



Thoughts on the Journey...

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What do you think of when you think of a desert? Most people would say a large hot sandy landscape. However, not all deserts are alike. The

two largest deserts on the earth are polar deserts. We also have subtropical deserts, cold winter deserts, and cool coastal deserts. That briefly describes deserts as far as land mass goes. For thousands of years, deserts have been places of inspiration and renewal for those on the spiritual journey.

Not all deserts are land masses. A desert can also be a *journey* in our lives that brings about rebirth and renewal as long as we do the hard work of honest introspection. But every desert has its dangers.

The most difficult deserts I have had to navigate in my life were coming to terms with sinfulness. One in particular, was the sin of promiscuity. My own behavior drove me square in the middle of a barren desolate place. Single, pregnant, alone, and feeling removed from my Lord, I found myself fearful, shamed, and lost. But, that's what happens when sin distances you from God.

I clearly remember sitting in my apartment, folded over in a chair with my tear filled face in my hands. The only prayer I could muster was, "O, my God, what have I done?" That was the beginning of finding my way out of the desert. It was that question of introspection that made me unravel the knots of deception that shackled me and kept me from the freedom and made me a slave to sin.

It's hard work finding our way out of the desert. There were moments when I would sit and the *beast of discouragement* would make me feel alone in my situation, as though God was not listening to my cries for help; that's what Satan does best! He makes us believe that we cannot overcome our sinfulness. This master of trickery doesn't want us to find our way. He relishes the notion that we are feeling lost and alone.

In this week's gospel from Mark, we learn

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

It's Lent! Like Jesus, so begins our 40 days in the desert. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to call upon the Holy Spirit to journey with us as we pray, fast, give alms, and repent. It's a season set aside to do the hard work of delving into the areas of our lives that are tuned to sin and missing Christ.

We are *not* a Lenten people, but an *Easter* people. We are not called to beat ourselves over the head with our past sins, but rather to acknowledge the many ways our sin distracts us from a fuller life in Christ. We are called to repent and renew! We are called to HOPE in Jesus who made it clear to us, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel," He wants us to be the people he created us to be.

In retrospect, I look at the many deserts in my life and I can tell you solemnly that never have I been alone, even though there were times when I felt aloneness. Through prayer, scripture, and sorrow for my sins, the Lord revealed a clear path in the barren places. As I made my way in the desert, I know that angels ministered to me - angels that spoke the truth, angels that put skin on God and served me in my time of need.

Repent, yes. But *believe* in the Good News, which is that Christ has come to save us all. He gives us the Holy Spirit to journey with us in the deserts of our lives leading us to life eternal. All we need to do is to put our trust and faith in Him and prepare ourselves for the perpetual peace and joy of His spring.