

# Link to Liturgy



## 3rd Sunday of Advent Rejoice and Prepare

*Link to Liturgy provides faithful resources which use the latest audiovisual means alongside traditional means to evangelize & catechize thus linking life to the Gospel & the Gospel to life. Sign up Free to Link to Liturgy.*



### Lessons and Discussions

**Page 5 – John the Baptist: More than a Prophet**

*“there has been none greater than John the Baptist”*

**Page 9 – Rejoice and Prepare**

*“Are you the one who is to come?”*

**Page 10 – Pilgrimage**

*“What did you go out to the desert to see?”*

**Page 15 – Guarding One’s Heart**

*“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”*

**Entrance Antiphon – Philippians 4:4,5**

Should be chanted so that the time of prayer, study and discussion can be made sacred. Another song can be substituted, but should have the same theme; this should not be the norm.

*Gaudete in Domino**Phil 4: 4, 5*

**R** E-joice in the Lord always; \* again I say, rejoice.

Let your forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is

at hand. Do not be anxious over an-ything; but in all

manner of prayer, let your requests be made known un-

to God.

**Alternate options:**Hymns

On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry  
Hark! A Herald Voice Is Calling

Praise

Prepare the Way

**Collect – Roman Missal**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

O God, who see how your people  
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,

our hearts, that we to whom the incarnation of Christ Thy Son was made know by the message of an angel may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

**End Notes**

- [1] Catechesim of the Catholic Church - 523
- [2] Matthew 14:3-10
- [3] Goffine, The Church's Year, pg. 20
- [4] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 20
- [5] New American Bible footnotes Matthew's Gospel pg. 27
- [6] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 20
- [7] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 20
- [8] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 20-21
- [9] Hardon, Modern Catholic Dictionary pg. 446
- [10] Mal. 3:1
- [11] Luke 1:76-77
- [12] In conversation with God pg. 58
- [13] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 21
- [14] New American Bible footnotes Matthew's Gospel pg. 27
- [15] Mal. 3:23
- [16] John 1:21
- [17] cf. Matthew 17:10-13
- [18] Catechesim of the Catholic Church - 523
- [19] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 21
- [20] Philippians 4:4-6
- [21] Abbot Gueranger, OSB; *The Liturgical Year*; Book 1 - Advent
- [22] Luke 1:77
- [23] John 3:30
- [24] Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, 35
- [25] 1 Corinthians 13:12
- [26] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 484
- [27] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 484
- [28] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 484
- [29] CCC1438
- [30] CCC 1674
- [31] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 484
- [32] CCC2691
- [33] St. Augustine, De civ. Dei, 18, 51: PL 41, 614; cf. LG 8.
- [34] Proverbs 4:23
- [35] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 16.2
- [36] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 16.2
- [37] Fernandez, In Conversation with God, 16.2
- [38] Matthew 19:26
- [39] St. Augustine, Sermon 16, 7
- [40] J. Escriva, The Way, 163

**Marian Antiphon – Alma Redemptoris Mater**

V  
**A** L-ma \* Redemptó-ris Ma-ter, quæ pèrvi-a cæ-li  
 porta manes, Et stella ma-ris, succúrre cadénti súrge-  
 re qui cu-rat pópu-lo: Tu quæ genu-ísti, na-tú-ra mi-  
 ránte, tu-um sanctum Ge-ni-tó-rem: Virgo pri-us ac po-  
 sté-ri-us, Gabri-é-lis ab o-re sumens illud Ave, pecca-  
 tó-rum mi-se-ré-re.

**Alma Redemptoris Mater (English Translation)**

Loving mother of the Redeemer, open door to heaven and star of the sea, come quickly to the aid of thy people, fallen indeed but striving to stand again. To nature's astonishment thou wert the mother of thy holy Creator without ceasing to be a virgin, and heard from Gabriel that greeting: "Hail." Have pity on us sinners.

V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.  
 R. And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into

enable us, we pray,  
 to attain the joys of so great a salvation  
 and to celebrate them always  
 with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.  
 Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
 one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
 Amen

**Gospel Reading – Matthew 11:2-11 – Roman Missal**

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew  
 - Glory to you O Lord

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why 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: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.* Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The Gospel of the Lord.  
 - Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

**Spiritual Reading**

**From the book On Virginity by Saint Ambrose, bishop**  
*You light up your grace of body with your splendor of soul*

You are one of God's people, of God's family, a virgin among virgins; you light up your grace of body with your splendor of soul. More than others you can be compared to the Church. When you are in your room, then, at night, think always on Christ, and wait for his coming at every moment.

