



*I, I am your consoler.  
Why then should you be afraid  
of mortal human beings, of a child of man,  
whose fate is that of the grass?  
You forget about the Lord your Creator  
who spread out the heavens and laid the earth's foundations;  
you have never stopped trembling all day long  
before the fury of the oppressor  
when he was bent on destruction.  
Where is the oppressor's fury now?  
The despairing captive is soon to be set free;  
he will not die in the dungeon,  
nor will his food run out.  
I am the Lord your God who stirs up the sea, making its waves roar –  
The Lord of Hosts is my name.  
I put my words into your mouth,  
I hid you in the shadow of my hand,  
to spread out the heavens and lay the earth's foundations  
and say to Zion, 'You are my people.'*

Isaiah 51:12-16

Confronting fear

## Thursday of Advent III

The words of the prophet were not spoken in abstract isolation. Isaiah spoke these words to a people who were genuinely (and probably with justification) fearful. As they sought to return from exile they confronted a situation that was overwhelmingly scary. Their faith was weak. Isaiah reminds them that only a short while ago the Babylonians appeared all-powerful, an oppressor who could never be overthrown. That power had been destroyed. *"Where is the oppressor's fury now?"* It was God's power, Isaiah proclaimed, that destroyed the Babylonians, the power of God who rules the universe. That power will now bring the people through their dangers back to Palestine.

Fear and anxiety are natural and normal elements of living. The life of faith is always scary, all the time, because God is forever challenging us to step out from our comfort zone, sometimes to attempt what seems to be the impossible. It is faith that affirms the grace of God and the power of God into the face of every fear and anxiety.