

2019.03.10 Homily by Fr. Gabor

It is only March, but I already heard about 3 different pilgrimages being organised in Aberdeen: one to Medjugorje, one to Padua and one to Rome. Pilgrimages were originally meant to be journeys; internal spiritual journeys from a life of sin, or separation from God towards a life closely bound up with God's heart. This is the whole purpose of Lent; a journey from A to B, converting from what is worldly towards what is divine. The Church makes us read this particular reading from the book of Deuteronomy, because it reminds us of the Jewish people's journey from the house of bondage, or sin, symbolised by Egypt, towards the Promised Land, Israel, which symbolises Heaven, where we are completely united heart to heart with God our Father.

The only problem is that the journey to the Promised Land leads through a vast desert; the North African desert. But this desert, though full of dangers and temptations, becomes a holy place in the sense that in the desert the people of Israel, which symbolises the Church, is purified, and is stripped off all their attachments to their former life in Egypt, the house of slavery, and is made to realise what the most important thing in life is; God who is with them and cares about them. When you are stripped off everything that gives you a false sense of security or fulfilment, like food, power and popularity, that's when you realise what and who really matter in your life, and who are your real friends, and most importantly that God the Father is there with you and cares about you even if no one does. Our journey to the Father inevitably leads through some desert experience, but be encouraged by St. Paul's words: *'I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." ... ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in ... in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor 12: 8-10)'*.

In order to regain our focus on God the Father we don't have to embark on a long desert journey, but first we need to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us and guide us as we enter our own Lenten desert. A prayerful time in your house or walking in your area for the next 35 days can be a desert where you can retreat, in order to rest, to get out

of the daily rat-race and to pray and listen and focus on who and what matters most in life, namely on your relationship with God. At Sacred Heart we will run a very interesting Lent retreat produced by the Jesuits who will help us to make a real Lenten journey from out of our sinful bondages, out of our daily handcuffs, to the heavenly Father and Jesus, into a heart to heart relationship with them. This will hopefully be a real conversion experience for those who will come along. Everyone and everything should always be put back into the overall context of our living relationship with God, otherwise less important things will take over your life; food and drink and sensual pleasures, symbolised by the temptation to turn stone into bread, or the lure of power, symbolised by the devil's offer of the kingdoms of the earth, or your own ego, symbolised by the temptation to put yourself on the parapet of the temple to show what an important person you are. All these will make you addicted to themselves, unless they are considered within your relationship with God. He must be made always the true centre of our lives, the solid rock, the anchor, because He will always keep us safe no matter what temptations threaten our lives.

During Lent you can also help mothers discover that their relationship to their unborn children and to God is the only lasting source of profound joy, so that they will change their minds and hearts, and convert from the thought of terminating their baby's life to trust and hope that everything will be all right for them and their babies. So please include them in your prayer intentions especially during Lent when you pray at home. You are also encouraged to join the 40 Days for Life campaign here in Aberdeen and around the world which aims at this purpose, or simply support them by your prayers. Several people sitting here are actual supporters, who have discovered that this is a meaningful and powerful campaign for the conversion and for the saving of millions of human lives.