This is the person Christ has loved in loving you, the person he has chosen in choosing you. He enters by the open door; he has promised to come in, and he cannot deceive. Embrace him, the one you have sought; turn to him, and be enlightened; hold him fast, ask him not to go in haste, beg him not to leave you. The Word of God moves swiftly; he is not won by the lukewarm, nor held fast by the negligent. Let your soul be attentive to his word; follow carefully the path God tells you to take, for he is swift in his passing.

What does his bride say? I sought him, and did not find him; I called him, and he did not hear me. Do not imagine that you are displeasing to him although you have called him, asked him, opened the door to him, and that this is the reason why he has gone so quickly; no, for he allows us to be constantly tested. When the crowds pressed him to stay, what does he say in the Gospel? I must preach the word of God to other cities, because for that I have been sent. But even if it seems to you that he has left you, go out and seek him once more.

Who but holy Church is to teach you how to hold Christ fast? Indeed, she has already taught you, if you only understood her words in Scripture: How short a time it was when I left them before I found him whom my soul has loved. I held him fast, and I will not let him go. How do we hold him fast? Not by restraining chains or knotted ropes but by bonds of love, by spiritual reins, by the longing of the soul. If you also, like the bride, wish to hold him fast, seek him and be fearless of suffering. It is often easier to find him in the midst of bodily torments, in the very hands of persecutors.

His bride says: How short a time it was after I left them. In a little space, after a brief moment, when you have escaped from the hands of your persecutors without yielding to the powers of this world, Christ will come to you, and he will not allow you to be tested for long.

sin." St. Jose Escriva, using Jesus' story of taking our eye out if it causes us to sin says, "If the right eye scandalize thee...pluck it out and cast it from thee! – poor heart! For this it is that scandalizes you...Press it, squeeze it tight in your hands! Give it no consolations. And when it asks for them say to it slowly and with a noble compassion – in confidence, as it were: Heart, heart on the Cross! Heart on the Cross!"[40] The saint is not saying to physically take out our eyes, but he is saying to hold desperately our hearts to the cross and not let our eyes, or ears, or anything else wonder away to sinful things.

The heart is a symbol of love, whatever we treasure there do we find our hearts. Our hearts should cling to the cross, for that is where our salvation was gained. Our love for Christ calls for us to conversion. When our ship is filling up with water we should strive to remember these things: "Love of frequent confession and persistence with the daily examination of conscience help us to keep our souls clean and ready to contemplate Jesus in the cave at Bethlehem, in spite of our obvious daily weakness." Through the discipline of daily examination of conscience, frequent confession, and persistence in the fight against the devil, the world, and the flesh our hands are ready and willing to pump out the water that threatens to drown our boat.

### **Profession of Faith or Popular Devotion – Prayer Before Reconciliation**

*This prayer can be found on page 17 of the Oratory: Place of Prayer Book and on the Saint Mary Magdalene prayer card. To learn more or purchase go to <http://remnantband.bandcamp.com/merch>*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen

Come Holy Spirit, give me Your light to see my sins, and give me Your help to be sorry for them. Show me why I sinned. Help me never sin again.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen



for reaching God. If there is anything whatsoever that proves to be an obstacle, then we must put it right or give it up in sacrifice.[36]

**Why it is difficult to guard our heart?** Sin is appealing to us, sometimes simply because it is taboo. Most of the time, the things we fall into that lead us into letting our guard down are the things that seem harmless. “The things we need to abandon, or to cut out of our lives, can be of many very different sorts. Sometimes they will even be things that are good in themselves but which our own egoism, or our failure to rectify our intention, has turned into obstacles to our sanctity. Very often they will not be anything of great importance, but mere whims, habitual minor self-indulgences, failures in complete self-control, excessive pre-occupations with material things, and so on.”[37] We are not destroyed by one single blow, or a giant wound, but sometimes by a million small cuts.

