

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?

Have a Blessed Advent!

The Advent Season is a great opportunity to reflect upon the space we make for Jesus Christ. A few ways to directly confront the road blocks that get in our way of knowing loving, and serving our Lord include:

- Participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation between now and Christmas Day
- Serving those who are less fortunate and newcomers to recovery over the upcoming weeks
- Fasting from a habit, behavior, or substance

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 7

Second Reading: Romans 15:4-9

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

Second Sunday of Advent



*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 Sunday's Gospel Reading for the Second Sunday of Advent. As we continue throughout a new liturgical year, we will primarily be hearing from the Gospel of Matthew, which describes Jesus Christ as the hopeful fulfillment of what God promised the Israelites. Jesus makes the good news available to all, including the outcasted, the lost, and the addicted.

The next two weeks are meant to prepare a path for the Lord to enter our lives and make all things new. 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 God to be our guide and protector. Often that means unlearning the things that we think we know about ourselves, our condition, and God 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.

Admitting powerlessness over our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments moves us toward recognizing our need for God's presence. 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 He 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 addictive and compulsive behaviors—whether centered around alcohol, drugs, food, sex, gambling, technology relationships, or other attachments—have been but a symptom of our spiritual condition. Removal of our addictions and unhealthy attachments 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 our desires that the Twelve Steps and sacraments set us free.