

## **Construct A Smooth New Highway**

**Is. 40: 1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3: 8-14; Mk 1: 1-8**

In the Gospel for the second Sunday of Advent, the evangelist, Mark, introduces John the Baptist. John was the one who was prophesied by Isaiah more than 700 years earlier as the person who would prepare the Jewish people for the coming of Jesus. John detached himself from every earthly thing and went out into the desert to lead a life of penance, preaching the need for repentance to anyone who would listen.

John proclaimed Isaiah's message that, to prepare the way for the Lord, the Jews must construct a straight and smooth highway by levelling mountains and hills and raising up valleys and low areas. (Is. 40: 3-4)

In the planning and design of roads, the engineer has to be aware of high spots and low spots, hills and valleys. The land is never completely flat. To minimize the excavation and optimize the use of the soil, the engineer designs the road such that hills are cut down (flattened) and the excess soil is used to fill in the valleys. The engineer tries to balance the cuts and fills to reduce costs.

So what is the message for us in the analogy of highway construction as we wait expectantly for the appearance of Jesus? Well, we too must cut down mountains and hills and fill in valleys to create a straight and level highway for Jesus. Not a physical highway, but a spiritual one; one that leads directly into our hearts.

Like the Jewish people of Isaiah's time who suffered greatly in the depths of exile, we also have many valleys. We are 'exiled' in a dark world of suffering due to the impacts of COVID-19, the economic crisis, social injustice, civil unrest, and climate change. And, as for mountains and hills, our society has raised many obstacles to seeing God because of our policies and practices. Although the outlook seems gloomy, Isaiah provides encouragement when he says that when we make that smooth highway, 'Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed...'. (Is. 40: 5)

Jesus will come. However, the Apostle Peter said that we don't know when this will happen because God's schedule is not the same as our schedule. (2 Peter 3: 8) Although the Lord may appear to be 'delaying' His arrival, He is patiently giving us time to repent and follow the preaching of John the Baptist.

We have received the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. As we wait expectantly for Jesus, let us set about with a strong purpose to allow the Holy Spirit to fill in those empty places; those hollows and valleys in our lives. And let us allow the Holy Spirit to level the mountains that we have created so that there will be a straight and level highway for Jesus to enter our hearts this Christmas.