**[See also Link to Liturgy Lesson - Love God with all your heart]**

**[See also Link to Liturgy Lesson - God Shaped Hole]**

**Is it possible to guard our heart?** It can be difficult to guard our heart, but it is entirely possible, because “all things are possible with God.”[38] Saint Augustine gives a great analogy of the struggles we face to guard our heart: “Observe how the sea comes in through any leaky places in the hull, and little by little fills the hold of the boat. Unless it is expelled, the ship goes down...Imitate the sailors: their hands never rest until they have baled her out thoroughly; let yours never rest from doing good. In spite of everything however, the bottom of the ship will fill with water again, because the weak points of our human nature are always there; and you will have to man the pumps again.”[39]

**How do we keep the weak points of our boat from breaking?** We must look at the finest detail. The greatest athletes are great not just because they are naturally born that way, but because they work tirelessly to hone their skills. They work on the weakest parts of their game. A musician will work on their lyrics or the music until it is perfect. We must work spiritually always to guard ourselves from even the slightest occasion of sin. We should work to see even the smallest sin as big as a boulder and say as St. Dominic Savio said, “I will rather die than commit a

Whoever seeks Christ in this way, and finds him, can say: I held him fast, and I will not let him go before I bring him into my mother’s house, into the room of her who conceived me. What is this “house,” this “room,” but the deep and secret places of your heart?

Maintain this house, sweep out its secret recesses until it becomes immaculate and rises as a spiritual temple for a holy priesthood, firmly secured by Christ, the cornerstone, so that the Holy Spirit may dwell in it.

Whoever seeks Christ in this way, whoever prays to Christ in this way, is not abandoned by him; on the contrary, Christ comes again and again to visit such a person, for he is with us until the end of the world.

### **Responsory**

The grace of the Lord gave her strength in the battle, and she was glorified before God and man. In the presence of the prince she spoke with wisdom,  
– and therefore the Lord of heaven and earth has loved her.

She is the virgin who prepared a joyful home for God in her heart.  
– And therefore the Lord of heaven and earth has loved her.

### **John the Baptist: More than a Prophet - Lesson and Discussion**

*“There has been none greater than John the Baptist”*

We were introduced to John the Baptist last week in the 2nd Sunday of Advent. This week we hear of him in prison. Jesus commands John’s followers to go report that He is the Lord, “the one who is to come.” Jesus asks the crowds why they went out into the desert, what did they want to see or expect to hear?

Whatever their expectations, the crowd encountered in John the Baptist, a great prophet and the last prophet. “St. John the Baptist is the Lord’s immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare the way. ‘Prophet of the Most High,’ John surpasses all the prophets, of whom he is the last.”[1]

**Why was John the Baptist in prison?** John the Baptist was in prison because he spoke truth to King Herod. John rebuked

King Herod for his adulterous marriage with his brother's wife. [2] Truth, as the proverb says, is certainly a very beautiful mother, but can sometimes bear within the hearts of the wicked an ugly daughter: Hatred. St. John experienced that speaking the truth can arouse hatred and enmity against the one who speaks truth. Let us learn from him to speak the truth always, when duty requires it, even if it brings upon us the greatest misfortunes, for, if with St. John we patiently bear persecution, with St. John we shall become martyrs for truth.[3]

**Discuss a time when you had to speak the truth even when it was unpopular. Why is it hard to speak the truth always?**

**Why did St. John send his disciples to Christ?** St. John the Baptist never claimed to be the Messiah, rather he claimed he was the one who was to prepare the way for the Messiah. John had heard of the wonders and miracles Jesus was doing, and he wanted confirmation that Jesus was “really the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world, whom they should follow.”[4]

**Why did St. John doubt Jesus as the Messiah?** Even though John was a prophet, he also was human. It is also mentioned in the footnotes in the Bible that John expected the mission of the Messiah as one of fiery judgment. However, Jesus replies to John's questioning with the passages from Isaiah, “the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.” These actions were foretold as signs that their salvation was at hand.[5] Not only did people not getting what they expected in the person of Saint John, they also did not get what they expected in the person of Christ. Jesus the Messiah comes for the salvation of all but pays special attention to the blind, the lame, the leper, the deaf, the dead and the poor.

