November GIFT

Called During Advent

Call of St. John the Baptist

**Hospitality**

Table Discussion during the meal:

What are some traditions your family has during Advent? Do you have an Advent wreath? How do you make Advent special?

**Welcome**

Welcome to November GIFT! Today we are going to think about how we are called by God during the season of Advent and about someone who answered a special call from God – St. John the Baptist.

First, who can tell me – what is Advent? (take answers) It is the 4 weeks before Christmas when we are preparing for Jesus coming in to our lives.

During the readings at Mass during Advent, we often hear from St. John the Baptist. John was Jesus’ cousin and he was a prophet. Who can tell me what a prophet is?

A prophet is a person who speaks for God. Prophets were called by God to tell the people the will of God. A prophet is not someone who tells the future! The prophets were people who had a personal relationship with God and were able to communicate God’s perspective to the people. Usually, the prophet’s message was about faithfulness to God’s commandments and issues of social justice. Often, a prophet’s message was hard to hear because it forced people to change their lives. The prophets also reminded people of God’s forgiveness and ongoing love for them. The message of a prophet not only applies to the people long ago, it also applies to people today.

St. John the Baptist was called by God to prepare people for the coming of Jesus. Today we will think about his call and about what it means for us today.

We will start with opening prayer which begins with our opening song. Please stand and join in singing, We are Called.

**Opening Prayer**

**Prayer Leader:**

Let us begin our prayer in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us pray:

Loving Father, we thank you for the gift of this day and for this chance to be together. We thank you for the role models you have given us in the prophets and the saints and in particular, St. John the Baptist. Through their humble trust in you, they show us how to say “yes” to your call in our lives. Help each one of us to say yes to your call in our lives. We pray this through Chris our Lord. Amen.

**Reader:**

A reading from the Gospel according to John

Now this was John’s testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, “I am not the Messiah.”

They asked him, “Then who are you? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

“Are you the Prophet?”

He answered, “No.”

Finally they said, “Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?”

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, “I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”

The Word of the Lord

**Response:** Prepare our hearts, Lord.

**Leader:** The Lord comes into the world in new ways each day. Let us pray that we will make preparation for the Lord a routine in our daily lives.

**All:** Prepare our hearts, Lord.

**Leader:** John the Baptist called people of his time to prepare by being more generous, more honest, and more peaceful. Let us pray that we will hear today what John is asking us to do to prepare for the Lord.

**All:** Prepare our hearts, Lord.

**Leader:** This GIFT session is also a time of preparation. Let us pray that we will generously share our enthusiasm with each other as we all celebrate and learn together so that our preparation will bear fruit.

**All:** Prepare our hearts, Lord.

**Leader:** We close our prayer and continue our sharing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**All:** Amen.

Please be seated.

**Opening Activity**

**Facilitator:**

I would like to quote a very famous person and ask if you can tell me who said this. “…among those born of women, there has been none greater than John the Baptist.” (Take answers. The correct answer is Jesus)

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus believed that there was no greater person on Earth than John the Baptist. But Jesus also said that being the greatest person on Earth is not the best thing that can happen for a person. He said that entering the kingdom of heaven is even greater than being the greatest person on Earth.

Take a look at the image on the power point slide of St. John the Baptist. Do you notice anything? Take a minute and share with someone an insight you have about the icon. Something you see and what you think it might mean. Try to think about what you know about John the Baptist.

After a few minutes, invite participants to share anything they might have said or heard that helped them understand something about John the Baptist from their viewing and discussing the image.

Well, John the Baptist was known for his unusual ways. He wore unusual clothes and he ate locusts. But, he had an important message for the people of his time, and that message is still important for us. During Advent, we will hear about John the Baptist during the readings. Our first activity will help us think more about his message.

We need one person from each table to come up and get a folder. Please follow the instructions inside.

**Table Activity 1**

A

**John the Baptist**

1. Using the Bible at the table, look up your Bible verse. **John 1:19-28**
2. Discuss:
* Who did John the Baptist say that he was?
* What was he doing?
* Why do you think he was baptizing?
* Prophets had a message from God for the people. What do you think John’s message was?
* How do you think John the Baptist answered God’s call?
* Do you think it was the popular thing to do? Do you think everyone agreed with him?
* John the Baptist told people to prepare the way for Jesus. How can you be prepared for Jesus to come to you?
* If Jesus was coming to your house tomorrow, how would you prepare?
1. You are going to teach another group about what your passage says and what it means.
* Make a short play or skit to tell about your reading
* Write a news paper article about what you learned
* Write a song about what you learned

4. Find a table with a different color folder than yours. Present to them what you created. Then, they should share what they learned with you.

