

The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 18, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #27)

Over the past few weeks in our reflections, we have taken a journey through the desert with Moses and the Children of Israel, to the Promised Land. We have seen Moses trying his very best to teach the people about a God that was different from the gods they were used to in the land of their captivity. Along with them, we've witnessed signs and wonders that should only have increased the faith that Moses was calling them to. We've watched as they, time after time, turned from the path, rejecting the teachings that Moses has been trying to bring them to understand. And still, through the pleadings of Moses, God has again and again forgiven all this. You would think, with manna falling from the sky, water flowing freely from a rock and quails flying in the desert, they would begin to see that Moses was not just some old man who didn't understand their needs—that his pleadings were from a heart filled with love and care for them. Does this not speak of the love of a father for his children?

And now we see them approaching the end of their journey—the goal they had been seeking all along is in sight. However, for this generation, this goal may have seemed like a fairytale. The generation that had crossed the Red Sea forty years ago has died out. These people are the second generation, the children of the ones who departed Egypt so long ago. Moses has been the witness to the changes that have come to his people—good and bad. Yet, like a loving father, he has taught them, he has spent many hours on his knees praying to almighty God for them. I am certain that there have been tears. I am certain that there has been joy and sadness and worry and pride. As a father myself, I have no doubt that this is the case. As parents, have we not all experienced this?

Now, with the Land of Promise just over the horizon, God tells Moses that the time of his death is near, that he will not be leading the people into the *land flowing with milk and honey*. He must pass on the leadership to another. Then God once again calls Moses to the mountain top to show him the land of his dreams, the goal he has been toiling to achieve for so long. What an emotional roller coaster this must have been. Can we see a parallel for us today?

As fathers and mothers, some of us have experienced similar emotions—I know I have. Some of you may yet, also experience this roller coaster ride. Throughout our lives as parents, we have toiled to raise our children right. We have spent many sleepless nights at the bedside of a sick child. We have sacrificed long days, toiling to provide for their needs. We have fed and clothed them. We have spent nothing less than a small fortune on their education.

Then, the day comes when we must send them down the aisle, giving another to take our place. We can only hope that we have done our absolute best to prepare them for what is to come. Yet, like Moses, we know that there will be trials and tribulation. We realize that temptation will come. How sad it is that, sometimes, we must watch and pray as our children fall to this temptation, giving in to the world around them, forsaking the path we have laid out before them. We find ourselves worrying that we did something wrong along the way. What could we—what should we—have done different? What words were left out?

Our only recourse is to continue to pray and watch and guide when we can. We must give them into God's capable and willing hands, praying that he will bring them through this muddled and confused desert to reach the Promised Land He has prepared for us all.