

NOTRE DAME PARISH

Second Sunday of Lent

"And he was transfigured before them."



Getting away to the mountains can have a cathartic experience. We feel renewed just because we have distance from our daily grind. We feel a sense of transcendence, for we are "above it all." Yet, such an experience

can be frightening, for we are not in control. Such was the experience of Peter, James and John. They saw Jesus transfigured. They were not in control.

MASS INTENTIONS

Saturday, February 27 @ 4PM
Tim & Alyce Sullivan

Sunday, February 28 @ 9:30AM
Mary Lou Linnen

Monday, March 1 @ 8AM
Roman Macudzinski

Tuesday, March 2 @ 8AM
Robert Reed

Wednesday, March 3 @ 8:30AM
Paige Dearden

Thursday, March 4 @ 8:30AM
Jean Donnelly

Friday, March 5 @ 8AM
Frank Parkerson

Saturday, March 7 @ 8AM
Joan & Mike King

Saturday, March 7 @ 4PM
George Boeckling
Pauline & Raymond McDonald

Oremus – Let Us Pray

- For Pope Francis as he prepares for a perilous trip to Iraq
- For the just distribution of COVID-19 vaccines
- For detachment from all that distracts us from God's voice and grace each day
- For legislation that will address the challenges and complications of COVID-19 society
- For the people of Texas and other regions adversely affected by winter storms and loss of power
- For transition from partisanship to effective government among legislators
- For co-operation in addressing climate change
- For the courage to address racism

Peak Experiences

Psychologists say that if you ever have a “peak experience,” its memory will be lasting.

By definition, peak experiences are often described as transcendent moments of pure joy and elation that stand out from everyday events.

I find it hard to believe that anyone could fail to have one in a lifetime, but some psychologists say it is possible.

Not all encounters with beauty or mystery can create a peak experience. I’m reminded of the scene in *European Vacation* when the Griswolds, pressed for time in Paris, resolve to “do” the Louvre before it closes in fifteen minutes.

One can avail oneself of a peak experience, but one cannot create or force it. Silence, solitude, exercise, fasting, mindfulness, and other practices can provide favorable conditions for a peak experience, but they cannot compel it. It always comes as a gift.

In Holy Week 1967, the Franciscans came into my home parish to celebrate the sacred mysteries. I was moved by the rites and by the prayerfulness of the friars. At the Communion service of Good Friday, I knelt at the communion rail (as we did in those days). As I lifted my head and stuck out my tongue, I caught the eyes of the priest. Something came over me. I felt that I was looking into the very eyes of Christ. It haunted me for days and months. It led me to affirm not only the priestly vocation I was already embarked upon, but also to explore

religious life.

In spring 1970, I went on a retreat with fellow seminarians to the Trappist monastery in Lincoln City, Oregon. The monastery rests in the foothills of the Cascades. Spring was just beginning. On a Saturday afternoon, we decided to take a hike up the very steep hills of the area. It was a beautiful day, with azure blue skies, awakening plant life, crisp cool air, and a magnificent vista of snow-peaked mountains to the east, and the Pacific ocean in the distant west.

I identified with Saint Peter on that day. Lord, let’s camp here. Lord, can you make this moment the eternal now? I could hardly wrest myself away to descend from this height to the ordinary world below.

Not all peak experiences have to occur on mountaintops or in church. Deserts have been favored places for encounters as well. In 1971, during the Easter season, I visited Valyermo, a Benedictine monastery in the Mojave desert. There, I found myself awed by simplicity, barrenness, an awareness that true wealth does not lie in extravagant decoration, but in mindfully contemplating what is essential.

