

“A voice of one crying in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all the people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken (ISAIAH 40:3-5)

This second Sunday of the Advent season is a time for us to think about PREPARING the Lord’s way through the desert places. Having spent a fair bit of time in the Sinai, I have a vague understanding of why Isaiah chose the metaphor of a desert place to emphasize his message which we heard last week – the availability of hope and light in the darkness of the wildernesses in which we travel from time to time, IF we trust in the Lord and commit ourselves to sharing the Light into which we have been baptized with others. Sunrise and sunset in the Sinai are unlike the ones I am so familiar with as I walk Kahla – sunrises burst seemingly out of nowhere on the horizon and then the light moves, as the American poet Carl Sandburg wrote, “on cat’s feet”, driving the shadows and all remnants of the darkness away. Sunsets are even more pronounced – no gloaming time and slow drift into sundown; one moment there is brilliant light and heat and then – poof!!! Everything is plunged into darkness and quiet and solitude. I so prefer our sunsets because, as the last jewels of light fade across our horizons, she whispers that she will be back and carry in her arms hope and possibilities with the next sunrise.

Isaiah reminds his people that we and God are partners in creation – God has called us and blessed us to be stewards of his creation. I so prefer the term steward to the words in the Genesis story translation which says that we are have “dominion” over creation. Dominion speaks of power and control and domination of the “weak” by the “strong” which I don’t think is how God sees our relationship with the created order. We are to tend creation, to embrace it as parents cuddle their children; we are to honour the Giver and the Gift; we are told not to hoard the Light, but to share it with wild abandon.

With love, God WILL raise us from the valleys of darkness and despair in which we dwell from time to time; the Lord will walk beside us as we scale the mountains that seem to block our efforts to be lovers of the created order and one another; God’s compassion, care and concern for each of us as beloved sons and daughters will seep into every fibre of our being and we will be enabled to see and feel the divine presence in others as we share ours with friends, family and strangers.

Today’s passage calls us to be “preparers of the Way” which involves our committing to trusting in a God whom we cannot see but whose reflection stands before us in the lives of all creation. With that sense that God is not some powerful, dreadful, fearful OTHER out there, we are empowered to say to others as they seek hope and love, “Come, let’s go together on the journey...” As you reflect this week, think of all those with whom you journey and how you can best serve them and yourself as you “prepare the way of the Lord”.

Additional Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10 Luke 1: 26-38 Psalm 72:18

Reflective Prayer for this Week:

As we enter more and more into our Advent time, help us to prepare our hearts as well as our homes for the gifting of your Son Jesus. Help us remember as we set about the common tasks of our day that we have the opportunity to witness to our faith, not through overbearing lectures or veiled threats, but through our simply being present to one another. Help us to see the world through your eyes and empower us through your Spirit to make the pathways straight and the desert places oases of hope, joy and love. In all that we say and all that we do this week, Lord, help us to make place in our lives and in our hearts for you and for your Son, your Gift of gifts, Jesus. Amen