

Friends

During Lent, however much we recall Christ's time in the desert in our prayers, readings, Church life and liturgy, in Britain at least, there is far too much rain for us to truly identify with the desert experience. As I write this, when I am going somewhere where I need to look smart and well-pressed, the rain outside my window is not endearing itself to me. Nevertheless, there are, and always have been, parts of the world where rain is something to be prayed for and welcomed.

After Easter, when I travel north via my friend in Yorkshire and my Uncle and Aunt in the Lake District, I will enjoy driving through lush greenery and fields of sheep and lambs, all of it courtesy of the rain. When I arrive at my own home on Bute, the rain there (and it rains a lot!) will ensure beautiful woodland walks and hillside strolls. We may not love the rain while it is actually raining, but we benefit usually from its results. (Although of course, when Paul said "Moderation in all things" he may not have been thinking about the weather, but it definitely applies!)

Like our gardens, our countryside and our national parks, our lives too flourish where they are watered. In the great waiting periods of Lent and Advent, we are encouraged to water our spiritual lives in times of meditation, contemplation and discipline. Giving something up, hard though it may be, helps us to focus on the spiritual. As we water our spiritual lives, so they flourish and grow, ready to burst forth into glory at the celebration that follows, whether that be the natural glory of the spring at Easter, or the artificially created decorations of Christmas.

In these days when shops encourage us to celebrate without preparation and preferably all the time, and life is lived so fast that we struggle to find any time for contemplation, study or spiritual discipline, I wonder if that part of our lives is in a Lenten desert? If we do not consider the love of God for his creation, how can we care for the environment? If we do not consider the face of God in all whom we meet, how can we care for those who struggle most in our society? If we do not have time to consider these things, how can we think of action? And if there is truth in that thought, how can we water the spiritual element of our lives and the lives of those around us?

God bless, Vicci