Level: 4
Title: WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST?
Strand: JESUS CHRIST: Jesus of Nazareth, Saviour, Word Made Flesh
Suggested Duration: 4-5 weeks

Unit Focus
In this unit students will explore some of the readings of the season of Advent. In exploring the readings students will see that John the Baptist answered the call of God to prepare the way for the coming of our saviour Jesus Christ.

Level Outcome
By the end of Year Six students should be able to:

Articulate an understanding that Jesus, present in our lives in many ways, offers hope to the world.

Unit Outcomes
By the end of this unit students should be able to:

1. Identify how John the Baptist responded to God’s call to proclaim the promise of the Saviour and challenged individuals to conversion.
2. Research and reflect on the relationship between John the Baptist and God as portrayed in the Scriptures.
3. Recognise that God’s promise challenges them to deepen their understanding of the Good News and calls them to participate more fully in the life of the Church.

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<th>STRAND</th>
<th>DOCTRINAL CONCEPTS</th>
<th>CATECHISM REFERENCE</th>
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<td>God</td>
<td>2. The reign of God is revealed through Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation, healing, justice and peace.</td>
<td>543-550</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>1. Jesus is the Son of God, the Chosen One whom God promised.</td>
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<td>Scripture</td>
<td>3. The Jewish Scriptures tell the story of the people of Israel’s covenant relationship with God</td>
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Key Understandings for Students
- Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist in the River Jordan.
- Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth while she was pregnant with Jesus.
- John the Baptist is a cousin of Jesus, being born of Elizabeth, Mary’s cousin.
- Advent is a time of preparation. John the Baptist preached preparation for the coming of the Messiah, which is the Hebrew term for Christ (Anointed One).
Curriculum Links - VELS

Victorian Essential Learning Standards
The unit “What was the Message of John the Baptist” can be used to assess a range of VELS. The table below gives examples of how Level 4 standards could be assessed. Those Standards identified with (P) are possible outcomes depending on work undertaken by students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Key elements of Standards Students…</th>
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<td>Physical, Personal and Social Learning</td>
<td>Interpersonal Development</td>
<td>Building Social Relationships</td>
<td>- “They accept and display empathy for the points of view and feelings of their peers and others.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civics and Citizenship</td>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>- “They demonstrate understanding that there are different viewpoints on an issue, and contribute to group and class decision making.”</td>
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| Interdisciplinary Learning                  | Communication           | Listening Viewing and Responding | - “students summarise ideas and organise ideas and information logically and clearly in a range of presentations” |
|                                            |                         | Presenting                        | - “students summarise and organise ideas and information, logically and clearly in a range of presentations.” |

| Design, Creativity and Technology (P)      | Investigating, and Designing | - “Individually and in teams, they use a range of methods to collect data and generate ideas in response to design briefs.” |
|                                            |                         | Producing                         | - “select and work safely with a variety of materials/ingredients and systems components to produce functional products and/or systems” |

| Information, Communication and Technology. | Creating                | - “students safely and independently use a range of skills, procedures, equipment and functions to process different data types and produce accurate and suitably formatted products to suit different purposes and audiences.” |

| Thinking                                   | Reasoning, processing and inquiry | - “develop their own questions for investigation. They collect relevant information from a range of sources and make judgements about its worth” |
|                                            | Creativity                        | - “generate imaginative solutions when solving problems” |
|                                            | Reflection, evaluation and meta-cognition | - “use a broad range of thinking processes and tools and reflect on and evaluate their effectiveness.” |

Curriculum Framework Context

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<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
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<td>The Message of Joy and Peace; The Promise is Fulfilled</td>
<td>What is the Message of John the Baptist? The Birth of Jesus, the Messiah Feasts of the Christmas Season</td>
<td>How can we make a difference?</td>
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Students at this stage see themselves as members of a community that extends well beyond their family and immediate surroundings. They have some understanding of the notion of other times, other places and other kinds of societies. The children gradually become more capable of logical and abstract thinking which brings with it a greater understanding of consequences and an increased ability to justify assertions and opinions.

Students at this stage are usually aware of the story of the birth of Jesus. They understand that Mary was visited by an Angel who foretold of the coming of the Saviour, Jesus Christ. The students usually understand the significance of the visits by the shepherds and the wise men after the birth. The students will need some assistance with gaining an appreciation and understanding that throughout history there was a prediction of a Messiah and that John the Baptist was directly linked to Jesus.

**Theological Background for Teachers**

- John the Baptist heralded the commencement of Jesus’ ministry and called for repentance and conversion.

- Leading an austere life in the desert, John urged his listeners to repent of their sinfulness. The conversion of heart, which John called for, was symbolised by the ritual washing or baptism.

- John had his band of followers and was challenged by the religious authorities. Was he the Messiah? John rejected these suggestions. When Jesus presented himself to John to be baptised, John protested, but Jesus insisted. John’s preaching prepared the way for Jesus’ own mission.

- Advent takes its name from a Latin word meaning coming. It is a time to reflect on and rejoice in the coming of Christ. During Advent we share in the expectancy of Christ’s coming and look at the conversion or change of heart, which is necessary to prepare for it.

- During the season of Advent, we prepare for the commemoration of Christ’s first coming to us. It is a season of joyful anticipation.

