

"Every valley shall be filled in and every mountain shall be made low." Why? In order to clear the way, to make an even path for the coming of the Lord, where? In our world, here and now. Of course the words are figurative, an analogy. There are lots of things that can get in our way, that can keep us from the Lord. Pride or ego is a big one. The great John the Baptist, the herald of the Lord Jesus gets it right when he says, "*I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.*" We must ready the Lord's way, whether it be clearing things that bring us too far down to see God's goodness or things that bring us too high such that we place ourselves or *our* way above God's way. Those things must be cleared.

One of the great levelers for us, in its healthiest state, is the Church. For when we all come together, from a variety of walks of life, of economic and educational and racial and cultural backgrounds and approach the table of the Lord together, we do so the same, none more worthy than another, but equal and welcome in the eyes of God. When we turn to exchange a sign and prayer of the peace of Christ with one another we are Church. When we reach out and care for one another and for the stranger on the street, we are Christ. We are good stewards, "*conducting ourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*", as St. Peter's letter puts it.

As I mentioned in the bulletin last week, today George Whalen, chair of our Stewardship Council, will address us on that stewardship here at St. Teresa of Avila. Please welcome him.