

Second Sunday of Advent
December 6, 2020

“Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.” (Isaiah 40:1)

Our first reading begins a section of 15 chapters from the prophet Isaiah known as the “Book of Consolation.” It was addressed to the children of Israel who had been living in Babylon for the past fifty years. In the “Book of Consolation,” Isaiah announces to the people that God is ready to set them free to return home. Although the route would be filled with natural obstacles, God would lead the people as a shepherd leads his flock. Isaiah would further stress that this way would be known as “the way of the Lord.” Saint Mark would also use this term, “the way of the Lord,” as he began his Gospel. We hear again: *“A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’”* (Mark 1:3)

For you and I to understand this statement, “the way of the Lord,” we must first begin by understanding what the statement was originally referring to. In ancient times, people would be assigned to go before a king and remove any obstacles which would be in his path. The belief was the king’s path should be as smooth as humanly possible thereby allowing him free movement in his territory. As you can imagine, this was not an easy endeavor. It required extremely hard work from the people.

Saint Mark uses the term at the beginning of his Gospel in a very specific way. He wants you and I to prepare a smooth path within ourselves which will allow our King to freely move within His territory. We must be willing to commit to the hard labor of self-reflection, prayer, and virtuous living. Only these determined acts can remove the obstacles which reside within each of us. To begin this process, allow me to conclude with a question to guide your thoughts this week: During my day, what person or activity receives my best time, best effort, and most energy? For where I spend my time will show me what I am being spent for.