

December, 2000

"The Canyon of 60 Abandon"

We were enduring monsoon conditions at the aptly named Del Lago resort near Houston TX. It was mid-November, 1998, and we conferees were house-bound: our hotel an almost inaccessible island as a new lake surrounded us..

Inside, storyteller Michael Meade caught and kept my attention. His tale was of a place where, when one reached the age of 60, the rules of the culture required banishment to a far away "Canyon of 60 Abandon".

The story, told in chapters over two days, struck home with me: I was in the middle of my 59th year, contemplating possible retirement.

In Michael's village, one family violated the rules, hiding their elder under the porch. A puzzle came forth from the king, who offered a great prize to whoever could solve it. It was only this family, using the accumulated wisdom of their elder, who were able to solve the puzzle. They won the prize.

The metaphorical village in Michael's story was our own American society.

For me, age 60 and retirement came this year. It's been a truly great year.

There definitely is a "Canyon of 60 Abandon", but it is nowhere near as stark as I had imagined. There are, I am finding, incredible riches in that canyon - not in money so much as in the accumulated wisdom and caring existing there. And there remain many willing to hide me and others like me under their porch.

Resolve to visit often those in the canyon in 2001. You'll be glad you did.



*Father Eddie Fernandez and the congregation
bless a 105 year old man on the occasion of his
birthday, San Fernando Cathedral,
San Antonio TX, July 8, 2000.*

A visit to the canyon.

On July 8, at the San Fernando Cathedral in San Antonio TX, Father Eddie Fernandez recalled, in his homily, a story from his youth in Albuquerque NM.

Seems his best friend had a very rotund uncle who came to the family home each Sunday for dinner. He ate befitting his size, and before he left there was always a little ritual, ending with his sister packing an extra plate of food he could take home "for his friend."

The kids of the family privately scoffed. "Sure", they said, "Jose is just taking the food home for himself. See how big he is." Each week the ritual continued.

Some years later Jose died, and his funeral was held in the usual way. After the Mass, while Eddie's friend was visiting with family, an old man they didn't know came up. He said to them "I'm really going to miss Jose. He always brought me a plate of food on Sunday."

From an e-mail from a delightful senior citizen friend to me, March 31, 2000:

"Someone referred to old people as "books, waiting to be read", each with a unique story."

A book I highly recommend for daily reflection in 2001: "All Saints, Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time" by Robert Ellsberg, Crossroad Publishing, New York, 1997