- The Church challenges us through the readings of the Advent season to be committed in our love of God and neighbour. As Christians we have a particular way of life to follow in our communities, in worship and prayer and also in the way we treat others each day.

**Scripture**

**Teacher and Student Reference NRSV**

**Jas 5:7-10 Patience in Suffering**

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts for the coming of the Lord is near. Beloved, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors!

**Isa 11:1-6, 9 The Peaceful Kingdom**

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. ….. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

**Isa 35:1-2, 5-6 The Returned of the Redeemed to Zion**

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of
The eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

**Mt 3:1-8 The Proclamation of John the Baptist**

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance.”

**Mt 11:2-11 Messengers from John the Baptist**

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.”

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

**Lk 1:5–22 The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold**

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren and both were getting on in years.

Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. Now at the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at this birth; for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Zechariah said to the angel, “How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man and my wife is getting on in years.” The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.” Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them and they realised that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak.

**Suggested Assessment Tasks**

Assessment tasks for this unit may include:

**Outcome 1:** Explore how John the Baptist responded to God’s call to proclaim the promise of the Saviour and challenged individuals to conversion.

- Letter to a friend. Consider what is meant by the term prophet and describe:
  - what sort of prophet was John the Baptist
the result of his activity.
- ways individuals today can be a witness to the Good News

Outcome 2: Research and reflect on the relationship between John the Baptist and God as portrayed in the Scriptures.
- Complete a profile of the life and times of John the Baptist by referring to the gospel texts where he is mentioned. Prepare a written portrait or identity kit of John the Baptist and present to the class.
- Write a Newspaper report about John the Baptist from the point of view of the Pharisees or from the point of view of a newly baptised person. Explore what motivated John’s actions.

Outcome 3: Recognise that God’s promise challenges them to deepen their understanding of the Good News and calls them to participate more fully in the life of the Church.
- Prepare and present a liturgy focused on the life of John the Baptist.
- Challenge the students to propose ways that they can “Prepare the way of the Lord”. Add ideas to a display board.

N.B Outcomes 1 & 2 lend themselves to reporting in the dimension of Knowledge and Understanding

**Suggested Teaching & Learning Experiences**

Focusing Activities:

Discuss the excitement in preparing for a new baby, children write their own Birth Notice, capturing their parents joy. Using a collection of greeting cards name the preparation that takes place and what do we do while we are waiting for these events, eg Birth, Marriage, Christmas, Graduation, New House etc.

- Read Isa 11:1-6, 9. Introduce the ‘family tree’ of Jesus - The Jesse Tree. Make a tree (stand a dead branch in a container of sand) and hang symbols eg apple for Adam, Ark for Noah, Star for David, Locust for John the Baptist etc. Pairs could present the symbol and the story of the symbol.
- Choose one of the selected texts and do a Scripture Probe (White, Dan. (2003). *Into the deep. p.62*).
- Make and display a map of Israel and use mapping pins to trace the journey of John the Baptist from the desert to the River Jordan to Jerusalem.
- Produce a timeline that sequences the key events from the life of John the Baptist from the Gospel of Matthew.
- Brainstorm the notion of ‘wilderness’. Where/what is a wilderness for me? Illustrate.
- Research the meanings for ‘prophet’ and ‘prophecy’, agree on a common understanding for these terms, use a contents page in a Bible to identify the Prophets of the Old Testament.
- Journal entry relating to the anticipated hope surrounding the arrival of the Messiah.
- Develop a quiz about the significant events of John the Baptist's life.
- Students create a written portrait of John the Baptist and present to the class.
- Create newspaper headlines and slogans that could have been attributed to John the Baptist, concerning his message of repentance and preparation.
- Create a banner with the words “Prepare the Way for the Lord”.
- Dramatise the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist.
- Write a newspaper report of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.
- Using a T chart, compare and contrast the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus.
- Research Advent Traditions
Mt 11:2-11 To PREPARE TO HEAR the Word - John was imprisoned for his proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah. At the river Jordan John had recognised the specialness of Jesus and was uncomfortable baptizing him. In jail John’s resolve began to waiver and he sent a message to Jesus for reassurance. In this text Matthew asserts that Jesus was truly the one whose approach to the Law and the prophets embodied their true fulfilment and that Jesus’ way was the way of mercy not violence. This was not the Messiah anticipated and wanted by most contemporaries of Jesus, including, apparently John. Note: in verses 10&11 the ‘I’ is God, the ‘you’ is Jesus and the ‘he’ is John the Baptist.

Mt 11:2-11 To ENCOUNTER the Word after reading the text from the Bible, students deconstruct the text and identify the key elements.

Mt 11:2-11 To RESPOND to the Word – Students identify those in a contemporary context who stay faithful to the mission of Jesus in their word and action and then create a report to share with the class on this person.

Prayer and Ritual
Prepare a prayer celebration including a ritual of dressing the Jesse Tree using the symbols from work in the unit. Students may write personal prayers about their anticipated hopes for themselves or their family and place these around the tree. Play a reflective song or mantra.

Resources
For resources to support this unit, refer to the online planning tool. For additional resources, refer to the Resource Centre Catalogue: http://www.ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au and follow links to Resource Centre.