

The First Sunday in Lent

March 1, 2020

Wilderness

by The Rt. Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde

[After he was baptized] Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

—Matthew 4:1

The wilderness is a place of trial and vulnerability. It wasn't an easy place for Jesus, and it isn't an easy place for us whenever we find ourselves in a wilderness of our own.

Sometimes we go to the wilderness of our own accord because we know that it's time to make a change. So, we muster our courage and call the doctor to schedule a physical, reach out to a relative we haven't spoken to in years, or pray for the grace to forgive ourselves for something we've done.

Other times the wilderness comes to us, without warning. The telephone rings and suddenly life as we've known it is over. I don't believe that God causes those unwelcome wildernesses to appear, but I know that God is there to see us through, and that he provides us with the courage it will take to navigate the unfamiliar and sometimes frightening terrain.

Through is an important concept when it comes to the wilderness, for it is not our final destination. We travel through the wilderness on our way to somewhere else. But before we leave, the wilderness has a pearl of great price to impart.

The first wilderness temptation is to try and get out as quickly as we can. It's an understandable response, given our discomfort, but it guarantees that we will learn nothing from our experience. We leave the wilderness unscathed and revert to our old patterns in life.

The second wilderness temptation, however, is to stay too long. In particular, after an experience of grief or trauma, the wilderness can become a familiar place where little is required of us. Yet invariably, there comes

