



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B)

## John 1:6-8, 19-28

**6** A man came, sent by God. His name was John. **7** He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. **8** He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

**19** This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' **20** he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' **21** 'Well then,' they asked, 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not,' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' **22** So they said to

him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' **23** So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight way for the Lord.' **24** Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, **25** and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' **26** John replied, 'I baptise you with water; but there stands among you - unknown to you - **27** the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' **28** This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Other readings: Isaiah 61:1-2,10-11 Luke 1:46-50,53-54 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Our gospel reading from the Gospel of John today offers two separate sections from the first chapter of the gospel. What holds them together is that they both deal with John the Baptist, and both sections speak of him as 'a witness'.

The first three verses of this passage are an extract from the great prologue to the gospel, which begins with the words, 'In the beginning was the Word.' In speaking of the entry into the world of the Word of God, the Son sent by the Father, the writer cannot avoid speaking also of John the Baptist, but he makes it quite clear that John was a witness. He was not the Word-Light himself, but only 'a witness to speak for the light'.

The second section of the gospel passage comes immediately after the prologue and gives us details of how John bore his witness to Jesus. It is a characteristic of John that he always points to the one who is greater. He insists that he is simply 'a voice crying in the wilderness'. He dismisses all the speculation, that he himself might be the Christ, or the prophet to come. His whole ministry is to prepare the way, by baptising with a baptism of repentance, and by proclaiming the coming of the one who truly is the Messiah. To bear witness is the task of every Christian. We bear the name of Christ. Bearing witness to him means bringing his light and truth to those in darkness.

*In what ways should I be imitating the self-effacing humility of the Baptist?*

*What does it mean to be a witness?*

*Let us pray for those called to martyrdom in today's world, that they may have the necessary courage and wisdom.*

*Let us welcome the light, as John did.*