

DECEMBER 10, 2017



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



ISAIAH 40:1-5, 9-11

PSALM 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

2 PETER 3:8-14

MARK 1:1-8

REFLECTION

Advent is the liturgical season where the words of John the Baptist come alive. His voice cries out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths" (Mark 1:3bc). Too often we hear this and start daydreaming about how prepared we are for Christmas. We translate this to mean, "How many presents do we have left to buy?" Obviously, John the Baptist is not talking about buying Christmas presents. The second part of the statement helps us understand John's Advent challenge: "Make straight his paths" (v. 3c). John the Baptist is preaching about repentance. Boil down this famous Advent quote and you get one word—repent. To repent means to change. In today's reading, John the Baptist focuses on repentance for the forgiveness of sins. But how does one really repent? The Catholic Church practices the following four steps in the process of repentance for the forgiveness of sins: 1) Contrition: Be sorry for your sins; 2) Confession: Name your sin; 3) Penance: Commit to acting differently; and 4) Absolution: Recognize that you are forgiven. All four of those steps can be very difficult to do honestly and sincerely. The first step of actually feeling sorry for sins is very difficult. It is very hard to get to a place where we feel deep inside the sorrow for hurting others. The second step isn't any easier. It can be very hard to admit our sins, to say out loud: "I did this. I sinned. I knew it was wrong, but I did it anyway." So often we make excuses like, "Everyone else does this," or "Nobody really thinks this is wrong." The third step is also very hard. This is where we commit to try to overcome this sin in our lives. It takes tremendous courage to honestly admit that we sin. To be sorry for our sins. To commit to act differently. But this is repentance. This is preparing the way of the Lord, and making straight his paths.

ACTION

Perhaps you recognized that the four steps above come directly from the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Advent is the perfect time to go to confession. When we take the time to seriously reflect on our sins, to name them, to feel sorrow, and to commit to changing our actions, then something miraculous happens. We experience one of Christ's greatest blessings, the grace of forgiveness. The great burden of sin is lifted from us. Find out what times your parish offers confession and try to go this Advent.



JOURNALING QUESTIONS



- What are your sins? What have you done that you know is wrong? Are you really sorry? How might you feel sorry for your sins?