Spirituality
Scripture for Life
Voices of Sisters
Spirituality



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When I finished high school, my father thought it would be a great experience for me to learn from working in an office for the summer. Instead, I found a job as a counselor in a camp sponsored by Catholic Charities. Our campers were girls between the ages of 9-14, the majority of whom came from an orphanage in the city.

The camp sat at something over 7,000 feet in altitude and from it we could look up at "Twin Peaks," a pair of mountains 11,420 feet above sea level. Early in the camp session, we started getting the girls in shape for their end-of-camp hike up Twin Peaks.

Happily, we didn't know that this hike is officially classified as "hard," meaning that it's long, has significant gain in altitude and the possibility of unmarked tracks, etc. Innocent of that knowledge, we carried their lunches and led our little troopers up. Almost all of us — big and little — succeeded in reaching the summit and finding our way back down. One counselor stayed behind with stragglers when their energy ran out.

Second Sunday of Advent

December 7, 2025

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72
Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12

When we started, Twin Peaks was fully in sight. After about a half an hour, the incline hid the high mountains. As the climb grew more difficult, we had to remember that the goal was really there even though we couldn't see it. If we hadn't believed, we would have given up.

I thought of that climb when reading Paul's statement that hope comes from "endurance and ... the encouragement of the Scriptures." This coincides with Isaiah's promise that a savior would "sprout" from the people and "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him." Isaiah promised that the coming One would establish justice and peace

throughout creation and that "Earth will be filled with knowledge of the Lord." An invisible dream!

This Sunday, our wild friend John the Baptist appears with his never-subtle message, "REPENT!" He's broadcasting a call to assume a new mentality. John preached that one like Isaiah's "sprout" was coming and that everyone had to make ready to recognize him.

John called the preparation "metanoia," or repentance. Metanoia has little to do with saying "I'm sorry," or making a confession. It's far more demanding than that.

John wanted to clear the way for the Messiah. To do that, he didn't demand worship, prayer or fasting; one might almost think he avoided those expressions of formal religiosity. No, John cuts to the quick: "Produce good fruit! You think you're part of the chosen people? God can raise up children of Abraham from stones — and right now you do resemble those rocks!"

John called for a mindset that relied completely on Isaiah's promises, a metanoia perspective in which people believe so firmly that they act from the certainty that God's future is already present. They see God's reign emerging now; they sense that humanity and all of creation are on the way to becoming all God created us to be.

This mentality doesn't look backward to an ideal past but toward what theologian John Haught calls "an unprecedented, planetary, super-organic state of fuller being." That's a way of being that Paul described more simply as the process of all creation groaning in the birth pangs of the glorious future of the children of God (Romans 8:18-28).

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John is the perfect messenger to prepare us for the Nativity. He readies us for One to come, the One whose passion for God and creation is so contagious that it can only be described as the fire of the Holy Spirit. John proclaims that the time is ripe, that this is the moment. He calls us to metanoia faith. He maintains that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and that we can discern the Spirit at work among us if only we look with new eyes.

This second Sunday of Advent invites us all to live John's style of metanoia. Because this prophetic invitation comes from the Spirit, we can believe that it's possible. The Baptist echoes what Moses taught: that the reign of God is not far away in the heavens or across the sea, "No, it is very near ... in your mouth and [it's] in your heart to do it" (Deuteronomy 30:12-14).

The time is ripe; this is the moment to make straight the paths, to remind ourselves that Christ is alive and the Spirit is active among us.

In this fracturing world, we're all on a long climb. We'll find ways to care for those whose stamina runs dry while the rest of us move forward. All we need is the conviction that we are on the way to something dreamed of, but currently out of sight. We can keep going if we believe.

This story appears in the **Advent** feature series. View the full series.