

EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

John's Baptism was a "baptism of repentance". This baptism expressed the decision to turn away from sin.

Christian baptism is more than turning from sin; it brings us into life in Christ and His Church. It gives us the graces and vitality of the Holy Spirit.

This divine activity was not part of John's baptism. St. John himself declared: "I have baptized you with water; but He [Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

HIS NAME IS JOHN

John is a historical figure mentioned by the Roman historian Josephus. One of his titles is "John the Forerunner". The Catechism says: "*John the Baptist is 'more than a prophet' In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets.*"



SEEDS FOR CONVERSATION

How does the writer of this Gospel summarize John's message?

What kind of a baptism was John preaching? What was it designed to do for the people?

How might this baptism fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah 40 that he refers to?

What do you think the valleys and mountains might represent? What is John preparing the people for?

How was John different from all the important people mentioned in the first two verses?

Why do you think God likes to use "insignificant people?"

Can you think of some "insignificant" people God has used in your life?



On the 6th it's time to break out the chocolate coins from your Crate!

And, there are other easy ways to celebrate St. Nicholas' Day at home. Celebrating the holy days of Advent is a way to prepare for Christmas more intentionally....focusing on Christ and His saints. Retell the story of St. Nicholas - he would assist poor families (especially young ladies needing dowries) by dropping a bag of gold coins in their shoes, which he found drying by the fire in the middle of the night, or in other versions - in their stockings left by the fire.



What a fun tradition - to hang your Christmas stockings on St. Nicholas Day!

And it is also fun to **leave shoes out on December 5**, to find goodies in them the next morning. What kind of goodies? In addition to the chocolate-wrapped coins, nuts, cookies, or any small trinket. **Candy canes** tell an important part of the story - St. Nicholas was a Bishop and they stand for his crozier. And what to leave out the night before for St. Nicholas? A plate of cookies is always welcome, and don't forget to leave a carrot or two for his donkey (they love them with the tops on).



If you'd like to bless your candy canes, and tuck them into a picture of St. Nicholas (like the one above), check out the Growing Catholics media for this week. We'll have the pattern for you to print out. Share them with neighbors and friends. (You don't have to be Catholic to like St. Nick!)

Lord,

You make this day special with the memory of the good bishop Nicholas. He praised you in all the wonders he worked, he thanked you in all the gifts he shared with the poor. May we have ears like Saint Nicholas to hear when any are in need, and hands always ready to help and share. Blessed are you, O Lord, in all your saints.

Amen



Another SOLEMNITY

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY DECEMBER 8

It's easy to get the idea that this day refers to Jesus' conception by the Virgin Mary. **It doesn't.**

Instead, it refers to the special way in which the Virgin Mary herself was conceived. Mary had a human father as well as a human mother. But her conception was special and unique in another way. . . .**From her beginning in her mother's womb, Mary was free of original sin.**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains it this way: To become the mother of the Savior, Mary "was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role."

One source of confusion might be that the Gospel reading for this Solemnity is from Luke (1: 26-38), the Annunciation, which is about Jesus' conception. So, why? The reason this reading is used is because of the way the Angel Gabriel addresses Mary - as "full of grace". If she is entirely full of grace that leaves no room for sin.

Adam and Eve were also born immaculate - free from sin; they chose to sin. Jesus and Mary were born immaculate, but they remained sinless. This is why you might hear Jesus spoken of as the New Adam, and Mary as the New Eve.

The Catechism quotes (494): As St. Irenaeus says, "Being obedient she became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race." It was not *necessary* that Mary was immaculate - the Church sees the Immaculate Conception as something that was "fitting," something that made Mary a "fit habitation" (i.e., suitable mother) for the Son of God.



GROWING CATHOLICS

Leaflet 

2nd Sunday in Advent

Sunday Gospel • December 5, 2021 Luke 3: 1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.

John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.

Every valley shall be filled
and every mountain and hill shall be made low.

The winding roads shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

