

***Advent 2B 2014***  
***Comfort My People***

In today's reading the Prophet Isaiah speaks a word of comfort to God's people. The people of Israel—God's chosen people—had lived in exile in Babylon for nearly eighty years. Their temple had been destroyed; their city lay in ruins; and they no longer had a king to rule over them. The Psalmist remembers this period when he writes: "By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion ... How we could sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?" This was the most difficult period in Israel's history. *It seemed* that the gods of Babylon were stronger than the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; *it seemed* that the people of Israel had no future; *it seemed* that God was no longer present to his people.

But suddenly, there came a word of comfort and hope, a word of salvation and redemption. "Comfort, give comfort to my people says the Lord. Prepare the way of the Lord. Go to a high mountain and cry out at the top of your voice, here comes with power, the Lord God." And so it was, in a short period of time the impossible happened. God freed his people from exile, and they returned to the city of Jerusalem to build a new temple where God would dwell in their midst once more.

Today we find ourselves in another kind of Babylonian Exile. *We live as exiles in a world* where many no longer believe. *We live as exiles in a world* where many no longer see any need for God. *We live as exiles in a world* that prefers the comfort of gadgets and conveniences to the comfort of God's Word. *We live as exiles in a world* where God's Word is a voice crying in the wilderness. *We live as exiles in a world* where it is too easy to become discouraged, where it is tempting to say "God is no longer present to us."

This is why Advent is so important. This is why Advent reminds us of the marvelous ways God has worked in the past and will work again. For, *it is precisely at those moments* when there is no reason for hope that God makes his appearance. *It is precisely at those moments* that God seems absent from us that God is most present to us. God speaks a word of comfort and salvation again and again to those who listen. God redeems and saves those who repent; for while we may hide from God, God never hides from us.

*We are living in a time* when it is becoming more and more difficult to live as Catholics, but there is no need to be discouraged. *We are living in a time* when it takes courage to be a faithful Catholic, but there is no need to be discouraged. *We are living in a time* when others are amazed we continue to practice our faith, but there is no need to be discouraged. For Christ will come into our lives again in new and unexpected ways; for the gifts of God's salvation are not exhausted. This is

why we wait with joyful hope this Advent season. This is why we are not discouraged.