Father Keith & Rocco



*Now he walks in quiet solitude
the forest and the streams
Seeking grace in every step he
takes*

*His sight has turned inside
himself to try and understand
The serenity of a clear blue
mountain lake*

*And the Colorado rocky
mountain high
I’ve seen it raining fire in the
sky
You can talk to God and listen
to the casual reply
Rocky mountain high*

*Now his life is full of wonder
but his heart still knows some
fear
Of a simple thing he cannot
comprehend
Why they try to tear the
mountains down to bring in a
couple more
More people, more scars upon
the land.*

*Taken from
“Rocky Mountain High”
by John Denver*



Walking Through the Wilderness

by Sister Teresa White

In early January, during a cold spell in France, where I was staying at the time, a *météo* bulletin on the television showed a line of eight or nine people mutely climbing up a steep, icy mountain path. There was a sheer drop on one side and the going was tough. Before long, the camera focused on a narrow side-track, and the climbers smiled when they saw it. It led to an almost invisible aperture, like a portal, framed by bare, snow-laden branches of stunted trees on either side. The climbers passed through, and there below them was a steaming pool. They all ran towards it, stripped off their outer clothing and entered the water with shouts of joy. I think the journalist said the surrounding temperature was -10 or -12 degrees Celsius...

Remembering that scene, the arduous, silent journey and the ecstatic arrival, it seemed to me to be an image of Lent. For this liturgical season, moving towards its culmination in the celebration of Easter, encapsulates two symbols that are deeply rooted in the human imagination: wilderness and paradise, desert and Promised Land. The Easter Vigil, the haunting celebration of the indescribable mystery of Jesus passing from death to new life,

marks the completion of the journey of the Christian community through the wilderness of Lent to the promised land of Easter.

Any wilderness, cold or hot, is filled with contradictions. At once frightening and fascinating, it offers the worst and the best of human experiences. It may be a place of sand and scorching sun, where there is sparse foliage and little water; or it may be a bare, cold landscape, a precipitous mountain, rendered all but inaccessible by 'winter and rough weather'. The journey through it is demanding, and there are no signposts; the travellers are in danger of straying. Wandering from the 'right' path can lead to a keen sense of abandonment, to despair: will they ever reach their destination? Those who walk in this place of challenge may be faced not only with bewilderment, but with long, dark nights, with hunger and thirst, with loneliness and silence.

Yet the wilderness is also a sacred place where the presence of the 'other world' is discernible to those with eyes to see and ears to hear. In the Christian tradition, those who go into the

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Continued, WILDERNESS

wilderness pray that all their senses will be made alert to that which is elusive elsewhere. It is an archetypal place of encounter with the divine, for in the solitude of the wilderness there is also revelation. God's presence can be very real in this place of apparent sterility and strange, unlooked-for beauty, as Carlo Carretto discovered during his extended retreat in the Sahara. To his own amazement, he did not find it a hostile environment. He rejoiced in his time there, undeterred even by the cold desert nights: 'I shall never forget the nights under the Saharan stars', he wrote. 'I felt as if I were wrapped around by the blanket of the friendly night... The darkness is necessary, the darkness of faith is necessary, for God's light is too great. It wounds.' (*Letters from the Desert*, pp. 139, 141)

This 'other world' - Arcadia, Eden, Utopia, Paradise, Nirvana, the Promised Land ... whatever name we give it - we are always seeking it. It is as if we have lost something that belongs to us by right and we cannot rest until we find it. Is it home we are looking for? Is it an abiding peacefulness? Is it the touch of God? Whatever it is, it eludes us. We glimpse it sometimes, but never quite manage to catch hold of it, possess it, never really make it our own. Yet when we take time to pray, to reflect, to move away from the jumble of existence and spend time in the wilderness, things which had previously escaped us become

more clearly visible. And our ears, momentarily unblocked, hear echoes of melodies that are new yet strangely familiar. Lent, that season of prayer and fasting, can unlock the doors of the enclosures in which we so often find ourselves and set us free to walk courageously into the unknown. So we embark on a journey through the wilderness, a testing journey of waiting, silence and awakening.

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he took them through the desert where they spent the proverbial 40 years. There, where there were no distractions, where mere survival was all-important, God could mould them to be his people. Speaking to Israel, he says, in the words of Hosea to his unfaithful wife: 'I will now persuade her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her... And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy.' (Hosea 2:14, 19). These words movingly express the traditional Judaeo-Christian conviction that the desert is a place of formation, where God speaks to the hearts of his people, saves them and makes them his own. A beautiful poem that is included in the prophecy of Isaiah sees God doing this for the Israelites during the Babylonian exile, and as a result the wilderness and the dry-

lands exult, the wasteland rejoices and blooms, the streams and rivers gush out in the desert, the scorched earth becomes a lake, the parched land springs of water (Isaiah 35:1ff). The wilderness is a place of change, of conversion, of transformation.

