

WHAT ABOUT LENT?

Every year on Ash Wednesday churches are filled with "regulars" (and "not-so-regulars") who seek to receive the ashes which remind us of our weakness and humanity. Fast-forward to Easter Sunday and people of all religions celebrate and partake in the joyful festivities of the Easter-tide. But what about Lent? What about the journey in the wilderness and Jesus' unsung triumph over temptation and sin?

Back to our roots

It's astounding how many times the prophets of old, King David, Saint Paul in his writings and so many other great men of God reminded the people of Israel of how their journey to the Promised Land took place – with a Wilderness experience.

On Ash Wednesday the Church reminds us in the same way to remember where we came from, "You are dust and unto dust you shall return." These words speak not only of a physical death, but also the death of self that can only happen in one special place: The Wilderness. This is a place filled with a sense of desolation. The sand, as restless as the feet which tread upon it, burns from the constant heat of the sun. Little to no comfort can be found here. The only way out is by going through it. This is the path Jesus was lead to after he was baptised by his cousin, John.

To serve or be served?

Did you know that even Jesus had a stalker? The Devil, who couldn't wait for an opportunity to get a one-on-one 'chat' with Jesus, followed him into the wilderness. There he tested Jesus in order to try and foil the plan of Salvation that God had set in motion. In this journey one can see the great difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the Evil One: The devil's selfish desire to be served by humanity contrasting with Jesus coming to serve us in love.

What about me?

We saw that in the Old Testament Israel walked through the desert to get to the Promised Land, and in the New Testament Jesus walked through the wilderness before he started his powerful earthly ministry – performing miracles, signs and wonders. So what about right NOW, your everyday life?

You are going to have to face your wilderness at some point or another. During Lent, we get the opportunity to do this by "journeying with Jesus" in the giving up of things which steer us away from living our best lives, whether it be avoiding the eating of sweets or chocolates, smoking, drinking alcohol in excess or even giving up swearing or complaining. Not everybody's wilderness will look the same, but one thing is for certain: God won't give us more than we can handle. Jesus triumphed over the cunning plans of the devil, and so can we. Along with this, when we are weak, he is strong! For his strength is greatest in our weakness, so – rejoice!

By Jill A. Williams