

**December 7 – Second Sunday of Advent**  
***Prepared by Bernice Rigney, MM, Nairobi, Kenya***

- Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11    A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low...
- 2nd Peter 3:8-14        But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
- Mark 1:1-8                John appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins ... And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me ... I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit."

The readings of this second Sunday of Advent are set against a desert landscape.

As always, the challenge of the gospel is to touch us where we live. If we reflect for a moment on this image of desert, dry wasteland, place of desolation how do we name this place in our own lives? It seems urgent to do this if we believe that this is where God waits – to speak, to reach out, to comfort.

We read that a voice cries out there in the desert – to prepare the way of the Lord. Later in Mark's gospel we hear of John the Baptist – in the desert – and crying out that the way of the Lord be prepared by the people – by us.

Some of us might live in or near deserts, but the words of Isaiah and Mark call us to deeper questions, beyond the physical, geographical description. If the desert can be described as wild, uninhabited and uncultivated, arid, desolate, harsh what does this have to do with me? How do I describe my own personal desert? How does this reading become real in my live and experience?

On the African continent the Sahara desert advances steadily, consuming land and people in its destructive advances. In Nairobi, another desert is already evident – destruction, harshness and desolation – in the midst of Kibera, a crowded slum described as the largest on the continent. How would Isaiah cry out if he entered this teeming, crowded area, marked by the ravages of poverty, disease and ethnic conflict? "Comfort, comfort my people."

A recent report from Nairobi speaks of further suffering – starvation related to the effects of the failing world economy, rising oil prices. Folks in Kibera don't use gas for cars but they are affected daily by world supply and demand as the high price of oil translates into rising food and public transportation costs.

Our own nation has been touched deeply, flattened, devastated by both natural causes and those of our own making. The choices we make, the way we live reaches across boundaries, into other lands and deserts. We are those who are called to "prepare the way of the Lord." In this season of Advent as the familiar person of John the Baptists briefly walks across our stage, can we hear his call as a challenge for NOW?

How can the unplanned “interruptions” in our lives become instead an INVITATION?

The theme of Isaiah grows stronger in Mark’s gospel. What is described as a voice by the prophet becomes a person, John the Baptist, who goes out into the desert to proclaim, prepare the way for Jesus. Amazingly we hear the people of the whole countryside followed John into the desert, to listen, to respond to the call, to be transformed. If we think of the desert as far away and isolated it might be easy to ignore, to forget. But what if we are being called into the desert, to listen and respond?

**For more information:** Read “Loving our neighbor in a shrinking world,” a resource developed by Maryknoll missionaries that views U.S. policies through the lens of those who, both in the U.S. and overseas, lack basic necessities, endure the scourge of racism, live with gender-based discrimination or feel the immediate impact of climate change. Now that the elections have taken place, respond to Maryknoll’s invitation and engage policy makers on political and economic decisions that impact people around the world. Copies of the guide, plus additional resources and information, are available at [www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm](http://www.maryknollogc.org/2008elections/index.htm).

**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, Social Justice & Integrity of Creation**

P.O. Box 29132 Washington, D.C. 20017

phone: (202)832-1780 fax: (202)832-5195

[ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org) [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org)