

Reflection – “Comfort” – Sunday August 2, 2020

(Isaiah 40: 1-8; Psalm 119:49-56)

In today's reading, God spoke through Isaiah to comfort the people of Jerusalem. Letting them know that their sins are forgiven and they have suffered long enough. In their pain and desperation, God provided hope.

The dictionary defines comfort as a feeling of freedom from worry or disappointment. That feeling of freedom that expresses itself through peace of mind only comes from being fully aligned with the power of Holy Spirit. To acknowledge our faults may bring relief and a measure of peace. But only Jesus can give the assurance of comfort, strength, healing and forgiveness that we need.

In Psalm 23, verse 4 tells you *"even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil. For you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me."*

Stressful situations are not always easy to handle. So, if we are going through a major change or loss, our immediate need will be for comfort. We will hear that small voice whispering, *"you are not alone"*.

Friends and family may also provide us with comforting words or gestures. We accept gratefully that they care. We find comfort, knowing that by reaching out our hands to others, just as we receive comfort, we give it. We offer a listening heart, an encouraging word, a tender touch. We are the heart, voice and compassion of the Spirit. When we freely give our caring to others, then we too are comforted.

At times, challenges or worries may seem to block our way. These things often bring on frustration and sadness. They can keep us from seeing the blessings we have experienced in our lives. When we feel this way, we should take time to quiet ourselves. We should remind ourselves that there is so much more to life than worry and fear. We can move forward, finding comfort in the wonders of God's creation all around us. Visualizing beautiful places that fill our hearts and minds with awe. We can stop to smell the flowers. Watching the birds and animals that bring a smile to our faces. The list is endless and each is a reminder that God's amazing gifts fill us with strength and confidence and joy.

In Psalm 119 verse 50, it says, *"even in my suffering, I was comforted because your promise gave me life."* When the weather is cold, we might find ourselves bundling up at home with extra blankets, turning up the thermostat, or warming ourselves in front of a crackling fire. We appreciate these resources as they greatly enhance our feeling of ease, comfort and stability. However, this may not always be our experience. Sometimes it can seem like life has rudely yanked off our cozy blankets and thrown us out in the cold. At such times we are grateful for our faith. Even in the midst of the roughest winter, we are warmed by faith and encouraged by the presence of the Divine Spirit.

Children have a desire for comfort before they are able to speak. They cry out for touch, nourishment and protection. Although we are no longer children, we still need comforting. We need to feel safe and loved, especially in difficult times when we feel lost, sad or afraid. We yearn for the reassurance that we are not alone. God gently reminds us: **He will never leave us nor forsake us.** We release any sadness, fear or loneliness. They have no place in our lives. In the silence, we feel God's love deep within our hearts. Our inner child is comforted. We are safe and loved, strong and courageous. We stay in touch with the Holy Spirit and we are at peace in good times and in rough times. We are secure in the comforting love of God.

Isaiah reminds us that the source of peace and comfort is God's love and care for us. Even in times of hardship, God holds us close.

Amen.