**Why did Christ say to the disciples of St. John: ‘Go and say to John, the blind see, the lame walk, etc.’?** Jesus possesses everything that was foretold of the coming Messiah. Jesus tells John's disciples about those miracles in order that they may judge Him to be the Messiah since He is performing the miracles that the prophets predict He would work. According to St. Cyril, Christ revealed that He was the Messiah by the grandeur and the number of His miracles.[6]

**Why does Christ add: “And blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in me”?** Jesus is saying something similar to our

honor God's saving deeds? Would you feel closer to God as a result?” If that person is a practicing Christian, they will most likely say yes. Why do we go on vacations? Why would we want to go to Hawaii when we can get the “same” experience at home or somewhere closer? For that matter why go to a professional sports game when we can watch our HD big screen at home? We go to visit places in the world to witness them ourselves with all of our senses. A pilgrimage is something much deeper and holier than a vacation. We experience the pilgrimage with our senses while our souls are also awake, and God willing, on fire for what He is showing us.

**What is the deeper meaning to pilgrimages?** When we go on a pilgrimage, we should remember that we are all pilgrims on this earth, and we are trekking to Jesus Christ as the disciples of St. John the Baptist did. “Pilgrimages evoke our earthly journey toward heaven and are traditionally very special occasions for renewal in prayer. For pilgrims seeking living water, shrines are special places for living the forms of Christian prayer ‘in Church.’”[32] Finally, as St. Augustine teaches, “the Church progresses on her pilgrimage amidst this world's persecutions and God's consolations.”[33]

#### **Guarding One's Heart - Lesson and Discussion**

*“Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”*

In the today's Gospel, St. John sends out some of his disciples to ask Jesus if He is truly the Messiah. It seems that St. John the Baptist is being very cautious. He is guarding his heart from deception and lies of those who claim to be the Son of God.

**Why is it important to guard one's heart?** Proverbs says, “Keep custody of your heart with all vigilance; for from it flows the springs of life.”[34] “How carefully we must guard our hearts! Because otherwise they always tend to attach themselves in the wrong way to people and to things.”[35]

**What should our hearts be after?** They should be after the ultimate prize, the same thing John the Baptist's heart was after, Jesus. Among all the aims of our lives, there is only one end that is truly necessary: to reach the goal for which God has made us, eternal union with Him. In order to attain heaven, we must strive to live our own individual vocation to the fullest. We must be ready to lose everything else and to clear away anything that obstructs our way. Everything in our lives must be a means

schedule, but there is not a schedule, God can change everything and some of these changes in the schedule are the greatest moments of grace for the soul.

### **What are some special pilgrimage places for the Church?**

First and foremost is the Holy Land, which is considered to be anywhere that our Lord walked, primarily in and around Jerusalem. The most special journey is the one that allows us to walk in the footsteps of our Lord. To visit where he was born, to go up on the Mount of Olives, to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, to go to the Holy Sepulcher of Christ's Passion, Burial, and Resurrection.

### **Other famous places to mention are:**

Assisi, Italy (Shrine of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi)  
 Compostella de Santiago in Spain (famous walking pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James the Greater)  
 Cologne, Germany (pilgrimage shrine to the Three Kings who visited the infant Jesus)  
 Czestochowa, Poland (Our Lady of Czestochowa)  
 Mexico City, Mexico (Our Lady of Guadalupe)  
 Lourdes, France (Our Lady appearing to St. Bernadette)  
 Fatima, Portugal (Our Lady of Fatima)  
 Turin, Italy (shrine that holds the relic of the shroud of Turin)

And of course, Rome, Italy where St. Peter's Basilica resides that rests above the bones of St. Peter. It also holds the Vatican City and the Papal State.

### **[For pilgrimage options in the United States see the "American Saints" PDF in the document section]**

There are many other holy places to visit in the world for Christians.

**Why would people go on a pilgrimage?** Some may question the very idea of going off to some distant land to encounter God. Some might say, "I can experience God right at home in my church!" While this is true, it is good for us to remove ourselves from our daily rituals and comforts. When we go on a pilgrimage, we have the opportunity to offer up the trials and tribulations we encounter on the journey, and to have our sole focus be on God. We could ask the person who sees no use for pilgrimages, "If you could visit the Tomb of Christ or visit Golgotha, would you? Would it be spiritually profitable for you to see these places and

saying 'don't judge a book by its cover.' Jesus was nothing like what people assumed the Messiah would look or act like. He did not want anyone to "be scandalized by His poverty, humility and ignominious death on the cross, and who for these reasons would doubt and despise Him, and cast Him away; though 'man,' as St. Gregory says, 'owes all the more love to the Lord, his God, the more humiliations He has borne for him.'" [7]

