

Dear Parishioners,

Sin has a way of making us feel like we are exiles far away from the home we love. Exiles suffer profound homesickness and loneliness, they long for the comfort and security of the place they have called home. Often I wonder if it is just the guilt of sin that causes that feeling of being exiles. I can't help but wonder if the Church has at times fostered that sense of homelessness because of the many legal regulations which strive to keep the sanctity of the Church pure. Sometimes it is right for us to feel like we are exiles because that sense of longing which develops over time flows from deep within our souls; from the spring of life giving water which unites us to the heart of God.

Isaiah the Prophet writes in our first reading this week,

***“In the desert I make a way;  
in the wasteland, rivers.  
Wild beasts honor me,  
jackals and ostriches,  
for I put water in the desert  
and rivers in the wasteland  
for my chosen people to drink,  
the people whom I formed for myself,  
that they might announce my praise.”***

(Isaiah 43:19-21)

Isaiah wrote these words to provide comfort for a nation in exile. The people of Israel truly longed for their homeland which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. The people of Israel didn't blame their exile entirely on Babylon. They were convinced that it was their sin that weakened them as a nation. They knew they had been unfaithful to God, and to the covenant God gave them. They were in the desert once again, only this time they felt they were alone. There was no manna, no quail, and no water flowing from the rock; in their exile they were alone with their shame.

So often we experience the same kind of spiritual dryness and loneliness as a result of our own shame. But God makes a way for us in the desert; in our wastelands God provides a river of life giving water to quench the longings of our souls. We thirst for mercy, we long for compassion, our hearts desire a place to call our home.

One of the ways God blesses the longings of our souls is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Next Sunday, April 1 (Palm Sunday), we will be given the opportunity to celebrate communal penance. Several

priests will be on hand to hear our confessions and to offer absolution for our sins. The Communal Penance Service will begin at 4:00 in the afternoon.

As we begin Holy Week, and enter into the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord, let us do so knowing we have been cleansed of our sins so that we can truly know the gift of salvation which we celebrate at Easter. Easter is the day of our homecoming; it is the day in which we celebrate the gift of our salvation.

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel