

The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality #12

A Time for Prayer and Solace

Wednesday, January 26, 2022

Chapter 6 Desert Catechesis

“Sheer survival in such a hostile environment required structure, conformity, and adherence to routine.” (p. 161).

“The harsh landscape was interpreted within a hermeneutical context of fear tempered with grace.” (p. 164).

John Climacus advised his novices in the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount ‘Sinai to ‘let the monastery be for you a tomb before the tomb’--a way of dying to the compulsiveness of the ego prior to one’s physical death. (p. 165).

“Ironically, then, the desert served as a welcoming ‘refuge’ from the self because of the terror of its threatening indifference.” (p. 165).

“The landscape’s silent immensity----and the God to whom it points----is able to absorb all the grief one can give it.” (p. 168).

“This is what it means to learn the dying to neighbor that the desert teaches.” (p.169). (The story is told about a brother who came to Macarius the Egyptian, asking the great abbot of the monastery at Scete how to become holy.)

“The freedom of the Desert Eccentric: Francis de Sales once remarked that ‘a sad saint is a sorry sort of saint’ understanding playfulness to be an intrinsic dimension of the holy life.” (Among them the Pauline tradition of the holy fool was fully developed. (p/ 179).

I Cor 2:6-13; 4:10.)

“In the wilderness the people of Israel experience, more than they might have liked, the rough play of God’s deep longing for them” (p.178)

Song of Songs 5:4-6