

1. Read (Seek) — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate (Find) — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray (Ask) — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate (Taste) — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence. **How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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Link to Liturgy**



[1] Goffines, The Church's Year, pg. 21

[2] Philippians 4:4-6

[3] Abbot Gueranger, OSB; *The Liturgical Year*; Book 1 - Advent

[4] Luke 1:77

Quick Connect

What is the Gospel saying? Matthew 11:2-11 — Pg. 1

What is the Church saying Past and Present? Pages 1-3

What is God saying to you through this passage? Page 4

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

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.”

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. 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.

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." [1]

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." [2]

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." [3]

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." [4] 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.