

Kids' Chronicle

People hear 'a voice in the wilderness'

BY JOE SARNICOLA

"Repent, repent! The kingdom of God is at hand!"

The tall, bearded man shouted these words as he came out of the wilderness and onto a road that led to a nearby village. His clothes were tattered, he was dirty and he stared into the eyes of anyone who looked his way.

"Repent, he repeated. "Be baptized and God will forgive your sins."

"Who are you?" someone asked.

The man just looked at them.

"Are you Elijah or Moses?" people asked. "Are you the messiah? Tell us."

"My name is John," he said. "I am the person written about in the words of Isaiah. I am the voice who cries in the wilderness. We must all make a clear path for the Lord to walk on."

In spite of his scraggly appearance, John spoke kindly of the power of God's love and his willingness to forgive. Many people were persuaded by him. They were baptized and became faithful followers.

John was also a very humble man. People were often tempted to bow before him or call him a prophet.

"I only baptize you with the water of the Jordan River," John said. "A man will come soon who will baptize you with the fire of heaven. I do not consider myself worthy to even fasten his sandals."

John also urged the people who came to hear him preach not to become boastful or proud.

"You call yourselves sons and daughters of Abraham," he said. "If God wills it, the stones on the ground in front of you could become his sons or his daughters."

Sometimes John's words confused people, so they would ask him questions.

"What is it God wants us to do?" they asked.

"Share what you have with those who



Illustration by Amy Sundstrom

do not have anything. Do not think what you possess makes you important," John answered. "At harvest time only the trees that bear ripe fruit are valuable to the farmer."

When a tax collector stood by the river waiting to be baptized, he asked, "And what should I do to please God?"

"Take only the amount that the person owes," John said. "Do not impose unnecessary fines and do not cheat anyone."

A platoon of soldiers saw John in the village and said, "We are men of arms. We must fight when necessary. What does God expect from us?"

"Do not abuse your authority," John told them. "Do not arrest anyone on false charges. Show mercy to those who deserve it."

Then one day a man named Jesus

came to John to be baptized.

Q&A

READ MORE ABOUT IT: Mark 1.

1. Which prophet foretold the coming of John?
2. How did John feel about the importance of his ministry?

Bible Accent

Sarah J. Hale was the editor of the Boston-based *Ladies' Magazine* in the 1860s. She wanted the country to celebrate a national day of thanks.

In addition to writing editorials in favor of the idea in her magazine, she wrote to state governors, senators and even to President Abraham Lincoln.

Many of the politicians agreed with her position and used their influence to make Sarah's dream become a reality. On Oct. 3, 1863, President Lincoln read a proclamation that designated the last Thursday of November as "a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens."

St. Andrew

St. Andrew made his living by fishing on the Sea of Galilee. He was a friend of John the Baptist, an apostle of Jesus Christ and the brother of the apostle Peter.

Jesus told Peter and Andrew he would make them "fishers of men." Andrew became a missionary after Jesus ascended into heaven.

Scholars believe Andrew was crucified as a martyr. He is the patron saint of Scotland and of fishermen. We honor him on Nov. 30.

Bible Trivia

Who was the mother of John the Baptist? (Luke 13)

Send Answer to: *Catholic Courier Bible Trivia*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your name, address and school name.

All entries must be received by Jan. 9, 1997. A winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries submitted.

Last month's winner was Martin Coniglio, a fifth-grader at St. Joseph's School, Wayland. He correctly identified St. Paul as the New Testament author who was a Pharisee before becoming a Christian.

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Puzzle

Fill in the blanks around the word "thanks" by answering the questions. Answers on page 5A.

1. The last book of the New Testament.	1. _____ T _____
2. He was king when Jesus was born. (Matthew 2)	2. _____ H _____
3. He built a big ship. (Genesis 6)	3. _____ A _____
4. The fourth Gospel.	4. _____ N _____
5. David was _____ of Israel.	5. _____ K _____
6. The son of God.	6. _____ S _____

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