

By Pat Haggerty

I remember telling my students, “It’s okay to read a book more than once. In fact, it’s a good thing.” We gain so much from a second reading. We discover nuances we hadn’t read before, or we gain new insights into the author’s purpose.

The same is true of a good movie. Do you have a favorite? How often have you seen it? I can’t even begin to tell you how often I’ve seen *It’s a Wonderful Life!* I cry every time and my enjoyment of it never seems to fade.

Why am I telling you this? Well, I am trying to justify revisiting a topic I wrote about last year at this time. I want to talk about church environment and what it means to me. Our parish is very fortunate in having a very talented Environment Committee, which does a marvelous job in setting an appropriate tone in our worship space for each liturgical season. I don’t know if there is an official written mission for this committee, but, if there is, I am sure it says something about enhancing the worship space for purposes of prayer and reflection in keeping with the theme of the season.

During this Lenten season I have been most grateful to look at the “scene” created by the Environment Committee that causes me to ponder the meaning of Lent. This scene is more like a vibrant piece of art that gets expanded upon each week. It is a multi-dimensional picture that bombards me with stimuli while, at the same time, enveloping me with peace. It is a depiction of a slice of desert consisting of cacti, sand and rock. The focal point is the wooden cross draped with a purple cloth. To the left of the cross is a small, stone pillar. Near that stone is a

simple picture of a rose-colored sun and a beautiful saying: “The wilderness will lead you to your heart where I will speak.” The quote is from Hosea.

Think about it. Something barren, like the wilderness, can lead us to find the Lord. Something that may seem dismal, stark and dry can cause us to find refreshment, clarity and peace. In this solitude we can find joy. Perhaps, even in our darkest hours, then, we can find what is missing. Even in the desert of Lent, we can find what will lead us to the joy of the risen Lord.

I continue to ponder on this Lenten reflection. What causes you to ponder?