**Table Activity 1**

B

**John the Baptist**

1. Using the Bible at the table, look up your Bible verse. **Matthew 3:1-6**

1. Discuss:
* What was John the Baptist like?
* Why do you think he was baptizing?
* Prophets had a message from God for the people. What do you think John’s message was?
* How do you think John the Baptist answered God’s call?
* Do you think it was the popular thing to do? Do you think everyone agreed with him?
* John the Baptist told people to prepare the way for Jesus. How can you be prepared for Jesus to come to you?
* If Jesus was coming to your house tomorrow, how would you prepare?
1. You are going to teach another group about what your passage says and what it means.
* Make a short play or skit to tell about your reading
* Write a news paper article about what you learned
* Write a song about what you learned

4. Find a table with a different color folder than yours. Present to them what you created!

**Table Activity 1**

C

**John the Baptist**

1. Using the Bible at the table, look up your Bible verse. **Matthew 3:13-17**
2. Discuss:
* Why do you think Jesus was baptized by John?
* What happened after Jesus was baptized?
* Why do you think he was baptizing?
* Prophets had a message from God for the people. What do you think John’s message was?
* How do you think John the Baptist answered God’s call?
* Do you think it was the popular thing to do? Do you think everyone agreed with him?
* John the Baptist told people to prepare the way for Jesus. How can you be prepared for Jesus to come to you?
* If Jesus was coming to your house tomorrow, how would you prepare?
1. You are going to teach another group about what your passage says and what it means.
* Make a short play or skit to tell about your reading
* Write a news paper article about what you learned
* Write a song about what you learned
1. Find a table with a different color folder than yours. Present to them what you created!

**Table Activity 1**

D

**John the Baptist**

1. Using the Bible at the table, look up your Bible verse. **Luke 3:1-6**
2. Discuss:
* John told people to prepare the way for the Lord. What do you think that means? How can you prepare the way?
* Prophets had a message from God for the people. What do you think John’s message was?
* How do you think John the Baptist answered God’s call?
* Do you think it was the popular thing to do? Do you think everyone agreed with him?
* John the Baptist told people to prepare the way for Jesus. How can you be prepared for Jesus to come to you?
* If Jesus was coming to your house tomorrow, how would you prepare?
1. You are going to teach another group about what your passage says and what it means.
* Make a short play or skit to tell about your reading
* Write a news paper article about what you learned
* Write a song about what you learned
1. Find a table with a different color folder than yours. Present to them what you created!

**Facilitator:**

*Invite sharing about what they learned.*

John the Baptist had an important role. His purpose was to help people prepare for the coming of Jesus in our lives.

We usually hear the readings about John the Baptist during the season of Advent, which is coming up soon! Our next activity will be about Advent

Will one person from each table return your folder and take a folder for our next activity. The next activity will begin with a video which will start as soon as everyone is ready.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzEnvmMdZUE>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YKJOgNJoXkQ

**Table Activity 2**

**Advent**

**Watch Advent video**

**Discuss:**

1. What is something you consider worth waiting for?
2. Is it worth waiting for Jesus’ coming? Why?
3. Why does the church have Advent? Is it important?
4. If Jesus was coming to your house today, what would you do to get ready?

**Activity:**

On your blank puzzle, create a message about Advent. You can decorate it with images of Advent too! Make your puzzle interesting and informational. When you are finished, take the puzzle apart and put the pieces in the baggie.

Next, you are going to be like a prophet and help spread the message of Jesus.

Older children try to find a younger child in the room, younger find an older one and do each other’s puzzle. Talk with each other about why you put your message on your puzzle.

Here are some interesting things to know about Advent that you might include:
• Advent is the beginning of the church year
• The word “Advent” means ‘to come’
• Advent begins four Sundays prior to Christmas
• During Advent we ready ourselves for the birth of Jesus, the coming of Jesus into our lives, and for the return of Jesus
• Advent is season of expectation, anticipation,and preparation
• the color of Advent is either purple or blue, St. Charles uses blue
• We light Advent candles to remind us that Christ is the light of the world
• The evergreens of the advent wreath represent life and growth
• The circle of the Advent wreath have no beginning and no end, as Jesus has no beginning and no end
• The four colored candles of the Advent wreath represent the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy (sometimes represented by the color pink) and Love.

