

The Season of Advent: Year C, Week 2

When discussing John the Baptist, all four gospels reiterate the powerful metaphor of the words of Isaiah: “*Yahweh will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel*” (11:12). These images of the Messiah’s forerunner present the birth of Jesus as a homecoming for all those alienated and dislocated. For the Jewish exiles in Babylon whom Isaiah is addressing in 8th century BCE, his poetry is a vision of wholeness, embracing freedom, peace, and a sense of being home again in Jerusalem.

In 21st century CE, a Central American caravan of exiles, which includes [LGBT refugees](#), gather at the southern border of the United States and wait. In Asia, Myanmar’s persecuted Rohingya minority, trapped in exile in the forests of Bangladesh, struggle for the right to return home. And around the globe, criminalized and abused LGBT people flee their homelands to protect their lives and safety.

On this Second Sunday of Advent, the voice of one crying out in the desert takes on a renewed urgency: how does one “prepare the way” while so many remain alienated and dislocated?



JUCHITAN DE ZARAGOZA, MEXICO - NOVEMBER 1, 2018: Members of an LGBT group traveling with the Central American migrant caravan wait for a ride. (Photo by Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

LUKE 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the Word of God came to John, ben-Zechariah in the desert.

John went through the entire region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the words of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of our God, clear a straight path. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all humankind shall see the salvation of God."

For all the readings for the Second Sunday of Advent click [here](#).

FOR REFLECTION

1. The Gospel is a message of hope for the People of God suffering in exile. As an LGBT person or ally (perhaps in exile), what winding roads lie ahead for you? And how do you imagine your home, "*Jerusalem*," to be like? On this winding road, are you able to offer hope and peace to others who might feel alienated or dislocated? How?
2. In your life as an LGBT person how have you navigated emotional or spiritual "*wildernesses*" or "*deserts*?" In such parched environments how has the Word of God been an oasis for you? What did you learn from being in the wilderness? Have you moved to "*fertile grounds*" since or are you still a "*voice crying out in the desert*?"
3. What might be some "*rough*" places in your life or in the life of the LGBT community, that need to be smoothed out? How would you answer the Baptist's call to repent?
4. "*All humankind shall see the salvation of God.*" Are you able to see the salvation of God in places where LGBT persons (and their gifts) are often invisible or ignored?
5. In today's second reading, St. Paul prays that the Philippians will discern what is of value: "*And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*" How do you discern what is of value? What is the LGBT community's value to the church? To the wider world?

6. The people's response to Psalm 126 today is "*God has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.*" If you were to write the verses for the psalm, what would be some of the great things God has done for you that fills you with joy? Which of these things relate to your participation in the LGBT community?

PRAYER



O God who restores, in faith we take off our robes of mourning and misery and put on your splendor of glory. We believe that you will gather your people from all exiles and wildernesses and bring us home. Our song is ready and we will celebrate when we sing: "Yahweh has done great things for us and we are filled with joy."

Thank you for prophets like John the Baptist who help us prepare the way. Thank you for the example of the Holy Family who were also exiles and refugees in Egypt. On our journeys home, may our love increase ever more in knowledge and every kind of perception to discern what is of value, so that we may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through your firstborn, Jesus, Amen.