A Reading from the Gospel of Mark 1:1–8: The Preaching of John the Baptist

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Focus Questions

1. How is John the Baptist described in the Gospel? Why did John choose to behave this way?

2. What does John the Baptist choose as the setting for his preaching and ministry? Why do you think he chose this setting?

3. What is John the Baptist’s main goal and message?

4. Why do you think God sent John the Baptist to prepare the way for Christ? Why was he a necessary part of God’s plan?

5. How does this Gospel passage help us to reflect on and prepare for the true meaning of Christmas?
HANDOUT B

Nativity and Annunciation to the Shepherds
BY BERNARDINO LUINI (1525)

Musée du Louvre, Paris
Create Your Own Nativity Scene

Directions:
Color and cut out the parts of the Nativity Scene. Then assemble them into your own Nativity Scene that you can display at home.