

SPIRITUALITY OF THE DESERT

(COSTING NOT LESS THAN EVERYTHING)

T. S. Eliot

Strive with all your might to bring your interior activity into accord with God, and you will overcome exterior passions

Abba Arsenius

When you walk through fire you shall not be burned.

Isaiah 43:2

The desert is the primal scriptural symbol of the absence of all human aid and comfort.

Roland Wallis

It is by warfare that the soul makes progress

Abba John the Dwarf

**This is a difficult land. Here things miscarry
Whether we care, or do not care enough....**

This is a difficult country, and our home.

Edwin Muir

Spend some time getting in touch with your experience of suffering or pain in disappointment; being faced with having to let go of something; being hurt or wounded., physically or emotionally; of loss - divorce – separation- death; illness; doubt; despair; depression or any other kind of struggle.

You do not measure the intense heat of the desert: you are measured by it”.

What’s it like to re-visit this desert?

Does it ever come back to you unasked, uninvited?

Or do you usually distance yourself from it?

Is there anything which holds you back from entering into this now?

Could you in any way say that such experiences - however painful – are a gift, an opportunity, an invitation?

What places, people, experiences give you a sense of becoming yourself again, restored?

What do you need/want in order to be more yourself, to be creative, fruitful?

St. Athanasius said that, because the most famous desert monk St. Anthony attracted so many to choose the solitary life, “the desert was made a city”. Yet in the 1950’s, Jean Danielou, wrote prophetically: “St. Anthony is coming back from the desert”. The desert today is more likely to be the desert of our circumstances, the desert in the city. The true geography of the Spirit remains however the landscape of the human heart. The primary focus of the desert tradition is not asceticism, not even the absence of people; it is always the presence of God. We find God, not by fleeing, but by having our hearts changed and seeing things differently. The desert is pre-eminently the birth place of that new vision and life.