EPISCOPAL DIOCESE *of West Texas*

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

Songs of Advent

2026 Advent Devotional

3rd WEEK OF ADVENT

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READ

John 1:6-8,19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

LISTEN

Children Go Where I Send Thee by Peter, Paul and Mary

Album: A Holiday Celebration with The New York Choral Society

Youtube Link

Spotify Link

REFLECT

Each season has its own heralds. The smell of suntan lotion, the sound of cicadas, and the light of longer days signal the arrival of summer. Pumpkin everything everywhere (regardless of weather) tells us that autumn is upon us, while spring is often announced with a burst of color and the clap of thunder. And as a child, I knew that the Advent & Christmas season had truly arrived when I started to hear Christmas music. The days after Thanksgiving were filled with sounds of Mannheim Steamroller, George Winston, and Bing Crosby. But my favorite was Peter, Paul, and Mary's Live Christmas Album. It is a true gem. And when I read this week's Gospel, I immediately thought of track 7, the trio's version of Children Go Where I Send Thee.

This beautiful, cumulative folk song is built on a commissioning structure (I'm gonna send thee…") that tells a story of the mission of sending. Through 10 call-and-response verses, the song asks and answers "How shall I send thee?" Our gospel reading challenges us to understand that John was sent by God with a specific, appointed mission. In essence, to lay the groundwork for Christ, to prepare, to witness, to do the work of Advent.

The song serves as a form of oral catechism— guiding children and listeners step-by-step through a biblical history of faith that ultimately always leads us to Christ. John 1:7 mirrors this exact pedagogical function: John's entire life's work was pointing others away from himself ("He was not the light") and toward the child born in Bethlehem.

As a child, Children Go Where I Send Thee was one of my favorite Christmas songs. As an adult, it's still a favorite, but I now understand it to be an Advent song, telling the story of those that, like John, were sent by God to prepare for Christ.

WONDER

Visio Divinia (https://www.st-barnabas.org/blog/visio-divina)

This link will take you to an image for this exercise:
https://library.nd.edu.au/sjbtour/baptismofjesus

After spending some time with the image, consider the following questions:

> What emotions does this image evoke in you?
> What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you?
> Is there an invitation for you in the image?
> Does this image lead you into an attitude of prayer? If so, let these prayers take form in you. Write, draw or doodle them.

Offer your prayers to God now in a time of silence.

PRAY

Stir up, O Lord,

The wills of your faithful people

To be alert to your calling, and awake to your Advent

That we may hear the voice in the wilderness, and prepare our hearts for the coming of your Son.

Allow the anticipation of this season, to create in us a renewed fervour to repent, and 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

The Collect for John the Baptist

Almighty God, who called your servant John the Baptist to go before your Son our Lord both in life and death; grant that we who remember his witness may with boldness speak your truth and in humility hear it when it is spoken to us, through Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns one God forever and ever. Amen.