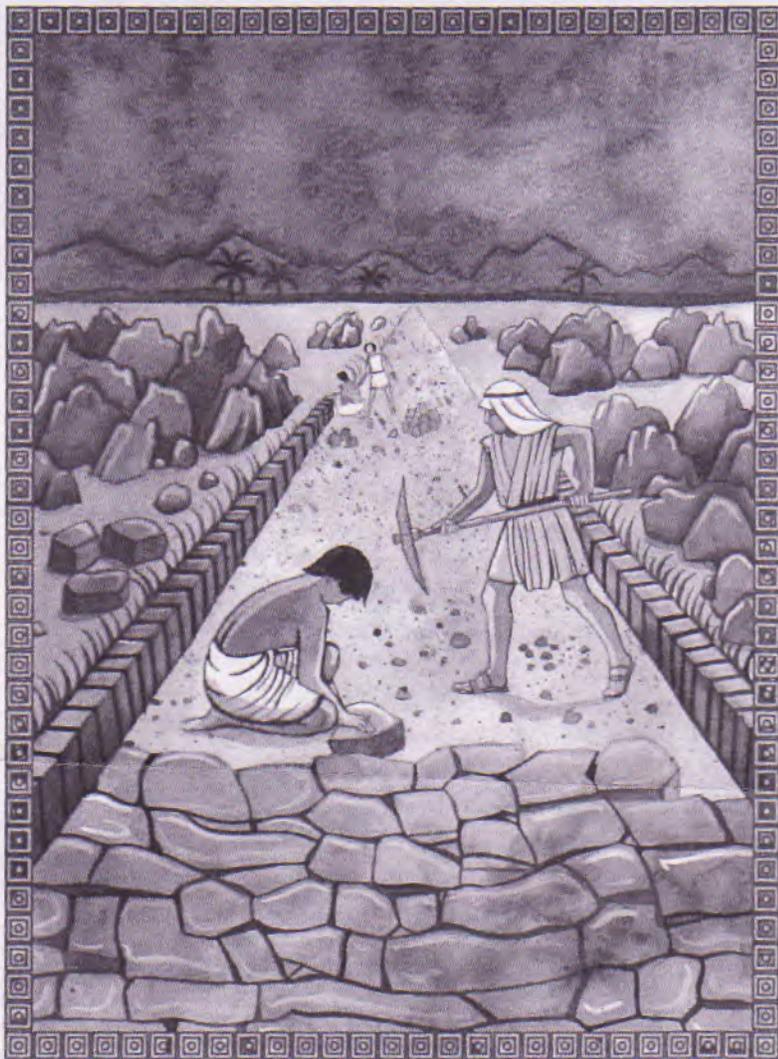


# Second Sunday of Advent



## Sharpen Our Hearing

God our generous Father,  
you who sent John  
to awaken the people  
to the coming of Jesus,  
sharpen our hearing  
so we too might hear  
the unlikely prophets in our midst.  
Attune us to your Word,  
spoken by ordinary people,  
by children and teenagers,  
laborers, artists, and the elderly  
so that together we can prepare  
your way.

Lead us to appreciate all your people  
as much as we admire the rich  
and famous.

We ask this through the same Christ  
our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 9, 2012

Who Will Prepare the Way of the Lord?

Today's Readings: Baruch 5:1-9; Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6 (3); Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6 If we were to describe the setting for John's Good News in contemporary terms, we might say: in France, Kenya, Samoa, Japan, and Bolivia, when Obama was president of the United States and Benedict XVI was pope, "the word of God came to John . . . ."

God's Word always comes to specific human beings in concrete situations. It's not airy, floating in the clouds. All around the world, as Advent begins, Christians undertake intensified prayer and preparation. This is how they prepare the way and make the paths straight. There is a collective power in millions turning from the culture's hype, seeking instead a way of peace, emptiness, and mystery.

When the stores hang red and green tinsel, Christians drape their altars and prayer corners with violet. Their energy comes not from what they can buy, but as Baruch says, from "rejoicing that God has remembered them."

In the twenty-first century, we remember Herod, Philip, and Annas only as villains. The heroes of the story that is unfolding were unknown in their day: a ragged preacher in the wilderness named John, a teenaged girl named Mary, her baffled fiancé, Joseph.

Somewhere in a Frankfurt treatment center for AIDS patients, a native American parish in Wyoming, an orphanage in Somalia, the Word of God continues to be spoken by unique individuals who aren't famous: through healing touches, compassionate eyes, hearts attuned to Christ's.



## This Week at Home

### Monday, December 10 After Paralysis, Movement

Today's Gospel presents the central paradox of Christianity: when we are weakest, even paralyzed, we are strongest. The friends of the paralytic must have thought their mission was futile: the crowd around Jesus was so dense. Just then, their faith became creative. The man lowered through the roof must have felt helpless, even foolish. Just then, he was cured. Today's Readings: Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 85:9ab and 10, 11-12, 13-14 (Isaiah 35:4f); Luke 5:17-26.

### Tuesday, December 11 Where Is the Greatest Need?

Jesus' words give clear direction during the hectic holiday season. Do what is most needed, he says. Perhaps that means decorations are sacrificed to a child's need for time and attention. There may not be forty-seven kinds of cookies because the baker must care for herself. Maybe the lonely neighbor needs an hour of conversation more than the gifts need perfect wrapping. Attending to need makes the difference between the shepherd's *satisfaction* when all is in order and his *joy* when the lost one is found. Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 96:1-2, 3 and 10ac, 11-12, 13 (see Isaiah 40:10ab); Matthew 18:12-14.

### Wednesday, December 12 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Mary's appearance to Juan Diego in Mexico came only ten years after the Spanish conquered the native peoples. They were oppressed, decimated, despondent. Then Mary appeared with dark skin, wearing their style of clothing, speaking their native language, not Spanish. She was one with them, and she directed the Church toward solidarity with the poor. Her profound influence continues. Today's Readings: Zechariah 2:14-17; Responsorial Psalm: Judith 13:18bcde, 19 (15:9d); Luke 1:26-38.

### Thursday, December 13 Memorial of Saint Lucy

Little is known about Lucy except that she rejected a suitor, who turned her in as a Christian to the authorities. They killed her in Sicily around the year 304. Lucy must have taken Christ and his message most seriously, as did John the Baptist. Do we invest in prayer and the works of mercy as avidly as we do our careers, favorite sports, or pursuit of luxuries? During a dark season, Lucy shines with brilliant light. How can we rearrange our priorities to be more in line with hers and John's? Today's Readings: Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalm 145:1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab (8); Matthew 11:11-15.

### Friday, December 14 Memorial of Saint John of the Cross

Together, John, the young priest, and Teresa of Avila, the fifty-two-year-old nun, reformed the Carmelite order, and also opened a door into mysticism for ordinary people seeking holiness. John's greatest work, *Dark Night of the Soul* uses the image of the soul meeting God like a lover seeking the beloved, undergoing pain as well as bliss in the search. Today's Readings: Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6 (see John 8:12); Matthew 11:16-19.

### Saturday, December 15 Unrecognized Prophets

To understand today's Gospel, it's important to know the Jewish belief that Elijah would return to precede the Messiah. If Jesus was really their savior, where was Elijah? Jesus points out the similarities between John and Elijah: John lived in the desert, defied the king, and dressed like Elijah. Yet people didn't recognize him; in fact, they killed him. What messengers of God in our midst are *we* missing? Today's Readings: Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Psalm 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19 (4); Matthew 17:9a, 10-13.



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*Keeping the Seasons*  
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