### **Why did Jesus ask the crowd so many questions about their visits to St. John?**

Jesus asks the following questions of the crowd. "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet?" Jesus is commending and supporting the person and mission of Saint John. Jesus did not want John to lose faith, especially while in prison. Jesus gave John hope and perseverance to die for the truth knowing that he had served his purpose perfectly. Saint John the Baptism "continued to fill his office of preacher, thus constituting him an example to all preachers, confessors and superiors, that they may never be deterred by human respect, or fear of man, or other temporal considerations, from courageously fulfilling their duties. Our Lord commended also rigorous penance, exhibited by St. John's coarse garments and simple food, that we may learn, from his example, penance and mortification." [8]

So why did the crowd go out to see Saint John the Baptist? They had questions and wanted answers, they wanted the truth. Christianity (our belief in Jesus Himself) is either the whole truth and the answer to what St. John the Baptist, his disciples, and all of us have been looking for; or it is false and we should reject it at all costs. There is no middle ground.

**How was John a prophet?** A prophet is "one who spoke, acted, or wrote under the extraordinary influence of God to make known the divine counsels and will." [9] There were prophets who prophesied the coming of John. "Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me; and suddenly there will come to the temple the LORD whom you seek, And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts." [10] In the Gospel of Luke, St. John's father is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies his son's role, "And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins..." [11] John spoke and

acted under the influence of God all his life. This was his whole life's mission. He was the bridge from the Old Testament and the New Testament. Jesus himself talks about John when he said "the law and the prophets down to John the Baptist." [12] He is the last and final prophet because he is the forerunner of Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment and perfection of all that was spoken by the prophets.

#### **Why does Christ say that John was "more than a prophet"?**

John the Baptist was a prophet because a prophet is one who heralds the coming of the Messiah. However, St. John the Baptist was more than a prophet because he not only preached the coming of Christ, but was able to see Him. "St. John was foretold by the prophet Malachi as was no other prophet; because of all the prophets he was the only one who with his own eyes saw Christ and could point Him out, and was the one to baptize Him: and because like an angel, a messenger of God, he announced the coming of the Savior, and prepared the way for the Lord." [13]

**Why is Saint John the Baptist considered the least but at the same time the greatest?** According to earthly standards, Saint John is called the greatest "among those born of women." However, reality is both temporal and eternal. Jesus tells the crowds, "the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." The very least in heaven are far greater than the greatest on earth. Even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven are better than John the Baptist. [14] However, by fulfilling his vocation perfectly, even dying a martyr's death, we can be assured that St. John the Baptist has a special place in heaven and for this reason he is highly revered by the Church.

**Was John the Baptist Elijah coming back?** Yes and No. In the book of Malachi, he prophesied "I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the day of the Lord come..." [15] The Jewish people took this passage literally. In John's Gospel, the Jews ask Saint John if he was Elijah reincarnated. [16] Saint John says that he is not. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that Elijah has already come, but they did not recognize him and ultimately killed him just like the Son of Man would suffer at their hands. [17] So yes, John the Baptist is the Elijah that was prophesied. However, he was not literally the reincarnated Elijah, spoken of in the book of 2 Kings. An example that can be used in today's terms is when athletes are compared to other athletes. "Tom Brady is the next Joe Montana" or "Tony Romo could be the next Brett Favre." Saint John comes in the "spirit and pow-

son it is best to have a chaplain or spiritual director who can offer Mass, or if this is not possible, find a Mass that is offered each day. Liturgy of the Hours can be prayed in the morning as a good beginning to each day and at night as a good end to each day. Liturgy of the Hours can be prayed in common and at other hours, perhaps privately. Popular devotions such as the Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet, novenas, and the Angelus should also be included and can be prayed even at certain set times. The Angelus is normally prayed at 6am, Noon, 6pm each day. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy is normally prayed at 3pm. It is a great practice to pray devotions at certain set times, since pilgrimage plans change. The Angelus could be prayed in a church or a subway station depending on where God leads the group. The important thing is to be a public witness and to not be afraid to pray in public.

**Community and Charity** – A pilgrimage gives individuals a chance to practice both community life and charity for an extended amount of time. Pilgrimages often entail close travel and sleeping quarters in which we might be annoyed or agitated. We begin to learn more about the people we thought we knew. There is the temptation to get frustrated, to gossip and to grumble. In the end, each pilgrim is on the same ship going the same course and each pilgrim has the daily chance to practice charity, often to a heroic degree. By nature, community life is social and fun. It is not necessary to build "fun" into the scheduling of a pilgrimage. By nature, people are fun and social; simply traveling together from one place to another is fun. We don't have to force the fun. The community life is also united by the fact that each pilgrim has a common goal; there is usually a spiritual focus or destination each day.

