

BLD WASINGTON



# BUKÁS-LOÓB SA DIYÓS COVENANT COMMUNITY

SERVING THE WASHINGTON, D.C. AREA

## Counsel

### *TEACHER, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?*

**Theme:** We are vigilant for the coming of Jesus when we joyfully show kindness to all.

**Word:** Zep 3:14-18; Is 12:2-6; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18

**Order:** Rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all.

*(BLD Global Community reflection for December 2009)*

**REFLECTION:** People who speak with conviction most often attract attention. John's powerful moral voice drew crowds to the banks of the Jordan. His fiery sermons spoke to something very real in their lives. He moved them to a desire to change. "What should we do" asked the crowds. John challenged them to acts of charity and social concern. They should show kindness, clothe the poor and feed the hungry.

Tax collectors asked him for instruction and guidance. They knew that people hated them for collaborating with the Roman government. They also exploited their own people, increasing their take by adding hidden costs for their services as tax agents. John did not tell them to give up their jobs, but he commanded them to stop cheating people. They should not use their authority to take more money than was allowed by

law. Soldiers asked him for moral instruction. Roman soldiers found numerous ways to intimidate and bleed the local people. John confronted them with their well known crimes of violently robbing villagers and of using false witnesses to extort money. He admonished them to stop their greed with his words: "Be satisfied with your wages".

John touched a great many of his listeners. He converted their hearts and watched with joy as they waded into the Jordan for his baptism. Songs of praise arose from Jordan's banks as the stream of penitents let the waters wash them with a ritual cleansing, giving them a new sense of repentance and renewal. So exciting was John that many people wondered if he were the expected messiah. John quickly corrected this misconception. He denied that he was the messiah and told them that one "mightier than I" was coming. Cupping the river water in his hands, he told them he only baptized with water. The messiah would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

The Gospel reflects the crucial role of John the Baptist in preparing the way for the coming of Christ; and likewise shows us, in this present day, that repentance and renewal are key in preparing our hearts for Christ's coming during this Advent season. These actions reveal our acceptance of God's encompassing presence in our lives and the operative relationship between ourselves and God.

The *real self* discovers far greater power in loving communion with the standards of God. When the person advances in loving union with God, enduring peace and joy flood the heart; kindness and harmony with others becomes possible; anxiety diminishes and a sense of power develops. This is the power of love not of force. It is the power of freedom not of addiction or compulsion.

A person in love with God has no need to push others around, hurt them, cheat, humiliate, take revenge against them. Love of God *provides the peace of God that surpasses all understanding that guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus* (Phil 4:7 paraphrased). It makes the self strong and adequate for the challenges of life.

At the core of the teachings of John the Baptist is conversion from the bondage of ego. John asks us to detach ourselves from our ego and its sins of selfishness, unkindness, cheating and all other forms of cruelly controlling others. Detachment from our ego reveals our true self. This is possible if we attach ourselves to Christ. The more I attach myself to Christ, the more I become a “for others” person in Christ, the more will my *real self, the person God wants me to be*, flourish and become powerful. This is what St. Paul meant when he said in Phil. 4:13, “*I have the strength for everything through Him who empowers me.*” The Gospel speaks only of the empowerment of love that comes only from attachment to Christ.

### **God's Promise for the Week**

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7)

December 8

## ***Feast of the Immaculate Conception***

A feast called the Conception of Mary arose in the Eastern Church in the seventh century. It came to the West in the eighth century. In the eleventh century it received its present name, the Immaculate Conception. In the eighteenth century it became a feast of the universal Church.

In 1854, Pius IX solemnly proclaimed: “The most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege granted by almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin.”

It took a long time for this doctrine to develop. While many Fathers and Doctors of the Church considered Mary the greatest and holiest of the saints, they often had difficulty in seeing Mary as sinless—either at her conception or throughout her life. This is one of the Church teachings that arose more from the piety of the faithful than from the insights of brilliant theologians. Even such champions of Mary as Bernard and Thomas Aquinas could not see theological justification for this teaching.

Two Franciscans, William of Ware and Blessed John Duns Scotus, helped develop the theology. They point out that Mary’s Immaculate Conception enhances Jesus’ redemptive work. Other members of the human race are cleansed from original sin after birth. In Mary, Jesus’ work was so powerful as to prevent original sin at the outset.

**Comment:** In Luke 1:28 the angel Gabriel, speaking on God’s behalf, addresses Mary as “full of grace” (or “highly favored”). In that context this phrase means that Mary is

receiving all the special divine help necessary for the task ahead. However, the Church grows in understanding with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit led the Church, especially non-theologians, to the insight that Mary had to be the most perfect work of God next to the Incarnation. Or rather, Mary's intimate association with the Incarnation called for the special involvement of God in Mary's whole life. The logic of piety helped God's people to believe that Mary was full of grace and free of sin from the first moment of her existence. Moreover, this great privilege of Mary is the highlight of all that God has done in Jesus. Rightly understood, the incomparable holiness of Mary shows forth the incomparable goodness of God.

**Quote:** “[Mary] gave to the world the Life that renews all things, and she was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role.

“It is no wonder, then, that the usage prevailed among the holy Fathers whereby they called the mother of God entirely holy and free from all stain of sin, fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new substance and new creature. Adorned from the first instant of her conception with the splendors of an entirely unique holiness, the Virgin of Nazareth is, on God's command, greeted by an angel messenger as ‘full of grace’ (cf. Luke 1:28). To the heavenly messenger she replies: ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word’ (Luke 1:38)” (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 56).

**Patron Saint of:**

Brazil and the United States

*Source:*

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/Saints/saint.aspx?id=1223>



**Flashback Dinner Dance  
Raffle Ticket Winners:**

- 26” LCD HDTV: Ming Zerrudo
- Notebook/netbook – Minerva Pratt
- I Touch – Pilar Walsh
- Tom Tom GPS – Paula Jones
- Digital camera – Lita Milan
- DVD Player – Liza Almendrala

**Love Offering**

- Nov. 15, 2009 \$1,119.00
- Nov. 20, 2009 \$ 962.00
- Nov. 27, 2009 \$ 928.00
- Dec. 04, 2009 \$1,177.00

*Thank you for your generosity!*

**December Calendar**

- Dec. 04 1st Friday Eucharistic Celebration
- 11 Eucharistic Celebration
- 18 Eucharistic Celebration
- Community Christmas Party
- 25 Christmas Day – No P&W

**Reminder**

Please sign in and wear your BLD IDs during Praise & Worship and Community Functions.