

## **Thursday of the Third Week of Advent**

### **St. John the Baptist**

#### **Homily of Bishop Barres**

#### **St. Agnes Cathedral**

**December 16, 2021**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Gospel of Luke and the Advent season point us to the witness of St. John the Baptist.

John emerges from the desert and teaches us the value and power of silence.

John lives a life of asceticism and self-denial which keeps him sensitive and alert to the presence of Christ.

John's role is foretold in Scripture. He is a bridge between Old Testament expectation and New Testament fulfillment. He prepares the way of the Lord.

He calls us to the joyful liberation of repentance.

We will see in this Sunday's Gospel a focus on the Mystery of the Visitation.

The biblical personalities involved in the mystery of Visitation are the pregnant Mary, her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, and both Jesus present in útero in Mary and John the Baptist present in útero in Elizabeth.

What a beautiful moment when John the Baptist leaps *in útero*. in the womb of Elizabeth as Mary approaches with the child Jesus in her womb.

From Elizabeth's womb to his martyrdom, St. John the Baptist teaches us to be always sensitive and alert to the presence of Christ.

Sensitivity and alertness to the presence of Christ and the three comings of Christ in the Incarnation, in the present moment and in Christ's Second Coming are what the Season of Advent is all about.

John teaches us that Christ must increase and we must decrease – in our lives and in the mission of the Church.

He is the great forerunner of the Prologue of John's Gospel.

He identifies Jesus when he says: "Behold the Lamb of God." And we reverently repeat that phrase and give testimony to St. John the Baptist's witness in every Communion Rite of every Catholic Mass we celebrate.