

Kids' Chronicle

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John readies people for Jesus

During the time when Herod was ruler of Galilee, a man named John, son of Zechariah, was in the desert when God spoke to him from heaven. From that moment, John preached about God and baptized people wherever he went.

John was the "voice from the desert" foretold by the prophet Isaiah, who wrote, "Clear a path for the Lord! Make the ground level and God will show us his glory. He is our loving shepherd."

"Repent!" cried John. "Stop sinning and be baptized. God wants to forgive you."

People would crowd around John waiting to be baptized or to hear him preach. There were men and women from Jerusalem, all parts of Judea, and from other towns along the Jordan River. As they confessed their sins, John baptized them.

Some of the Jewish leaders were afraid that John might have been the Messiah promised by the prophets, so they said, "Tell us who you are."

"I am not the Messiah, as you may think."

"Are you Elijah, or one of the other prophets?"

"No, but as I baptize with the water of the Jordan River, another man will soon come who will baptize with fire. I am not worthy even to carry his sandals. He is the son of God."

When John met some people who did not want to repent for their sins, he said, "You brag that you are descendants of Abraham, but God is able to make descendants out of the rocks



on the ground, if he wants to. Be warned that any tree that does not yield fruit that is good to eat will be chopped down with an ax."

"What do you want us to do?" asked one man who was clearly upset by John's words.

"Share what you have with others, do not take more than what is due to you, and be honest with everyone."

One day when John was baptizing people in the river, a certain man asked to be baptized. As John immersed the man in water, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a white dove, landed on his shoulder and a voice from heaven said,

"I am happy with you my son." The man's name was Jesus.

Although John continued to preach and baptize people in the river, when he heard that Herod was committing many sins, he openly criticized him. Herod heard of this criticism and had John thrown in jail. Later, John was killed there, as well.

Read more about it: Luke 3 1.

Q&A

1. What prophet told of John's ministry?
2. Who was the special man John baptized?

Bible Accent



Bethlehem, which means "house of bread," is less than ten miles from Jerusalem. A small town of fig and olive trees, stone buildings, and narrow streets, it is revered by Christians because both David and Jesus were born there.

In honor of the birth of Christ, the Church of the Nativity was built in Bethlehem. Beneath the church was a cave called the Grotto of the Nativity. In the floor of the grotto a silver star is inlaid that bears an inscription in Latin that translates into, "Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary here." Less than a mile from the church is the Field of the Shepherds, where tradition places the appearance of the angels to the shepherds. Many thousands of Christians visit Bethlehem every year, especially at Christmas.

Nativity Puzzle

Can you find all ten words or names associated with the Nativity in the scrambled sentence? Can you find other words not in the answers? Each letter may only be used once in a word. Answers on page 11.

B N E G T A H R
L O E H J E I M
S F P O H D Y

Kids' Club

You can win a \$50 savings bond by writing an essay (100 words or less) answering this question:

Why do you think Jesus was born in a stable and not a palace?

Send your essay — including name, home address, telephone number, school and grade — to Catholic Courier, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Deadline for entries is December 22, 1994. The winner will be notified by phone and receive the savings bond by mail.

Last month's winner was Diane Mandery, a sixth-grade student at Rochester's Mother of Sorrows School. In response to the question God answered Elijah's prayer. What prayers has God answered for you? she wrote:

God answered my prayer for a little sister who I love dearly. When I was about five years old, I prayed every night for a baby sister to keep me company in times when I was bored. After three months of praying to him every day, God answered my prayer. Now that my sister is six years old, I still love her just as much as when she was a baby. At times we have our disagreements, but we always get back together. God has answered other prayers, but they aren't quite as important as the gift of my sister's life. She is and always will be very "special" to me. Thank you, God!

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St. Peter Canisius

Peter Canisius lived in sixteenth century Holland. He excelled in scholarship at any early age, but left school to join the Society of Jesus — the Jesuits. He gave all of his wealth to the poor, and began visiting the sick and teaching religion. He was later named as a delegate to the Council of Trent.

Peter was a charismatic speaker and was loved by the people for his kindness and compassion. He prayed for the sick and dying during the time of the plague and his example of faith persuaded many people to return to church.

Peter was also an accomplished writer. He became well known for his catechism, which was reprinted many times and was translated into several languages. He always encouraged his students to practice reading and writing. We remember him on December 21.

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