



Thoughts on the Journey...

Suanne Gettings—Pastoral Associate

Would we recognize him? If we heard his message today would we take heed? I would venture to say that most people of John the Baptist's time would think he was an odd man. He dressed in camel's hair with a belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. That's odd, but if he kept quiet and to himself, he may have gone unnoticed. Instead, John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah's prediction.

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

John the Baptist was destined for this role of heralding the coming of the Lord. Even in Elizabeth's womb he leapt for joy at the sight of Mary already with Jesus in utero. Perhaps his one and only mission in life was to prepare people for the way of the Lord. It had to be a lonely mission at times. It would have required courage, faith, confidence in the prophets before him, belief that his cousin was the promised Messiah.

In preparing for this reflection, I tried to imagine what it would have been like to be living on the side of history before the birth of Jesus; it's certainly an unfair advantage knowing the rest of the story. I would imagine that reactions ran the gamut. For those whose attention was distracted by daily living, John's message was probably lost. For those who worshipped other gods, John's message was probably ignored or criticized. But, for those looking for hope in a coming Messiah, John's message was probably a refreshing affirmation as they waited for a Savior.

We are really no different than the people of John's time. We are given the same message from Isaiah that John was given. We are given the historical message in the Word of God telling us to prepare the way of the Lord. That's not just a prelude to the Nativity story. It's a message addressed directly to us in this year 2017.

Advent is a time for us to reflect on the first coming of the Lord, it is also a time for us to reflect on the next

coming of Our Lord. Advent is a wonderful time to adjust the landscape of our lives so that our path to our Savior is not cluttered with obstacles. It's time to look within and remove the baggage that's taking up room in our hearts. Often, we make the path to our Lord more difficult because we create our own impediments that are a result of our sinfulness.

It's easy in life to make mountains out of mole hills, to dig deep valleys when we dig our heels in and refuse to forgive one another. We harbor hurts that keep us locked in anger and resentment and that only makes the road on our journey rugged and harsh.

The Gospel of Mark speaks to us directly in this Advent season. We are on the other side of John's predictions of the coming Messiah. We know that his prophecy and the prophecy of Isaiah became undisputed history. We DO have the advantage of being on this side of the Nativity Story as well as the Resurrection story. We have more cause to believe because our faith is based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We are being called to prepare ourselves for the second coming of the Lord with the same message as the voice crying out in the desert: repent! Examine your conscience and make your path straight, fill in those valleys, make low the mountains, release your sins to your compassionate and merciful Father in heaven.

We are blessed to have the Sacrament of Reconciliation to exchange shame, regret, and fear for an intimate embrace of forgiveness and a kiss of peace from God who calls us His beloved. Transformation begins when we clear the path by seeking forgiveness and reconciling ourselves with our Father in heaven and those we have hurt.

The greatest gift you can give yourself, those you love, and Jesus Himself, is the sacramental grace you will receive from confession. If you haven't been in a while, the priests are compassionate, understanding, and will walk you through it. Take advantage of additional Reconciliation times during Advent: Every Tuesday from 5-8 pm in addition to our regularly scheduled time on Saturday from 4-4:30 p.m.