

Second Sunday of Advent
Second Sunday of Advent (Latin Mass)
December 4, 2022
Year of Saint Joseph

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” (Matthew 3:3)

During the season of Advent, we recall the person and preaching of John the Baptist. Today, I would like to pose a question concerning his use of the prophet Isaiah, specifically 40:3: *make straight the way of the Lord.*” The question, my dear family, how does one **make straight** the way of the Lord?

To answer this question, it is important to realize that our system of roads were not built by a single person. If we were driving upon a dirt/gravel road, a highway, an interstate, or an old Roman cobblestone road, still used today in Rome, none of these roads were laid by one individual. Realistically, it would take many persons and many days to construct a road. This is the first clue to understanding John’s use of Isaiah—**no one person can make straight the way of the Lord by themselves.**

Saint Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, wrote this one line which affirms this point: *“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* (Philippians 2:12-13).

Combining these two thoughts, we can now propose that to make straight the way of the Lord in our lives is – a work which must both begin and be completed in humility (fear and trembling); not relying upon our own strength (*“. . . for apart from Me you can do nothing.”* John 15:5).

I could use Sacred Scripture to justify my proposed statement by offering a famous statement which was uttered prior to the threefold denial of Our Lord Jesus by Saint Peter. *“But Peter said to Him, ‘Even though all may fall away because of You, **I will never fall away.**’”* (Matthew 26:33). Saint Peter, attempting to rely upon his own strength of will, failed miserably. Yet, do we need this example from Sacred Scripture to prove that which we know deep within our hearts? I am a sinner in need of God’s grace. Each and every time you or I enter into the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we confess this fact. Distrusting of our own strength, cleverness or abilities, we need to humbly acknowledge our need for God to lift us up to the heights of holiness through His free gift of grace.

An old story recounts that as Saint Philip Neri arose from his bed each morning, he would pray these words: *“O Lord, keep thy hand this day over Philip; if Thou does not, Philip will betray Thee.”* His prayer is our prayer and our many confessions remind us of its truth. As we prepare for Christmas, let us humble ourselves through the reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Let us beg His grace to make straight His road into my heart. It is a road of holiness which ends in heaven. It is a road which risks becoming congested by my prideful assuming of my own sanctity. God keep your hand upon me today, for if not, I will betray You.