

Reflection for the First Week of Lent 2009

I offer the following words to you as an invitation to you to take time apart during the season of Lent:-
to reflect on the meaning of Lent,
to find your soul in a new and different way,
to rediscover the gift of God at this time.

I invite you to spend some time in deepening your understanding of and seeing with new eyes what God is asking of us as we contemplate his word in the Gospel of Mark and particularly in the Desert experience as described in Mark 1:12- 15, which is the Gospel for the first Sunday of Lent.

It is an opportunity for each of us to make extra room for silence, for quiet, for prayer, for 'desert' time. Desert time evokes all kinds of different images for different people – what does it say to you? The image that is staying with me at this time is that of 'wild-erness'. At this time in our world we are experiencing all kinds of wilderness moments and we tend to see them as burdens, as impositions, as not of our making, as deprivations etc.

I would like to offer the opposite view for a moment. Maybe we could see this time of barrenness, loss, unemployment and un-sureness as opportunity:-
to be vulnerable;
to find new strength, self-belief and insight;
to find a meaning for living that will free us to live more faithfully, more dependently and more mindfully;
to reconnect to the gift of God in our lives and to his never ending love for us.

Desert times can be the most growth-filled, grace-filled and 'recovering' experiences for us. They help us to take stock, to look at the values that we will need, and to let go of, perhaps, what we hold as important. What we are searching for will come alive in the wilderness; we question more when we stand apart; we will have time to become "*centred in the God of Mercy*" and we will be better able to "*engage with the questions and struggles of our time*". (Congregational Chapter Statement, 2006.)

When one looks at a barren place – one sees no life and yet on deeper reflection there is the possibility of creativity, growth, new possibilities and new life.

Each of us has a dry and dusty place in our heart and when we discover it a whole new vista opens for us. What seems impossible becomes possible. Wilderness is truly a holy place, a place of rest for our souls. Jesus found new meaning and new reasons from his struggle in the desert and from that place moved out with new energy for his mission of love and compassion. We too will find avenues into a deeper relationship with God and with all of life.

My invitation to you is to discover:

- your own un-interrupted place this Lent
- your own desert place
- a place that is wild, free and un-tethered
- a place that you are your best self
- a place in the memory stones of your past
- your own heart space
- a soul space
- a place of hope and imagination.

Allow that place to hold, in love and gentleness, your deepest desires for the movement of God in your life, a conversion movement that will be transforming and transformative. It will surely be a place of dying and giving way to newness and to resurrection, a place of truth, a place of knowing God differently and experiencing his desire for each of us at this time.

***May you
Walk gently through this season of Lent.***

***May you
Know God's presence in extraordinary ways.***

***May your life
Be filled with new meaning as you await Resurrection.***



My invitation to you is to discover your own desert place.

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