

**1. Read** — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

**2. Meditate** — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

**3. Pray** — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

**4. Contemplate** — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.  
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

# Quick Connect

**What is the Gospel saying? Luke 3:10-18** — Pg. 1

**What is the Church saying Past and Present?** Pages 1-3

**What is God saying to you through this passage?** Page 4

## **Gospel Reading – Luke 3:10-18 – Roman Missal**

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

## **Spiritual Reading – Office of Readings – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sun. of Advent - Cycle C—From a sermon by Saint Augustine, bishop**

*The Voice is John, the Word is Christ*

John is the voice, but the Lord *is the Word who was in the beginning*. John is the voice that lasts for a time; from the beginning Christ is the Word who lives for ever. Take away the word, the meaning, and what is the voice? Where there is no understanding, there is only a meaningless sound. The voice without the word strikes the ear but does not build up the heart. However, let us observe what happens when we first seek to build up our hearts. When I think about what I am going to say, the word or message is already in my heart. When I want to speak to you, I look for a way to share with your heart what is already in mine. In my search for a way to let this message reach you, so that the word already in my heart may find a place also in yours, I use my voice to speak to you. The sound of my voice brings the meaning of the word to you and then passes away. The word which the sound has brought to you is now in your heart, and yet it is still also in mine. When the word has been conveyed to you, does not the sound seem to say: *The word ought to grow, and I should diminish?* The sound of the voice has made itself heard in the service of the word, and has gone away, as though it were saying: *My joy is complete*. Let us hold on to the word; we must not lose the word conceived inwardly in our hearts. Do you need proof that the voice passes away but the divine Word remains? Where is John's baptism today? It served its purpose, and it went away. Now it is

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Christ's baptism that we celebrate. It is in Christ that we all believe; we hope for salvation in him. This is the message the voice cried out. Because it is hard to distinguish word from voice, even John himself was thought to be the Christ. The voice was thought to be the word. But the voice acknowledged what it was, anxious not to give offense to the word. *I am not the Christ*, he said, *nor Elijah, nor the prophet*. And the question came: *Who are you, then?* He replied: *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord. The voice of one crying in the wilderness is the voice of one breaking the silence. Prepare the way for the Lord*, he says, as though he were saying: "I speak out in order to lead him into your hearts, but he does not choose to come where I lead him unless you prepare the way for him." *To prepare the way* means to pray well; it means thinking humbly of oneself. We should take our lesson from John the Baptist. He is thought to be the Christ; he declares he is not what they think. He does not take advantage of their mistake to further his own glory. If he had said, "I am the Christ," you can imagine how readily he would have been believed, since they believed he was the Christ even before he spoke. But he did not say it; he acknowledged what he was. He pointed out clearly who he was; he humbled himself.

He saw where his salvation lay. He understood that he was a lamp, and his fear was that it might be blown out by the wind of pride.

### O Antiphons [Introduction] – Lesson and Discussion

*"The O's of Advent"*

The Church gives us the "O" antiphons as a meditation. The best way to prepare using the "O" antiphons is to pray Vespers (Evening Prayer) each night from Dec. 17-23. It is on these days during the Antiphon of the Magnificat that the Church asks us to meditate on Christ. If we are unable to pray Vespers each day, we can at the very least say or sing the antiphon privately or in common. For a family this could take place during a common meal or in the morning before starting the day. If we meditate on Christ for these seven days we will be better able to receive the Christ Child, whom we have meditated upon.

### ACTIVITY – The "O" Chart

It would be good to begin with the hymn O Come, O Come Emmanuel. Many people may be tired of hearing this hymn by the time the third Sunday of Advent comes around, but do they know the meaning; Can that meaning renew a deeper devotion and love for the text and thus our Lord? After singing the hymn write the antiphons on the left hand side of a chart (seven rows by three columns). After listing the antiphons have the group match the virtue and sacrament with the antiphon based on the lyrics they just sang. The lessons in this packet serve not only as the answer to the chart but explanation as well.

|                   |            |                       |
|-------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| O Wisdom          | Prudence   | Marriage              |
| O Adonai          | Charity    | Holy Orders           |
| O Root of Jesse   | Temperance | Baptism               |
| O Key of David    | Hope       | Reconciliation        |
| O Orient!         | Justice    | Anointing of the Sick |
| O King of Nations | Fortitude  | Confirmation          |
| O Emmanuel        | Faith      | Eucharist             |

The Sacraments are in somewhat of a chronological order as we progress toward the Feast of the Nativity. Marriage is the first of Sacraments to be instituted. It was given by God to man in the Garden and ensures that we will have physical life. The Levitical Priesthood was instituted in the Old Testament and then fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, who ordained the apostles priests at the Last Supper. The Sacrament of Holy Orders ensures that we will have spiritual life. Baptism is the gateway into all Sacraments and is necessary for salvation. We will commit personal sins after Baptism, Reconciliation is like a second Baptism washing away the eternal punishment due to personal sin and restoring the state of Grace in our soul. Anointing of the Sick is the second of the healing Sacraments and although typically given at the end of life, it can be used throughout life when we are in special need of healing such as sickness or before a surgery.

As we live our Christian Life we need strength to resist sin, avoid evil, pursue good, and be a witness for Christ. Confirmation is this gift of strength, which allows us to answer with dignity, in our thoughts, words, and deeds our call to holiness as a Christian. Without the gift of the Holy Spirit we would not be able to endure and bear fruit. Finally the King of all Sacraments, the crown, which we call the Blessed Sacrament, is in fact what we are given when the Word becomes Flesh. The Word becomes Flesh, not just in the Christ Child, but that Holy Child would live, die, and rise again leaving with us His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity in the Most Holy Eucharist. It is in the Mass that the Liturgy of the Word becomes or moves into the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the Word becomes Flesh right before our eyes as the Word became Flesh on that Silent Night in Bethlehem.