**Sacrifice and Suffering** – A pilgrimage is not a vacation. Many times pilgrims get very little sleep and eat meals that they might not want to eat. Pilgrims have to learn to be obedient and trust their pilgrimage guides. Pilgrims usually walk more than they are used to and may encounter soreness in muscles that they do not use in their day-to-day routines. In all of this sacrifice and suffering, pilgrims are united and can bring about many graces if they offer the suffering up. Some of the most memorable pilgrimage experiences are not sites but "war wounds", sharing the trials and how these trials were overcome by God's merciful providence. Perhaps the greatest sacrifice for both pilgrims and pilgrimage guides is the giving up of one's own plan. A pilgrimage is a surrendering to the Divine Providence of God. There is a



Christian, hastened to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Pentecost there (Acts 20:16). In the history of the Church we find that it was the custom in the earliest ages, as it has continued to be to this day, to make pilgrimages to holy places, as to the holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem and to the graves of martyrs.”[28]

**Who can go on pilgrimage?** Anyone can go on a pilgrimage.

**When is the best time to go on pilgrimage?** Any time is a good time to go for a true pilgrim. However, the Church teaches, “The seasons and days of penance in the course of the liturgical year (Lent, and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord) are intense moments of the Church’s penitential practice. These times are particularly appropriate for spiritual exercises, penitential liturgies, and pilgrimages as signs of penance, voluntary self-denial such as fasting and almsgiving, and fraternal sharing (charitable and missionary works).”[29]

**How should a pilgrim act?** Pilgrimages should be done as a form of piety. “The religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church’s sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross...”[30] A pilgrim should not act like a tourist. A pilgrimage is not a vacation. A pilgrimage should be begun “in the spirit of true devotion and penance, with the sincere and holy intention of paying homage to God through His saints. Therefore we should not visit holy places for pleasure and recreation. On the way and when at the place, we should avoid all idle talk and sensual excesses; we should gladly endure all the hardships of the journey; the unfavorable weather, the temporary inconvenience of the lodgings, be moderate in eating and drinking, pray fervently and with recollection, confess all our sins contritely and sincerely, reverently receive the Blessed Sacrament, fervently thank God for all the graces which He has shown to us, make good resolutions, and preserve the good impressions which we have received from the pilgrimage, and manifest them afterwards by a pious life. Whoever makes it thus, is sure to derive real advantage therefrom.”[31]

**In leading or making a pilgrimage a few things should be considered:**

**Liturgy and Prayer** – The Divine Liturgy (Mass) and Liturgy of the Hours should be a part of every day, if possible. For this rea-

er” of Elijah and this is why people wonder if he indeed is Elijah. “Going before Jesus in spirit and power of Elijah, John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom.”[18]

**Rejoice and Prepare - Lesson and Discussion**

*“Are you the one who is to come?”*

**How did St. John prepare the way for the Savior?** During this time of Advent, we are called to prepare our hearts for Jesus. St. John the Baptist calls for us to prepare by an act of repentance and conversion. “By his sermons on penance, and by his own penitential life He endeavored to move the hearts of the Jews, that by amending their lives, they might prepare to receive the grace of the Messiah, for God will not come with His grace into our hearts if we do not prepare His way by true repentance.”[19]

**How do we feel/what should we do when a visitor comes to our home?** When a visitor is coming we are full of joy and we prepare for the visit. If we are filled with joy and prepare for earthly visitors, how much more should we be full of joy and prepare for our Divine visitor? The third Sunday of Advent is named by the Church, “Gaudete” Sunday. Gaudete is Latin for ‘Rejoice!’ This comes from the text of the Entrance Antiphon. Saint Paul tells us, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.”[20]

