

## Reflection Questions

- How is God straightening the path, filling in valleys, and lowering mountains along your journey of recovery?
- How are you noticing themes of hope, love, joy, and peace in your life?
- What kind of attitude changes or *metanoia* have you experienced in recovery?

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### Sunday Mass Readings this Week

**1st Reading:** Baruch 5:1-9

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

**2nd Reading:** Philippeans 1:4-6,8-11

**Gospel:** Luke 3:1-6

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*A voice of one crying out in the desert:  
“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make straight his paths.  
Every valley shall be filled  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The  
winding roads shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,  
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”*

These prophetic words from the Book of Isaiah are often used in reference to John the Baptist and are quoted in this week’s Gospel Reading on the Second Sunday of Advent. As we continue into a new liturgical year, we will primarily be hearing from the Gospel of Luke, which shares themes of great pardoning and universal salvation. Jesus makes the good news available to all, including the outcasted, the lost, the addicted, and those powerless over another.

The next two weeks are meant to prepare a path for the Lord to enter our lives. As the season of Advent moves along, we will dive further into themes of hope, love, joy, and peace. These are the fruits of setting our sights on the coming of Christ.

Our preparation includes making room for Him to be a part of our lives. Often that means unlearning the things that we think we know about ourselves, our condition, God, and others so that we may be open to a new experience of all these things.

Our journey may not always be smooth, and this week it is implied that Jesus will pave a new way of life for us. Those who have developed a personal relationship with Christ have witnessed this necessary realignment. Steering our lives in the direction of self-discovery and an attitude of being separate but hopeful sets our sails toward living freely.

Admitting powerlessness over addiction, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments moves us toward recognizing our need for a savior. Our lives had become unmanageable, and we needed a new set of directions to prepare for the road of recovery. We do this by getting honest with ourselves, others, and God. With humble anticipation, we come to believe that God can restore us (both as individuals and as a collective people) to communion with Him.

The second and third weeks of Advent feature John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. John preaches the theme of *metanoia*, which is the changing of one's attitude or the shifting of our life's story. In recovery, we refer to this as a spiritual awakening.

As we prepare our way, we recognize that our behaviors—rooted in fear, resentment, and a desire to have some control—have been but a symptom of our spiritual condition. Admitting our powerlessness is but a step in the process of preparing ourselves for the coming of Jesus.

Ralph Waldo Emerson noted, "There are three wants which never can be satisfied: that of the rich, who wants something more; that of the sick, who wants something different; and that of the traveler, who says anywhere but here." It is from this discontented nature of ours that the Twelve Steps and sacraments set us free.