



Prepare the Way of the Lord

Luke 3:4

Taking Down Mountains

In this week's gospel we hear John the Baptist emerge from the desert and encourage the people to prepare the way of the Lord. In our own time, how do we prepare for Jesus' arrival? A great way to prepare the way of the Lord is to participate in the sacrament of confession. Sadly, few people take advantage of this wonderful and healing opportunity. Statistics tell us there are two main reasons why people don't go.

First, we are scared to go. When I was young we used to go to confession every Advent, and I was terrified. What if Father remembers my sins, is appalled by me or scolds me? But that never happened. In fact, I soon discovered that I enjoyed going. Confessing my sins left me with a great sense of relief and peace. That is why the Church calls confession, "the *sacrament of forgiveness*, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent pardon and peace" (CCC 1424). If you have ever trudged up a mountain, you know how relieved you are to be traveling on a straight highway again. Confession levels our path and makes the journey easier.

Second, we do not believe that sin affects our lives, or that we really need confession. If you're like me, stubbornness is a vice you have to work on, especially around confession. Small sins can turn into big sins and breed bad habits. What was once a small hill, turns into a mountain that must be made level. But mountains are hard to move. They are stubborn. It takes something bigger than mountains to move them and that is God's grace. The sacrament of reconciliation is a mountain moving machine because God is a mountain mover. His grace, with our openness, can plow over any obstacle.

This year, prepare your heart and level out the mountains in your life by going to confession. Try it, you won't regret it.