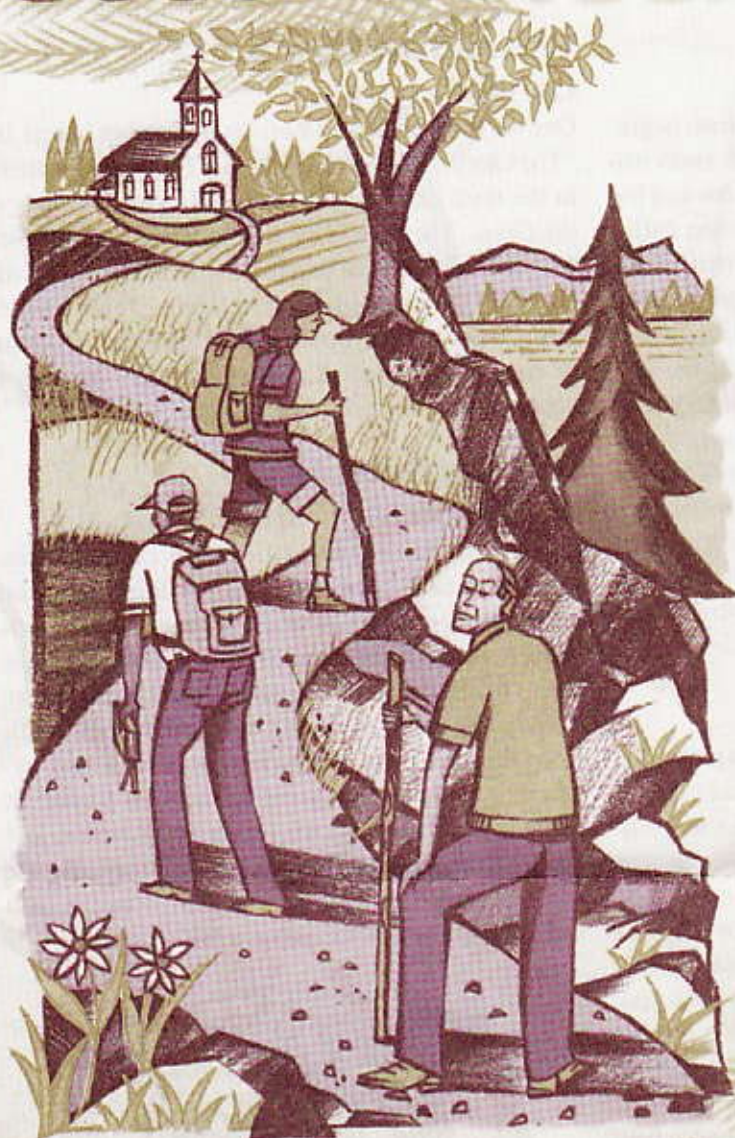


Second Week of Lent



Blessing for Pilgrims

Holy God,
you are never far
from those who seek you.
Be our companion on our
Lenten journey.
Guide us out of our slavery,
our addictions,
our less-than-ultimate concerns.
Lead us to sacred places
and holy people.
Be our strength.
Revive the weary,
protect our young,
shelter the homeless,
re-orient the lost.
Divine origin, be our destination.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

March 8, 2009

Faith Seeking Understanding

In today's Gospel, Peter, James, and John encounter the glorified Jesus, accompanied by Elijah and Moses, on a mountain where God declares Jesus to be his Son. The Transfiguration is a theophany, an appearance of God. It echoes God's appearance on Mount Sinai, and it prefigures both the Resurrection and the Parousia. The disciples ponder this experience, much as Mary pondered the words of Simeon at Jesus' presentation. The disciples thought they knew Jesus. They ate with him daily and listened to his teachings. But now they must ask themselves, "Who is this Jesus?" Mary carried him in her womb, nursed him at her breast, taught him to speak, and

yet she had to ask herself, "Who is this Jesus?" He is so much more than we can fathom.

