

Camino Contemplations (A Message from Pastor Dave) W5

"Simul justus et peccator," the Reformers would say of our Christian human condition - we are at the same time justified yet sinful. When we look honestly at ourselves the joyful and humbling reality is that this is true. Often-times though we need a 'wilderness' experience to secure that vision and understanding.

I write these words as I have been walking through the Meseta, the High Plateau desert of northern Spain. It has been described as a wilderness due to the difficulty of terrain, heat, lack of shade and in places barrenness (see pic). In truth there is also beauty; oat, barley and wheat fields, bird life and in the early golden sunrise, nature at her best.

It has some similarities with the wilderness locations of the Bible so my thoughts naturally ran to Christ's temptation when led into said wilderness by the Holy Spirit after His affirming baptism (Matt. 4: 1-11). During that time Jesus' identity and mission were questioned by Satan who tried to lure Christ away with temptations of flesh, pride and power that questioned (& twisted) His Father's truth. Jesus overcame by trust, belief and standing on His Father's truth; He had been tested in the wilderness and had NOT been found wanting.

In the Meseta, just outside Hontanas, are the remains of a convent San Anton where the nuns would keep a stocked 'community cupboard' for the pilgrims (good to see that through Lynne we are keeping that tradition going, see pics). The Nuns also used to call encouragement to the pilgrims, "Eultreia esusia,"go further, go higher; as in closer to God.

To get closer to God sometimes we need to go through our own 'wilderness' experience where we humbly see ourselves as we actually are. These times can be truly horrendous and painful. Our identity and mission/purpose can be questioned, we can realise who we truly serve and our sinfulness is laid bare.

Yet these times, in God's grace, can also be times of growth and even real joy as we get closer to God.

Jesus was tempted as one of us, His example can encourage us by showing us how to respond in our times in the wilderness with the knowledge that He understands what we go through (Hebs. 4: 15). His time in the wilderness was part of His discipleship that equipped Him for Mission; the same can be true for us. It also showed the ongoing conflict between good and evil which for us is between the old and new natures; hence our state of being justified yet sinful.

"Eultreia esusia,"may we go further, go higher in order to draw closer to God whatever our temptations, wilderness or walk may be (Eph. 1: 17-21, 2:6).

Bon Camino

As you read this, God willing, I will have entered and left the ancient capital of Leon and be walking in the Montes de Leon a more mountainous region with old and distinctive cultures. (Gerry, if the Latin in the above is incorrect, 'non placet indicare'.....and if that's incorrect blame Google translate!).

