

**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent**  
**December 4, 2022**  
**Reflection by Sister Patricia Crowley, OSB**  
**Amos 8:4-7, Timothy 2:1-8, Luke 16: 1-13**

I. Introduction on Preparation

In some ways, this time of year is a season of preparation for one thing or another. Perhaps it was

- for the traditional meal on Thanksgiving or
- looking for gifts for Christmas online or
- pulling out heavier clothes to get ready for the winter's cold or
- even packing for travel to visit family for the holidays.

Maybe it is in the news as our country prepares for a post-election Congress or as our city prepares for a mayoral election or the news about Ukrainians preparing for winter in wartime.

Lots of preparations...lots of anticipation.....

This liturgical season is no different. An Advent theme is “preparation” for what is to come. In life, we know that trying to prepare for the unknown happens more often than not. Think of birth, of sickness, of death, of relationships...We ask ourselves “How can we really prepare for what is so uncertain or unknown?”

II. John's cry to “Prepare” and his harsh condemnation of those not getting it!

Today's gospel echoes that theme of preparation as John quotes Isaiah – “Prepare the way for our God.” According to Matthew's account, John was at his apex when this incident took place. “...all Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan...people were going out to him.” Then, he sees some folks from among the Pharisees and the Sadducees. His words become harsh - “you brood of vipers...the ax lies at the root of the trees that don't bear good fruit.”

John ends that diatribe by predicting the One who is to come and his own unworthiness in that Presence. In many ways what John is predicting is a promise of something unknown.

Some of those listeners were clearly disbelievers. How to truly prepare for what John was describing was probably unclear too!

That is the challenge and we know from history that followers of Christ often did not and do not know how to “make way for this new Divine reality in human life.”

### III. The unexpected

In our times, nearly everything seems uncertain / unknown in spite of the ubiquitous media messages

Many of us, myself included, are planners. We want to be prepared. We want to know what the future holds. Some of the wise tell us that it is when we really try to plan for the future, *God laughs*.

The gospels tell us not to prepare for what we will say for it will be given to us to speak wisely. The question is – can we live with so much unknown, so much uncertainty?

The most recent issue of Occasional Papers (LCWR) asks that question and leads us to consider the realm of possibilities. One author quotes Andre Gide that

*We cannot discover new oceans unless we have the courage to lose sight of the shore.*

Focusing on “the possible” takes a lot of good inner work and some courage!

### IV. A new way of experiencing the Divine

We might note that Matthew’s John does not say *Prepare your way* but rather,

*Prepare the way for our God.*

Perhaps this Advent season could invite us to prepare ourselves for a brand new (and so ancient) sense of the Divine in our personal lives as well as in our communal life experience and even beyond.

The poet, David Whyte, speaks of

*An unknown energy pulls us forward in trust and eventually toward freedom.*

*Our God does walk with us and this sacred accompaniment is clothed in mystery.*

The Scriptural images today draw us to that realm of possibility in our experience of the Divine, preparing the way for our world to come to know God in new ways by believer present to the possibilities of Divine Presence in our unfolding realities into the unknown.

## V. Conclusion

The American poetess, Emily Dickenson's famous statement:

*I dwell in possibility.*

might become ours as we ponder John the Baptist's call to Prepare the way for our God.

The entrance antiphon for today's liturgy gives us a clue how to begin to do this "inner work" as it says:

*God's voice is heard in the joy of your heart.*

*Let us listen to that with the ears of our heart!*