

**St. Frances Cabrini - Lebanon, TN**  
**Second Sunday of Advent – Year B**  
**December 10, 2017**

*IS 40:1-5, 9-11*

*2 PT 3:8-14*

*Mk 1:1-8*

The second Sunday of Advent has us heralding in the coming of the Messiah. This Sunday is usually represented by John the Baptist. Prepare the way of the Lord. It is important for us to prepare. This is a purpose for Advent. Maybe what is more important is the “how” we prepare.

In our first reading from Isaiah, “...give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated. This is the important part...her guilt is expiated. The Hebrew actually reads “speaks to the heart”. Since the heart was considered the organ of thought, the phrase means “convince Jerusalem. What should they be convinced of? They didn’t believe that their release was imminent. Here they are thinking in human terms, not as God. Release from the bondage of sin, not of the Persians, or Romans.

The people are directed to act out their deliverance. Some are told to prepare for the coming of their God by removing any obstacle that might prevent God’s approach. “Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain made low”. Now I want you to use your imagination. Imagine this ambo as a mountain. Can you see me behind it? I can’t see you. The floor below is a deep valley. I can see to the other side, but I cannot cross due to the depth of the valley.

This distance between here and there represents a chasm. It is a chasm between us and God. It is sin. Sin keeps us from God. It is not God saying keep away you sinner. It is us putting up the barriers blocking God from us. So to make straight the crooked path, to make every mountain and hill low, to fill in every valley is

another way of saying to remove the barriers between us and God. Said in a more simple way, to remove the sin that hurts our relationship with God.

How do we do this? In a word, confession. In any return to God, confession must be made to three different people. No, you don't have to go to three different priests. First, you must confess to yourself. We may want to close our eyes to what we do not wish to see; this is human nature. The most difficult person to face is ourselves; and the first step to repentance and to a right relationship with God is to admit our sin to ourselves.

Next, we must make a confession to those whom we have wronged. It will not be much use saying to God that we are sorry until we say we are sorry to those we have hurt or grieved. The human barriers have to be removed before the divine barriers can be. Remember, there is no forgiveness without being humble.

I stated above that there is no one harder to face than ourselves. In our mind, we probably think it is this person we need to approach. In most cases, it is harder in our mind than reality. Just do it. Just rip the band aid off. You will be the better for it. You must repair the relationship.

Finally, we must make your confession with God. This is the end of pride and the beginning of forgiveness. It is when we find it possible to say "I have sinned". God in turn gets the chance to say "I forgive".

We Catholics are fortunate in that we have the sacrament of Reconciliation. We have the ability to confess to God through the priest. I know that is difficult for many people. If it weren't, Father Michael, and every other priest, would have long lines outside the confessional. Some may believe that they don't have to go to a priest, they go directly to God. I am not going to preach against Catholic teachings. What is desired is conversion. It starts with the same process. Confess to yourself; confess to those you hurt; confess to God. The formula doesn't change.

God does not want sacrifice. God wants a humbled heart, a contrite heart. This is what will remove the barriers between you and God. This is what opens the path for God to enter back into your life. This is what makes a right relationship with God. Prepare the way for the Lord. Prepare your heart for the coming of the Lord.