



Thoughts on the Journey...

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Nature often mirrors the spiritual dimension of our lives. Sometimes by stepping outside of ourselves and observing nature, it can shed some light on the complex mysteries that are part of the human condition.

Long before the time of Christ Egyptians and Greeks saw the similarity between the butterfly's cocoon and the cloth wrappings of their mummies. They would place golden butterflies in their tombs to symbolize immortality, new life, and the resurrection. But, before we get to the "new life" and "resurrection" stage of the butterfly we don't want to miss the important stage of struggle that leads to new life.

Years ago, one of my sisters went through a rehabilitation program at Hazelden in Minnesota for narcotics addiction. I attended the family portion of the program and during my stay I heard the butterfly story for the first time.

A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared. He sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to squeeze its body through the tiny hole. Then it stopped, as if it couldn't go further.

So the man decided to help the butterfly. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bits of cocoon. The butterfly emerged easily but it had a swollen body and shriveled wings.

The man continued to watch it, expecting that any minute the wings would enlarge and expand enough to support the body: neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around. It was never able to fly.

It's absolutely true. Helping the butterfly out of the chrysalis will prevent it from ever flying. The butterfly needs the struggle to strengthen its wings. So is true for we as Christians, no one can do our personal conversion for us. We have to be willing to embrace the journey and the struggle that accompanies it in order to ex-

perience new life.

We have spent the past 40+ days of Lent in a chrysalis state of sorts. For the pupa, this is the transformation stage in which tissues are broken down and the butterfly structures are formed. As Christians, Lent is also a time of transformation when we break down the parts of ourselves that are not of God and restructure our thinking. It's a time for renewing our spirit within. It is in the struggle, the prayer, the fasting, the almsgiving, that we pump new life into the wings of our faith so that we can be lifted from our darkness and rise to the joy of the Resurrection. It is in the struggle that we prepare ourselves for new life.

Our second reading on this Easter morning is from St. Paul to the Colossians. Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison. He tells the people of Colossae,

"Brothers and sisters: If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory."

The resurrected Christ is still with us and he wants us to spread our wings and celebrate his victory over death. Jesus also wants us to continue on the path of conversion working to make the inner changes, struggling to be better Christians. That conversion requires that we turn our heads and hearts away from the negative distractions of this world and seek *what is above where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

Our life is with Christ. It is there with him, as we persist in our struggle and effort to be more like him, that he will lead us to Easter glory forever. Alleluia! Alleluia!