**Facilitator:**

We believe that God calls us every day of our lives. He calls to be his followers. During the season of Advent, we set aside to listen more carefully to how God is calling us. Maybe your family has some special Advent traditions that you do at home, like light an Advent wreath, or celebrate the feasts that take place during Advent like Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Whatever you do to “prepare the way” as John the Baptist would say, we hope that you will find ways to pray during Advent that you can hear how God is calling you.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY IS IF TIME PERMITS!!

Now for some fun. Let’s play a little Advent BINGO.

I will ask questions about Advent. If you know the answer, raise your hands and we will see if we can get the answer. If you have the correct answer on your BINGO card, mark it off. Just like regular BINGO, when you have 5 in a row, you are a winner!

*(Facilitator can ask for more information or details. Example, if the question is “what is the color for Advent? You might also ask, what is the color for Christmas, or Lent.)*

**BINGO Questions and Answers**

1. Which Church season comes before Christmas? (Advent)

2. How many weeks are in Advent? (four)

3. What day of the week is the first day of Advent? (Sunday)

4. What do we call the future time when Jesus Christ will come into the world again? (the Second Coming)

5. What is the church’s color for Advent? (purple or blue)

6. What does the word Advent mean? (coming)

7. During Advent, we prepare for Jesus Christ to come into our \_\_\_\_\_\_ for Christmas. (hearts)

8. During Advent, what do we pray for? (peace)

9. During Advent, we remember God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_ to send our Savior, Jesus. (promise)

10. During Advent, we try harder to do what? (help others)

11. What did Jesus the Savior save his people from? (sin)

12. What Advent custom uses three purple or blue candles and one pink candle to remind us that Jesus brings light into our darkness? (Advent wreath)

13. The circle of green leaves on an Advent wreath reminds us that God’s love is what? (eternal)

14. In which week of Advent do we light the pink candle? (Week 3)

15. What is Jesus the light of? (the world)

16. God sent special people to remind everyone that God would keep his promises of love. We hear readings from the Bible about these people in church during Advent. Who are these people? (prophets)

17. What prophet from the Old Testament predicted the coming of the Savior? (Isaiah)

18. Who announced that Jesus the Savior was coming to the world? (John the Baptist)

19. This next question has a four-part answer, and each of the four parts has

its own square. Be sure to check your card after each part of the question is

answered. What does John the Baptist ask us to do during Advent? (prepare, watch, repent, wait)

20. Which angel announced to Mary that God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus? (Gabriel)

21. What did Mary say when God asked her to be the mother of Jesus? (Yes!)

22. Who was the cousin of Mary who was also the mother of John the Baptist? (Elizabeth)

23. Who did an angel visit in a dream, saying “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife”? (Joseph)

24. What great feast of Mary’s do we celebrate on December 8? (Immaculate Conception)

25. Which patron saint of children do we celebrate on December 6? (Saint Nicholas)

26. Which saint, whose name means light, has a feast day that we celebrate on December 13? (Saint Lucy)

27. On what date during Advent do we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe? (December 12)

28. From December 17 through December 23, our Church uses special prayers that help us remember how great God is and what God is like. These special prayers start with the word “O” and are called \_\_\_\_\_\_ . (“O” Antiphons)

29. What traditional Catholic prayer contains the greeting that Elizabeth gave to Mary: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb”? (Hail Mary)

30. What is the name of the prayer that Mary sang when she visited her cousin Elizabeth? (Magnificat)

31. When we sing the song “O Come, O Come, \_\_\_\_\_\_ ,” what is the name we use for Jesus that means “God with us”? (Emmanuel)

**Announcements**

**Closing Prayer**

*Ask every to stand..*

Prayer Leader: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

 Our hope is in Christ, the Light of the World.

All: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Prayer Leader: Make ready the way of the Lord, clear a straight path.

All: Lord, you are the Way, the Truth and the Life. Help us prepare for your coming by following your example of prayer, caring, and service to

 others.

Prayer Leader: We ask this in the name of Jesus, God’s Son and our Savior.

All: Amen.

Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us, Our Father…

As we leave tonight, we ask God to bless us in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our closing prayer will be our closing song. Please join in singing