

**Pastoral Council**  
**Thoughts for Reflection**  
**March 20, 2016**

*Into the Desert*

The Biblical authors knew all about the desert, for they were desert people.

How often the great heroes of the Biblical revelation have to spend time in the desert: Abraham has to cross it to get to the promised land; Moses and the Israelite people have to go through it to get home; Joseph is sent into Egypt and prison before he is ready for his mission; John the Baptist is a voice crying in the desert; Paul goes into the desert of Arabia after receiving the revelation on the road to Damascus. Even Jesus himself spends forty days and nights in the desert before commencing his ministry.

What does the desert symbolize? A number of things: confrontation with one's own sin, seeing one's dark side; a deep realization of one's dependency upon God; an ordering of the priorities of one's life; a simplification, a getting back to basics. It means any and all of these things.

But the bottom line is that all of them had to wait through a painful time, living a stripped down life, before they were ready for mission. They were compelled to wait, during a time and in a place where very little life seems to be on offer.

But it is precisely in such deserts that the flowers bloom. Moses becomes a great leader; Abraham is the father of many nations; Joseph becomes the savior of his people; John the Baptist is the forerunner of the Messiah; Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. And of course, Jesus becomes our Savior.

This Lent, perhaps God is calling you into the desert—not to punish you, but to prepare you.

(Bishop Robert Baron)