Some people dread Lent, as I sometimes do myself, anticipating that it will be long and gloomy; we cannot wait for Easter. Yet could there be an Easter without a Lent? Naturally enough, wildernesses, deserts, could be and often are considered negative environments, with their enforced austerity, their lack of human comforts and normal social amenities. Yet in Lent, when we respond to the Church's call to enter these places, to walk, with Jesus Christ, the Way of the Cross, we can find within ourselves what Keats called a certain 'negative capability'. He defined this as the ability to be, 'in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable searching after fact and reason'. He was not writing here from a specifically religious perspective, but what he says is wonderfully apposite to the experience of anyone undertaking the journey of faith during the season of Lent.

The wilderness is not an end in itself. It is closely related to journeying, to pilgrimage. Most of us do not enter the desert to stay there for good, do not desire to make our homes in a bleak, trackless wilderness. We pass through, on our way to a more fertile, welcoming terrain, for we believe with Pope Francis that, 'God does not hide himself from those who seek him with a sincere heart, even though they do so

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tentatively, in a vague or haphazard manner' (*Evangelii Gaudium* §71). On the journey, with sharpened senses, we may see fragile flowers blooming in the crevices of rocks, drops of morning dew clinging to meagre grass-blades; we may find ourselves listening to the whispering wind, to the music that arises from the silence of creation. We may experience some of these glimpses and touches of God on the Lenten pilgrimage, and we trust that he will lead us on the sacred way through the wilderness to the joy and inner peace of Easter.

Sister Teresa White belongs to the Faithful Companions of Jesus. A former teacher, she spent many years in the ministry of spirituality at Katherine House, a retreat and conference centre run by her congregation in Salford, England.

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Mar. 18 St. Patrick, Chesterton
Mar. 25 St. Paul, Valparaiso

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IV STATION
JESUS MEETS HIS MOTHER



Meditation by the mother of a prisoner.

Not for a moment was I tempted to abandon my son in the face of his sentence. The day he was arrested changed our entire life: the whole family went into prison with him. Today people's judgment remains implacable: like a sharp knife, fingers pointed are against all of us, increasing the suffering we already bear in our hearts.

The wounds grow with each passing day, they take our breath away.

I feel Mother Mary close to me: she helps me not to give into despair and to cope with the pain. I've entrusted my son to her: only to Mary can I confide my fears, since she herself experienced them on the way to Calvary. In her heart she knew that her Son would not escape human evil, yet she did not abandon him. She stood there sharing in his suffering, keeping him company by her presence. I think of Jesus looking up, seeing those eyes so full of love, and not feeling alone.

I would like to do the same.

I blamed myself for my son's sins. I asked forgiveness also for my own responsibility. I beg for the mercy that only a mother is able to experience, so that my son can return to life after having paid for his crime. I pray constantly for him, so that day by day he can grow into a different man, capable once more of loving himself and others.

V STATION
SIMON HELPS CARRY THE CROSS



Meditation by a convicted prisoner.

With my job I helped generations of children to believe in themselves. Then one day I found myself lying on the ground. It was as if they broke my back: my job was the pretext for a shameful conviction. Since then I have become an outcast in the city: I have lost my name, I am now known by the crime of which I have been charged, I am no longer the master of my life. When I think about it, that child with worn-out shoes, wet feet, secondhand clothes comes to mind: that child was me, I was once that child. Then, one day, my arrest: three men in uniform, a rigid protocol, the prison that swallowed me alive in its concrete maw.

The cross they placed on my shoulders is a heavy one. Over time I have learned to live with it, to look it in the face, to call it by name: we spend many nights keeping each other company. Inside prisons, Simon of Cyrene is known by everyone: it is the second name of volunteers, of those who mount this Calvary to help carry a cross; they are people who reject the law of the pack and listen to their conscience. Simon of Cyrene, too, is my cellmate: I met him my first night in prison. He was a man who had lived on a bench for years, without affection or income. His only wealth was a box of candies. He has a sweet tooth, but he insisted that I bring it to my wife the first time she visited me: she burst into tears at that unexpected and thoughtful gesture. I'm growing old in prison: I dream that one day, I will be able to trust others.