



March 20, 2019

THE EXPERIENCE OF LOSING FAITH BELONGS TO FAITH

Lent invites us into an unsettled spiritual practice, reminding us of the wilderness where Jesus spent forty days fasting and praying, and the wilderness where the Hebrews spent forty years after their freedom from slavery in Egypt.

The wilderness is a time between homes. It is a time when things are unsettled. It may remind us of our own seasons of change, grief, uncertainty, growth, or simply the times of feeling alone in the world.

Years ago, a woman who experienced the loss of her faith wrote a letter to the great writer Flannery O'Connor, who infused her stories with the complexity of her own Catholic faith. In response to this woman, O'Connor wrote these important words.

The experience of losing your faith, or of having lost it, is an experience that in the long run belongs to faith; or at least it can belong to faith if faith is still valuable to you, and it must be or you would not have written me about this. I don't know how the kind of faith required of a Christian living in the 20th century can be at all if it is not grounded on this experience that you are having right now of unbelief. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" is the most natural and most human and most agonizing prayer in the gospels, and I think it is the foundation prayer of faith.

Being faithful includes the experience of being in the wilderness, unmoored and out of sorts. What I love about our church is that belonging to this community does not require certainty of faith or conformity of belief. We belong just as much in our lostness as in our being found.

I'll see you in church. This Sunday is Special Music Sunday, a service centered on the *Mozart Requiem*, a blessing for our Lenten season.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister