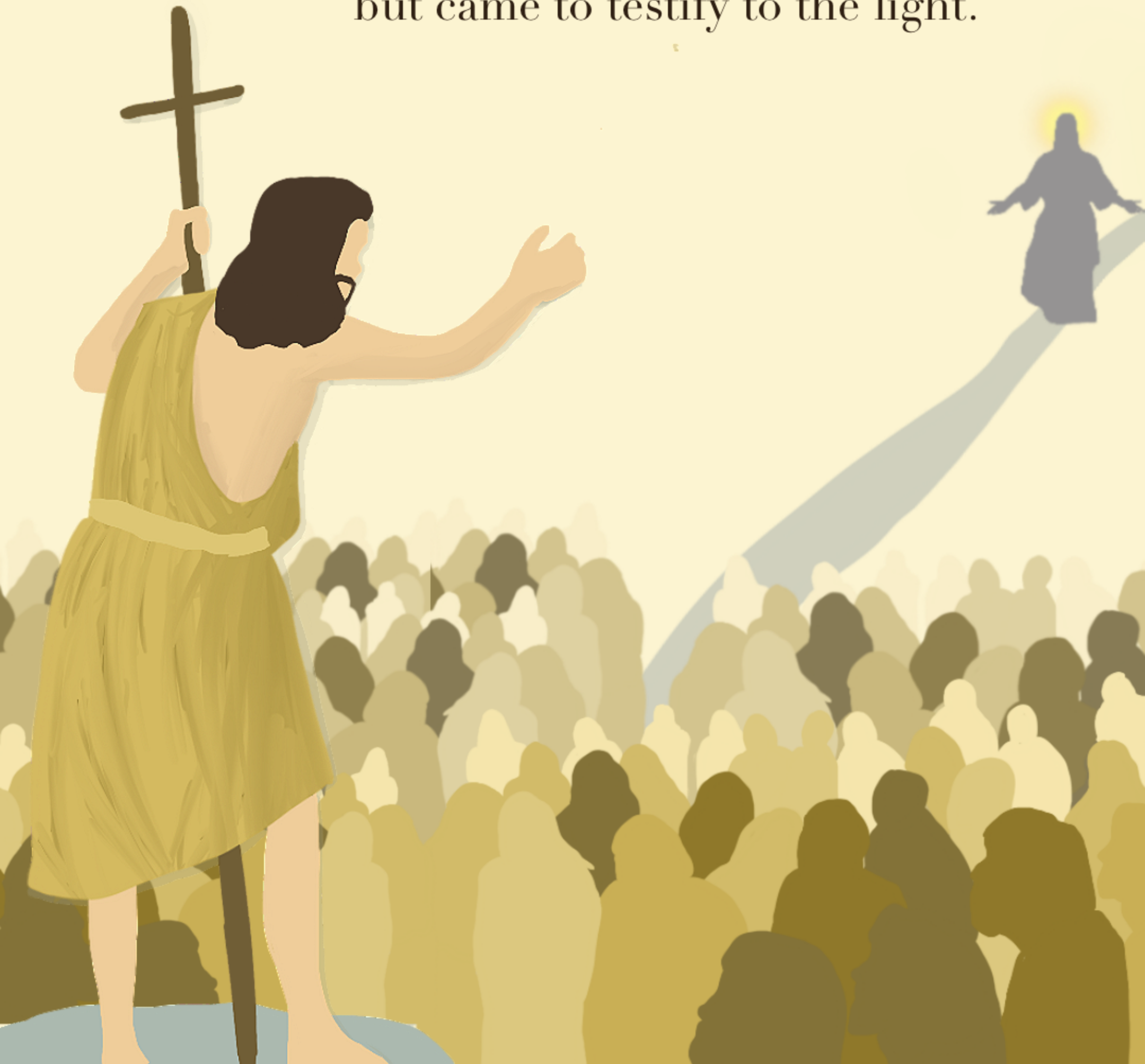


WALKING TO
bethlehem

Advent Spiritual Package



“He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light.”



Gospel Reading

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, “Who are you?” He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, “I am not the Christ.” So they asked him, “What are you then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” He answered, “No.”

Gospel Reading

So they said to him, “Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?” He said: “I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘make straight the way of the Lord,’” as Isaiah the prophet said.” Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.” This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.



reflection

Reflection

I've always looked forward to reading Gospel stories as a way to understand Jesus better, to imagine myself at scene and witnessing Jesus first-hand – what a thrill it must have been to encounter our Lord, up-close and personal. Thus, when I was reading and reflecting on this Sunday's Gospel, and realised that Jesus was not mentioned in the gospel, it felt really dry and rather insignificant to me.