Our souls are embodied, we live our eternal lives in finite moments, and so if we want to know who Jesus is, we need time to ponder. Some places are more conducive to pondering than others. Many of the great theophanies in religious history have taken place on mountains. Jesus went into the desert to pray. For centuries, Christians have gone on pilgrimages, seeking God in holy sites and on retreats where silence and communal prayer nurture the spiritual life. This Lent, try making a pilgrimage to a holy site, find your personal desert, make a retreat, or climb a mountain. Find a good place to ponder.

This Week at Home

Monday, March 9

Lenten Blooms

This is the season when seeds begin to sprout, beginning their pilgrimage through the cold dark earth into the light. It is the season when little children and big dogs track mud across the kitchen floor, when daffodils blooming on Wednesday are buried beneath drifts of snow by Thursday. It is that messy, unpredictable, long-hoped-for season of spring. The word *lent* comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for springtime, *lencten*. Our spiritual growth during this time may be just as messy, frustrating, unpredictable, and wonderful as the growth we see sprouting all around us. Try forcing some narcissus paperwhite bulbs this spring (ask at your local nursery about bulbs for forcing) or plant some flower seeds indoors. Let their slow growth remind you to be patient with your own growth.

Tuesday, March 10

Mini Retreats

In Judeo-Christian history, two of the best places for meeting God are mountaintops and the desert. These two sites have much in common. Both take us away from the distractions of daily life so that we can pay attention to the beauty around us and God's voice within us. In addition to making a retreat or pilgrimage, try getting in the habit of mini retreats taken throughout the day. To remind you and give you something to focus on, put up a picture of a mountain or desert where you will see it (on your desk at work or at home, or wherever you read your morning paper). Throughout the day, pause and spend a few minutes being still with God.

Wednesday, March 11

Planting the Seed

Lent is a wonderful time to begin having family Bible studies, planting the seed of scripture into our hearts and minds. Ask different people to read each night. Select scripture passages such as Isaiah 55:6-11, the seven penitential psalms (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143), Matthew 19:13-15, or Mark 4:1-9. Talk about what they mean, and pray for those in need. End with the Our Father, Glory Be, and a family blessing.

Thursday, March 12

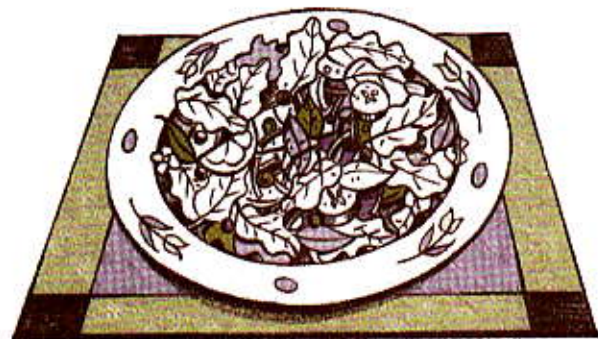
Lenten Hymn

One of the oldest and best-loved Lenten songs is "The Glory of These Forty Days." The words, written in the sixth century, are attributed to Pope Gregory the Great. The tune is by Joseph Klug, harmonized by J. S. Bach. You can find the words and tune (played on MIDI, Musical Instrument Digital Interface) at <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/htm/g/l/gloryt40.htm> or consult your parish hymn book. Try singing a verse after family prayer each night.

Friday, March 13

A Welcoming Family

At the very beginning of Lent, the catechumens, those who have been preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil, enter a new stage in their journey: purification and enlightenment. Now they are called the elect. This period of their preparation imitates the 40-day fast of Jesus in the desert (Matthew 4:2). Keep the elect in your prayers. Consider writing letters of welcome to be given to them on Easter, or invite one of them and his or her godparent to join you for a family meal. We can offer a warm welcome and encouragement to them, and their stories of faith and hope can revitalize our own faith.



Saturday, March 14

Crunchy Winter Salad

The simplicity of our Lenten diet can lead us to discover the goodness in humble ingredients. Try slicing green and red cabbage in very thin strips, then add diced celery and green pepper, grated carrots, and chunks of apple. Use your favorite dressing, or mix apple cider vinegar, oil of your choice, a little orange juice, and salt to taste. Toasted sunflower seeds are a nice addition.

