

The mountain top is a place where we are taken outside our usual experiences. We can seem very close to God.

From the mountain top, we are given a new perspective on familiar things.

- Have there been places or times where God has felt particularly present to you?
- Have you ever had the experience of seeing someone or something in a new light? What changed?

A Closing Prayer

O God,
who before the passion of thine only-begotten Son
didst reveal his glory upon the holy mount:
Grant unto us his servants,
that in faith beholding the light of his countenance,
we may be strengthened to bear the cross,
and be changed into his likeness from glory to
glory;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Book of Common Prayer Collect

Lent Reflections

Lenten Landscapes

Week 3: The Mountains



- What is the highest point on the earth's surface you've ever been?
- What do you think is the appeal of climbing hills or mountains?

Very often in the Bible, mountains are seen as places of encounter with God.

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

(Mark 9.2-9)

- What difference do you think this experience would have made for Peter, James and John?
- The disciples see Moses and Elijah with Jesus. What other 'mountain-top experiences' do you associate with those figures?

The following passage is from Graham Usher's book *Places of Enchantment: Meeting God in Landscapes*. In this chapter, he reflects on the spiritual qualities of mountains.

Mountains are regarded as sacred places, home to good and evil spirits, by different communities. Followers of St Francis of Assisi (c.1182-1226) established Mount La Verna in central Italy as a sacred mountain; it has a route dotted with stations of the cross leading up to a Calvary.

Making the pilgrimage up the mountain, visiting chapels with life-size figures along the way, not only brought the penitent closer to St Francis' suffering but drew them closer to the mystery of God. This, like sacred mountains in other religious traditions, was seen as the *axis mundi*, a place where earth and heaven meet, where humans and God meet. Such sacred mountains have the reputation of being sources of blessings, which can be invoked for such things as water, life, healing, health and well-being. The fact that mountains are often shrouded in swirling mist leads to an aura of mystery, the clouds concealing a deeper reality.