

# Kids' Chronicle

## John urges 'repent,' baptizes hundreds

BY JOE SARNICOLA

Isaiah stood at the top of the hill so he could be seen by all of the people. He shouted as if he would burst if he did not proclaim the wonderful message God had given to him.

"Be comforted, children of God, for you are free! A voice will call out to you from the desert and say, 'Prepare the way, for the Lord is coming!'"

Seven hundred years after the prophecy of Isaiah, a man with a long beard, thick brown hair, and intense blue eyes walked in the hot sun of the desert. He wore a cloak made from camel's hair and a belt made of leather. When the first town he had seen since his journey began came into view, he raised both of his hands into the air and declared, "The town is where you said it would be, my God, and I can see the Jordan River. Now I will do what you asked me to do."

The man ran toward the gate of the village. "Repent, repent," he cried.

The people who were in the village looked at the strange man.

"Who are you?" they asked. "What is it you wish us to repent from?"

"My name is John. I am the voice in the desert Isaiah spoke of. Repent from your sins against God, who is waiting to forgive you. I tell you there will be a man coming behind me who has the power of the heavens. I am not even worthy enough to fasten the sandals around his feet."

"What do we have to do?" the people asked.

"I will be at the river. Ask for the forgiveness of God and be baptized. I will baptize you with water, but the one who comes after me will baptize you with his Holy Spirit."



Illustration by Linda Jeanne Rivers

So the people came. One after the other, hundreds of them, from the nearby towns, from Jerusalem, from all over Judea. And John baptized every one. "Prepare a place for the Lord in your homes and in your hearts. The Scriptures foretold that God will reveal the power of his glory. And I tell you this, we shall see it happen! Our God will rule his kingdom with authority and with compassion. He will hold us in his arms. Like a shepherd who watches over his flock, we are the sheep that he loves. Repent, repent!"

READ MORE ABOUT IT:  
Isaiah 40, Mark 1

## Bible Accent

Baptism is one of the sacraments of initiation, the other two being first Communion and confirmation, and it has been one of the most important sacraments from the earliest days of the church.

When the Holy Spirit visited the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, Peter invited the people who had been watching the event to "repent and be baptized." Whenever new people joined the church, they were immediately encouraged to be baptized. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, baptism frees us from sin and enables us to "confess the faith" of the church.

The church also expects those who have been baptized to support each other in the Christian experience and, to increase their own faith through a life of prayer. Baptism symbolizes a life cleansed from sin and a birth into a new life, which is filled with God's grace.

## St. Clement I

St. Clement I was one of the earliest popes in church history, and he lived during the same time as the apostles Peter and Paul. He may even have been baptized by Peter. During a time where he was banished by the emperor to hard manual labor, Clement discovered a spring that could be used for drinking water by the slaves. Prior to that, the only water fit to drink was miles away. He preached wherever he was, and he was so persuasive that 75 churches were built to accommodate the many people who became Christians because of his influence.

One of his important acts as pope was to write a letter to the Church in Corinth to settle a dispute its members were having among themselves. This was the first letter that demonstrated the far-reaching authority of the pope to settle matters in other churches. Legends say that Clement had an anchor tied to his body and he was thrown into the Black Sea, where he drowned. We remember him on Nov. 23.

## Q&A

1. What was the message of the voice Isaiah described?
2. How did the people respond to John's message?

## Bible Trivia

Who was the mother of John the Baptist?

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 Dec. 2, 1999. A winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries submitted.

There was no winner for last month's question, Which two other men helped Paul write his First Letter to the Thessalonians?

TRIVIA ANSWER: Timothy and Silvanus (1 Thes 1:1)

## COURIER CLASSIFIEDS

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## Puzzle

Using the reverse alphabet code (a=z, b=y, c=x, etc.), unscramble the message to learn the name of the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Answers on Page 9.

GSV HVZHLM LU ZWEVMG