

PILGRIMAGE

Christianity
Practices

Pilgrimage: A religious journey to a holy site or sacred place. It is an act of worship and devotion.

Reasons why a pilgrimage is important

- grow closer to God and strengthen their faith
- express sorrow for sin and be forgiven (penance)
- reflect on their lives, particularly when facing a crisis or a big decision
- pray for something special or thank God for a blessing
- seek a cure for an illness
- help other pilgrims who are disabled or ill
- experience a holy place
- meet others who share their faith.

When on a pilgrimage many Christians may feel the need to eat simply and deny themselves every day luxuries. It may involve walking or sitting quietly, and reflecting on their life. Most feel spiritually, mentally healed. They receive a peace of mind from the experience of going on a pilgrimage.

Lourdes

This is a place in southwest France where it is believed the Virgin Mary appeared to a girl called Bernadette. Mary told her to dig a spring of water and that this water would have healing properties. Hundreds of thousands of people now travel there every year to pray at the grotto (cave) where Mary appeared or go on a procession. Many of the pilgrimages are sick or disabled and they hope that the water can heal them too.

Iona

Place of pilgrimage founded by St Columba in the fourth century. The separation between the spiritual and the physical world is thin. It is a remote place surrounded by nature.

Jesus went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. 'The Passover . . . was near and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.' John 2:13

Explain two contrasting examples of Christian pilgrimage. (4) Spec 2

Pilgrimage to **Lourdes**: pilgrims go because of the **miracles** that **happened there**. Some pray for a miracle in their own life, e.g. to be **healed**. Those who are too ill to walk have to be taken by special ambulances and have **helpers** to accompany them. There are usually large crowds. The basilica is huge and a large number attend the services there. Many people also visit the **grotto where Mary appeared** to St. Bernadette, etc

Pilgrimage to **Iona**: it is a **small island** which is **quiet and peaceful**. Pilgrims go there for many different reasons, some of them personal. They spend time **praying** and studying the Bible together in the **quietness**. It is believed that the **'veil between heaven and earth is thin'** there. It is easy for them to be alone if they want to, even if they go there with a group. They like to remember the saints of the past who lived and prayed there, e.g. St Columba, etc

You can use Israel as an example too.

Pilgrimage to the **Holy Land**: here they can visit the holy places associated with **Jesus**. They can take part in the **special celebrations** at **Christmas, Good Friday and Easter**, etc

2020: Explain two contrasting ways in which pilgrimage is experienced in Lourdes. (4)

- Some go to drink or bathe in the **water of the spring** in the hope of a miraculous cure / others go to be cleansed from sin / to confess their sins.
- Some bathe/submerge in the water to symbolise baptism / **some will take holy water** back for their loved ones who cannot make the journey.
- Some go to **pray** at a holy site / others go simply to feel the religious atmosphere.
- Some go to Lourdes because of its **dedication to Mary** the mother of Jesus / others might go because the site is famous among Christians generally.
- Some go because they are Christians / others go from general curiosity about the place. - Some go just to praise God / others **hope for** a vision or **religious experience**.
- Some go in order to experience the different things that Lourdes has to offer as a pilgrimage site / others experience pilgrimage through going **to serve others**, etc