



Lenten Reflections for EOHSJ

Second Sunday of Lent

2021

Reflection by Rev. Erik Esparza, JCL, KHS

What a difference a week makes! Last week we journeyed with Jesus into the desert and today we climb the mountain of transfiguration. So is the story of our lives. Throughout life we will experience along the way the lows and the highs. The deserts and the mountaintops. It is on those mountaintops where we experience a thrill and joy like no other. There also tends to be the moments where we are most alive spiritually and where there is little doubt that God is present. Then there are the other points along the journey where it feels like one is sitting alone in the desert. The desert typically brings with it a dryness and often sadness or longing. This part of the journey is where one can often feel weak or dry in the spiritual walk with God. It can be very difficult to even feel or experience God.

I am thankful we have the opportunity to experience both. Don't get me wrong, it is not desirable to encounter the sufferings and challenges associated with the desert experience, but how often it is in those moments we can experience the greatest growth. Sure, at the moment the growth is not felt, but if one is to persevere and reflect back, it is in the desert, where much learning is discovered and experienced. At the same time I am most grateful for the mountaintops experience. High above the challenges it is there where one can feel most alive. Rather than being stuck in the pits of life, the mountaintop lifts one high, gives clarity, and provides a new found perspective on life.

In the end, a desert is just a desert and a mountain just a mountain if we fail to see God in the experience. In both places we are called to open your hearts to see and experience God. At times it will be easier to see God, yet at other times, more difficult. Nevertheless, in both places God will provide us meaning and purpose for our lives. All we must do is to be willing to listen to the voice of God!

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once encouraged all to experience Lent much like a retreat: "Lent is like a long 'retreat' during which we can turn back into ourselves and listen to the voice of God, in order to defeat the temptations of the Evil One. It is a period of spiritual 'combat' which we must experience alongside Jesus, not with pride, and presumption, but using the arms of faith: prayer, listening to the word of God, and penance. In this way we will be able to celebrate Easter in truth, ready to renew the promises of our Baptism."

As Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, let us not only use this sacred time to renew our promises to Baptism, but at the same time, to renew our commitment to keep the message of Jesus alive in the Holy Land now and always!

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