

LETTERS FROM THE DESERT...

Two minutes a day,
One hour a day,
one day a month,
eight days a year,
for longer if necessary,
you must leave everything
and everybody,
and retire,
alone with God.
If you don't look for this solitude,
if you don't love it,
you won't achieve
real contemplative prayer....



But the desert is not
the final stopping place.
It is a stage on the journey....
You must go back among people,
mix with them,
live your intimacy with God
in the noise of the cities.
It will be difficult
but you must do it.
And for this
the grace of God
will not fail you....

- Carlo Carretto

A LITANY OF THE DESERT

The love of life

All: Desert, teach me

The simplicity of love

All: Desert, teach me

The beauty of simplicity

All: Desert, teach me

The wisdom that creates beauty

All: Desert, teach me

The insight that leads to wisdom

All: Desert, teach me

The curiosity that leads to insight

All: Desert, teach me

The attentiveness that leads to curiosity

All: Desert, teach me

Lord, in all that I am and all that I do,

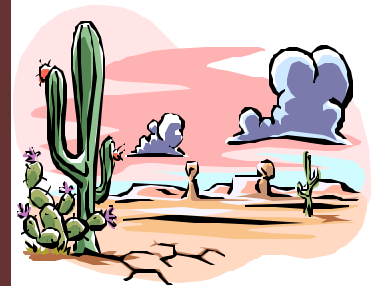
*All: Lure me out into the desert to
teach me again.*

-Les Miller



*Compiled by Les Miller and Melinda Rapallo
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THE DESERT



"Every now and then, leaving people and looking for solitude to restore, in prolonged silence and prayer, the stuff of your soul. This is the meaning of 'desert' in your spiritual life..."

-- Carlo Carretto

The desert...a place for contemplation...

God calls us to simplicity using the symbol of the desert. In the desert, we are able to see the world through new eyes.

INTRODUCTION: THE ECHO OF ASHES

*"Remember you are dust
and to dust you shall return."*

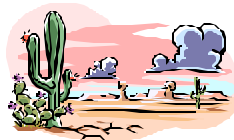
The large brown bowl
rests on a purple cloth
its roundness holding
ashes, freshly burned
black and ready for
wearing.



Blackened thumbs
press the ancient sign
upon the waiting foreheads.

I hear the message repeated
until it haunts and hunts me
down: remember, remember,
remember
you are dust, dust, only dust
someday only dust
will remain.

The echo of the Lent-stained
ashes speaks the truth
of my humanity:
the humbleness
of my beginning,
the simplicity
of my departure.



A few wise words
echoing through Ash Wednesday
urge me to deeper things:
renewed dedication,
constant compassion,
and mindful awareness.

I leave marveling
at how simple and sublime
is this envelope of the soul,
which one day returns
to dust, dust, only dust.

--Joyce Rupp
Out of the Ordinary

SCRIPTURE: HOSEA 2:14-15

A Reading from the Prophet Hosea

I will allure her,
And bring her back into the desert,
And speak tenderly to her.
From there I will give her vineyards,
And make the Valley of Achor a door of
hope.
There she will respond as in the days of her
youth,
As in the days she came out of the land of
Egypt.
The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.



LETTERS FROM THE DESERT

When one speaks of the desert,
and says that the desert
must be present in your life,
you must not think only of
the Sahara or the desert of Judea,
or into the High Valley of the Nile.

Certainly, it is not everyone
who can have the advantage
of being able to carry out in practice
this detachment from daily life.
The Lord conducted me
into the real desert because
I was so thick-skinned.
For *me*, it was necessary....

But the same way is not for everybody. And
if you cannot go into the desert,
you must nonetheless
"make some desert" in your life.
Every now and then leaving people
and looking for solitude to restore,
in prolonged silence and prayer,
the stuff of your soul.
This is the meaning of 'desert'
in your spiritual life.