

## Upcoming Lent

As we have already journeyed a month into 2021, I would like to place the focus of this reflection on the upcoming Lent, which this year begins quite early.

I am not sure about you, but despite its seemingly rigid structure, I love Lenten Season. It is filled with so many spiritual aspects that I can look at and work on. And there is the whole biblical theme of Christ being in the desert and being tempted. And we know that he overcomes all those temptations, because he is deeply connected to the Father and relies solely on him. What a great lesson that is to all of us.

In these times, it can be very easy to get discouraged and forget about our heavenly Father, who is the source of our strength and who, whenever we ask, will assist us in our spiritual struggles and in our temptations. Needless to say, it can be downright difficult to see the presence of our loving Father in the midst of all that is happening in our world today. It can even feel that God has forsaken us and has not been faithful to his promises. Nil novum sub solum! There is nothing new under the sun! We know that this is precisely how Israelites felt time and time again as they journeyed from Egypt into the promised land. And this is how they felt when they were already living in the promised land for centuries. We know, that in the person of Christ, his only Son, God has fulfilled all his promises to his people, and that includes us. He comes to us to make sure that none of us would be lost, but be brought back to his heart, where we belong. And he will stop at nothing to make this reunion between him and us possible. He does not even spare his own Son. St. John says that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him, may not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). And so, as we enter the spiritual desert of our soul, we can ask ourselves and reflect on this aspect of faith. Do I believe? Does my faith need to grow? Are there some aspects of my spiritual life where I have “let go” and have distanced myself from God? Maybe because of my lack of faith? Maybe because my fears and insecurities and my lack of trust? These may sound like harsh questions, but it is not my intention to point fingers. I ask these questions also from myself. And I know that if I dig deep enough, there is always something to work on, something to improve; and that is the beauty of spiritual life. It continues each day for every day of our lives. There is always room for growth and there is always an element of surprise.

So, I invite you to enter into this desert, without fear and full of trust that, if we rely fully on the Word of God and lean on our heavenly Father, we will be able to overcome all temptations that are trying to separate us from the heart of God. One of my favourite books is “The Little Prince”. This whole book begins in a desert and also ends in the same place where it started – in a desert. There is the pilot and the little prince who are near death because they have no food left and scarcely any water to keep them alive. They set on a journey in the desert to find water. And the little prince says to the pilot that what makes the desert beautiful, is that somewhere it hides a well. How true that is. What a beautiful image it is for our spiritual lives.

Just when it feels that our hearts and souls might dry and that they have become like a desert, and there is no life left, we are invited to look for this water, that is hidden within ourselves. It is there, we just have to make this journey and trust God that he will reveal to us the place where it is – the water that not only quenches our thirst, but gives us life in abundance. Like the psalmist says: I will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

I wish you a blessed Lenten Season as we discover how much God has blessed us with and how much we actually possess because of his love for us. And this is what makes our Lenten journey beautiful – somewhere in ourselves – there are waters that fill our hearts with joy and salvation. And we know that all this is God's gift to us! However, we have to do our part.

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