Anxious. I was extremely anxious to meet Jesus in the Gospel! As I read the Gospel passage again, I realised that I wasn't the only person feeling anxious.

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Reflection

The priests and Levites who were sent by the authorities to question John were feeling just as anxious as I was. They repeatedly asked John, “Who are you?” This revealed a deep desire to meet the Christ, the anointed one. Yet perhaps for a few of them, their true intention was just to merely fulfil an obligation “so that we can give an answer to those who sent us”. Every time I enter the season of Advent, I find myself making checklists, prayer, and activity plans. I wondered if my current disposition of feeling anxious to meet Jesus this Advent mirrors that of the priests and Levites who were eager to complete the task they were assigned to do?

Reflection

Has this sense of anxiety for Christ's coming been purified?

My dear sisters and brothers, as we enter into this third Sunday of Advent, I wonder if you too are feeling this sense of anxiety in this time of waiting for Christmas to arrive? This season might be one that is full of questions for some of us who are wondering where Jesus is and how we can recognise His presence in our lives. My mum passed away earlier this year – and just as I felt anxious to recognise Jesus in the Gospel, I am also anxious for this season of grief, of waiting, hoping, and missing, to be over. Peering deeper into the Gospel, I found Hope.

Reflection

I hope that St John the Baptist's words would bring some comfort to you too as he reminds me that Jesus is already among us, present in every situation of our lives, even when I do not recognise it.

I am also reminded of the Visitation (Luke 1:39-45) when our Blessed Mother visited Elizabeth and at that moment when they met, John who was in Elizabeth's womb had sensed the powerful presence of our Lord and had "leapt for joy". I imagine what it might have been like being in the darkness of Elizabeth's womb and without actual sight of Jesus, yet to be able to recognise

Reflection

the presence of our Lord and to respond with such delight and joy.

During those few weeks and months after my mum passed on, it felt as if I was plunged into darkness and it was difficult to give thanks and feel joyful at times. However, looking back, I realise I too have good reason to “leap for joy” as I encountered Jesus in His people during this time of growth and struggle: friends from community who never tire in journeying with me, a family member whom I grew closer to in these stormy times, and the many acquaintances who reached out to me with words of comfort.

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Reflection

May the words from Gaudete Sunday prepare our hearts to receive the true light and joy of Christ: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your forbearance be known to all, for the Lord is near at hand; have no anxiety about anything, but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God."

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watch and pray

watch and pray

Before you begin, you may want to click on the Spotify playlist link below to help you enter into prayer.

BREATHE

Take a few minutes to listen to your breathing as you sit with Jesus. Invite Him to sit with you.

REFLECT

Take a few moments to reflect on your year and ask Him to give the gift of remembrance for the good things you have experienced. Call to mind the things and people that you are grateful for.



watch and pray

Ponder how you in turn, can be a blessing to others as they have been a blessing to you. Finish with the prayer below.

Prayer of Generosity (by St Ignatius of Loyola)

Lord Jesus, teach me to be generous.
Teach me to serve you as you deserve.
To give and not to count the cost,
To fight and not to heed the wounds,
To toil and not to seek for rest,
To labour and not to seek reward,
Except that of knowing that I do your
will. Amen.





call to action

Call to action

What You'll Need:

*Bible, journal, pen, paper/ Christmas cards,
and private time with Jesus*

1. Set aside 20 minutes of your day to pray the Magnificat prayer (Luke 1:46-56) and/or reflect on the Gospel of the Visitation (Luke 1:39-56)
2. Think of 1 or 2 people in your life that you feel God is calling you to “visit” during this season (include at least one family member) and reflect on the relationship you have with them. How do you feel thinking about him/her? Is there reconciliation needed? Is there something that has happened in your life that you would like to share with them?

Call to action

3. With a renewed sense of gratitude for these relationships in your life, write him/her a card. Here are some guiding points on what to write:

- Thank the person for being in your life
- List out one or two attributes about him/her that you appreciate
- Share a scripture verse and why you feel it might be relevant to him/her
- End the message with a Christmas greeting
- Send the card out or pass it to them in person!



checkpoint

Checkpoint

We are always anxious trying to find things to do all the time. Perhaps this time, you could invite Jesus to spend time with you doing something that you normally enjoy doing in your regular schedule?

Maybe it's to go for a run together? Or have that cup of coffee in the morning with Jesus? Tell Him all about how much you can't wait to meet Him in Bethlehem this Christmas 😊

Journey Checkpoints

