



Grand Chaplain's Corner

By RW Grand Chaplain Pat Thompson

January 10, 2022



But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine (Isaiah 43:1).

Who says the God of the Old Testament is vengeful and cruel? This affirmation from the lips of the prophet is clearly compassionate and loving. The parental imagery is unmistakable and striking as the prophet speaks for the LORD and declares the enduring affection of the Deity.

I suspect that many of us who count ourselves among the faithful often miss the centrality of this recurring theme of the covenant relationship between God and humanity. The ancient prophetic tradition emphasizes this relationship repeatedly. God has created the relationship and is always faithful, even though humans stray repeatedly from its peaceful perfection. The very role of the prophet is to call the people to repentance—back to a state of *shalom*—i.e. *divine wholeness*.

Isaiah personifies the divine affection by addressing Jacob, the namesake of the people who have come to be known as *Israel*. Remember that it was the LORD who changed Jacob's name after that infamous struggle with the mysterious stranger at Peniel (see Genesis, chapter 32). The intimacy between the Deity and his people extends to a personal regard for their well-being. "I have called you by name, you are mine," says the LORD in today's text. Nothing in our Masonic teaching conflicts with this sentiment, and one could argue that this pervasive divine love is the very basis of our fraternal affection for one another—indeed for our deference for all human creatures. We love because the Supreme Architect loves all of Creation with this same fierce affection.

Someone has observed how frequently the command "do not fear" or "be not afraid" appears in scripture. Here the LORD reminds Israel of God's redemptive initiative. Indeed, humans are right to recall—and celebrate—that *all goodness* comes from the hand of the Deity! Perhaps we might find solace in that conviction as we navigate these perilous times.

The One who has known our names, when we were yet in our mother's womb, is the High and Holy One, whose affection for us can neither be quantified nor defeated—not even by death itself. If we have learned anything, it is that the divine prerogative always plays out for good in the covenant relationship between God and God's people. We are covenant partners with the Supreme Architect in the repair of a broken world, even as we endeavor to help return the *cosmos* to its intended state of perfection. And we are not to fear as we work because God knows who we are!

Faithfully and fraternally,

Pat