

Apart from (I suppose) the obvious connection of the O.T. prophets with this season of preparation for Christmas, two other figures are prominent too — Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and John the Baptist. Mary very naturally, because of her place in the history of the coming of Christ. But John the Baptist might seem a bit out of place, if you're only thinking of the sequence of historical events — but Christmas is more than just remembering history, which is why the preaching of John the Baptist, calling for repentance and preparing for the coming of the Christ does figure quite a bit in the readings of scripture the Church chooses for the Sundays & weekdays of Advent. So I wanted to start today with John the Baptist — a new song about him, for this time of year, and a piece from St Luke's gospel ~~for~~^{for our} reflection today, and to ask ourselves the question what do you think the answer would be if you asked John "what must I do?"

MUSIC

SCRIPTURE (Sun. Lit 3 Adv. 2)

— from St Luke's gospel, and the question for your prayerful reflection these days getting ready for Christmas: what should we do? Also from St Luke's gospel, of course, comes the Christmas story we're all familiar with — beginning with the announcement by the archangel Gabriel to Mary — and in that gospel, this too is closely linked with the announcement and the birth of John the Baptist. One of the very oldest Advent songs, or carols, is about the Annunciation to Mary — 'Angelus ad Virginem': it was once probably the best known carol in Europe, and has been called Europe's best carol; it's mentioned in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales as being sung by the clerk of Oxford. For today, I'd like to suggest it for a prayer in music — two modern versions of it, with (in between)

two even older hymns to Mary, from the Eastern Churches

MUSIC

PRAYERS (Sung Type 1
Prayers 5, 61)