

Welcome to this Lent Retreat 2021. Lent has often been described as an annual retreat which the Church presents to Christians. It is an annual opportunity to look at our lives and review how we are growing as disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us hope and pray that this year with its very special circumstances may be a time of growth and blessing for all of us.

During Lent we are enriched and guided by a treasury of the Word of God. In these reflections and during the weekly talks we will try to enter deeply into the mystery the Word of God is revealing to us. The first two Sundays of Lent give us two traditional scriptural images to help lead us deeply into the mystery of God: **Deserts** and **Mountains**.

The word of God was first spoken to a people living in lands of deserts and mountains. God spoke through the natural world they lived in and through their struggle for survival and growth in this challenging environment. Deserts are a long way from where most of us live and even if mountains are relatively near we cannot go there at present. We are experiencing something of the deprivation and challenge that is the everyday experience of those who live in inhospitable terrains.

Mountains and deserts are places of space and emptiness. There is more space and emptiness than is usual in many of our lives at present. The bible sees this as opportunity for God to enter people's lives. A question we could ask ourselves: Where is the space and emptiness in my life where God can enter at present?

For Reflection:

“On this mountain, the Lord of Hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food. On this mountain he will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, and the shroud enwrapping all nations, He will destroy Death for ever. The Lord will wipe away the tears from every cheek; he will take away his peoples shame everywhere on earth, for the Lord has said so”. [Prophet Isaiah 25: 6-7]

“The path of Mount Carmel, the spirit of perfection; nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, and even on the mountain nothing. Only the honour and glory of God dwells on this Mountain. ‘I brought you into the land of Carmel to eat its fruit and its good things’ [Jer2:7]. Here there is no longer any path because for the just man there is no law, he is a law unto himself.” [St. John of the Cross – drawing of Mount Carmel]

“We are descendants of men who felt this call to prayer and contemplation, of those holy fathers on Mount Carmel who in such great solitude and contempt for the world, sought this treasure, this precious pearl of contemplation that we are speaking about. Yet few of us dispose ourselves that the Lord may communicate it to us.... The truth is that the treasure lies within our very selves.” [St. Teresa of Avila – Interior Castle 5:1:2]