**Why are we filled with joy?** “The blind see, the lame walk, the sinful are cleansed, the deaf hear.” We welcome our divine guest as Saint Ambrose suggests in the spiritual reading, “He enters by the open door; he has promised to come in, and he cannot deceive. Embrace him, the one you have sought; turn to him, and be enlightened; hold him fast, ask him not to go in haste, beg him not to leave you.” Saint Paul says, “The Lord is near”. Advent is coming to a close and the Nativity of our Lord is at hand. “Thou art He that was to come, O Jesus! We look for no other. We were blind, Thou hast enlightened us; we were lame, Thou hast made us walk; the leprosy of sin disfigured us, Thou has cleansed us; we were deaf to Thy words, Thou hast given us life again; we were poor and had none to care for us, Thou hast come to us with every aid and consolation. These have been, and will again be, the blessing of Thy visit to our souls, O Jesus! A

visit, silent but wonderful in its work; which flesh and blood cannot understand, but which faithful hearts feel is granted to them.”[21]

For the soul that understands what Christ can and will do, there is great joy that the Lord is near and, thus there is no anxiety. This soul awaits the Lord in prayer, petition, and thanksgiving. For the soul that does not understand who Christ is or what Christ has to offer, there is no joy. Either this soul is lukewarm and oblivious to the Lord, thus our divine visitor is not welcomed. Or this soul is frightened and unprepared for the Lord, thus he is full of anxiety.

**How do we prepare for our divine guest?** When we have visitors in our homes, we usually have help from friends and family to clean, prepare food, etc. When we prepare for Jesus, we have the help of His Blessed Mother and Saint John the Baptist. Saint Zechariah says that his son, John the Baptist will give “people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.”[22] We can prepare by repentance. We can make a daily examination of conscience, confess our sins, make an act of contrition, and live a life of penance. In other words, we can clean the house of our souls. When a mother asks a child to clean his or her room, she typically inspects the room after the cleaning to check and see if the room is really clean. The mother will look in all the areas (under the bed, behind the door, in the closet) where the child might store things. A child often doesn’t clean but simply moves things around or tosses things out of the way. The mother puts in order all the clutter and truly helps the child clean. In our interior home, our souls, many times we do not really clean out the sins and darkness, rather we just move them around or toss them out of the way. Our Blessed Mother looks into the remote closets of our heart, behind the doors, and under the beds. She searches every area in order to help us be clean and ready to receive her Son. Our Lady is the one who is best able to prepare us because she herself was more prepared than any other created being to welcome and embrace Jesus Christ. Saint John the Baptist gives us the mission, the charge and Our Lady gives us the grace-filled assistance necessary to be ready to welcome and embrace Our Lord.

### **Pilgrimage – Lesson and Discussion**

*“What did you go out to the desert to see?”*

Jesus asks the people what they went out to go see in the desert. They went out on a journey to see St. John the Baptist. Although they go out in order to see and hear John the Baptist, he instead points them to Jesus. He says to the crowd, “He [Jesus] must increase; I must decrease.”[23] St. John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus. As the faithful of the Church, we are pilgrims sent to see Jesus. Pope Paul VI says, “He [Christ] is present in the Church as she moves along on her pilgrimage with a longing to reach the portals of eternal life, for He is the one who dwells in our hearts through faith, and who instills charity in them through the Holy Spirit whom He gives to us.”[24] We long to be united to Jesus, to see Him face to face for all eternity; on that pilgrimage it is Jesus who accompanies us. For we journey now with the One we will see later. Saint Paul says, “At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known.”[25]

**What is a pilgrimage?** “A pilgrimage is a journey voluntarily undertaken to some holy, distant place, where relics or pictures of saints, or of the Blessed Virgin are kept, there to pray fervently through the intercession of the saints to receive help from God in some spiritual or corporal need.”[26]

**How long have people been making pilgrimages?** Pilgrimages have been going on long before Christianity. Even in the Old Testament, we hear of people making pilgrimages. “Pilgrimages were customary in the Old Law, and we find them practiced by all nations. Abraham made a three days’ journey in order to perform his sacrifice according to the command of God (Gen. 22:3), and the Jews at certain times made pilgrimages to Bethel, which place Jacob had sanctified (Gen. 28:18; 1 Kings 10:3). In like manner they made, in accordance with a command of Moses, a pilgrimage, three times a year, to the Ark of the Covenant, and afterwards to the temple at Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16). What were these but religious pilgrimages?”[27]

Even in the New Testament we hear of people going to Jerusalem to pay homage to God. “In the New Testament we read that the parents of Jesus with their Divine Child and with many other persons made yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem (Luke 2:41-42). That the apostles and pious women visited the sepulcher of Christ (Mt. 28; Lk. 24), and that St. Paul though already a