

**Most teenagers don't get along with their parents – at least for a while. Teens discover who they are as individuals, and one way they show independence is to distance themselves from their parents. Parents hope their children will be independent one day, but some of the days before then can be painful. Parents and teens sometimes hurt one another when they really don't mean to. Teens become more secretive; parents feel out of control. Tempers flare; words are exchanged; a relationship that once was beautiful sometimes gets broken.**

**Most teenagers don't get along with parents at least for a while, but in time these relationships reform. As children become adults they appreciate what their parents have done. Parents come to enjoy this new person who has grown through the challenges of adolescence. So even though nearly everybody goes through a difficult period, people come out of it, and these relationships gain new respect and love. They are an example of forgiveness.**

**We all commit sin. We all offend people. We regretfully offend people we love. We hurt our parents, our children, the people we date, even the people we go to church with. When we hurt the people we love, what we most want back is forgiveness. It usually happens – and not just when the other person changes. Sometimes we realize our mistakes, and the ones we've offended, the ones who saw our mistakes before we did, they forgive. Usually the miracle of love comes back again, stronger, newer and more exciting than it was before. Forgiveness does not happen with every broken relationship, but when it does, we realize what a precious thing it is.**

**Forgiveness is one of the signs of the coming of Christ. Even before Jesus began his ministry, John the Baptist proclaimed repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John expected people to change their lives, to direct their hearts back toward God. When they did, he baptized them for the forgiveness of their sins. His baptism prepared the way for Christ, who makes us whole again.**

**John the Baptist appears in the gospel on this Second Sunday of Advent, and he proclaims the same message to us. Repent, he says. Own up to your mistakes. Acknowledge your faults. Can't think of any? Think then about the relationships you wish were stronger than they are. Think about how you contributed to the distance you feel. Once we discover what needs fixing, we can receive forgiveness.**

**The message of Christmas is peace and love. Between now and then, let us place ourselves, our sins, and our brokenness in the river of God's mercy. Let us forgive, and let us pray for forgiveness. Then make this Christmas one to remember for all the people you love – not just for little children, but for teenagers, for parents, for every broken person who wants to be whole again.**