



Preparing the Way of the Lord

During these weeks of Advent, while we prepare for the celebration of Christmas, it is important that we hear the voice of John the Baptist and respond to his appeal for conversion. In this holy season, the Church invites us to open our hearts to receive the Son of God. Unfortunately, we can easily lose the focus of faith during these weeks before Christmas and fall into the materialistic mindset of our culture.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. These words of Isaiah foretold the message and mission of John the Baptist. This call to prepare the way of the Lord and to make straight His paths was urgent then and is still urgent today. God came in the Person of His Son when the Word became flesh. This is what we celebrate at Christmas. He still comes today. God invites us to accept His Son into our lives, to be His disciples in the world today.

What does it mean to *make straight His paths*? There are so many *crooked* paths that we can be tempted to walk. We can get off track in our Christian lives, falling into sin, walking along roads that deviate from our faith. There are many temptations to stray from the path of the Lord and to get lost along the way, to stray from the Gospel. During Advent, it is good to make straight the path of the Lord in our hearts by examining our lives, clearing the way for the Lord to act in us with His grace. It is important to look at our lives and to see where our choices and actions have not been in harmony with the Gospel. The sacrament of Penance is a great way for all of us to heed the call of John the Baptist to repentance and conversion.

Advent is a season of commitment and conversion in preparation for the Lord's coming. It is also a time of joy since we are preparing for the celebration of Our Savior's birth. This joy comes from faith in the Incarnation, in the fact that Jesus brings us salvation. In the midst of so much darkness in our world, we see light, the light of Christ that overcomes the darkness of sin, selfishness, and death. He is always at our side, no matter the challenges and problems we encounter. He loves us and He saves us.

To experience the true joy and peace of Christmas, we need to prepare ourselves during these weeks of Advent. In Addition to confession, prayer is also important. Maybe you can find some time to attend a few daily Masses during Advent. We can so easily get caught up in the secularism of our culture's observance of Christmas, including the materialism that surrounds us. In a consumer society, we can be tempted to seek joy in things, but things really do not bring us fulfillment. When we neglect the spiritual, we end up living Christmas as a merely external holiday. It is so

much more: it is the feast of the Son of God who came to bring us peace, life, and true joy.

During these last few days of Advent, let us make sure that we listen to the voice of John the Baptist so as to make room for Jesus, the Word who saves us, and to welcome Him into our hearts. Let us keep our focus on the Child in the manger and make sure that we preserve the primacy of God in our life. May Mary intercede for us, that we will be ready to receive anew, in our hearts and in our whole lives, our Savior, Christ the Lord!