

## A Mountain Top Experience

Mountains come in all shapes and sizes, some are tall and towering, with snow capped peaks, some are gentle and rounded, with grassy slopes; some have glaciers cascading down to the sea. Some have spewed out volcanic ash and debris giving a lunar like surface, and yet others have roads winding right to the top. I have been very fortunate to have visited quite a few mountains in various parts of the world, all of them with characters of their own, and all of them fascinating and awe inspiring. I cannot imagine a favourite view that does not have a mountain somewhere in the picture - it is no wonder that the Bible describes life and mountains in the same breath.

But I want to tell you about a mountain that I couldn't find! Some years ago, Sr. Vi Hayton and I walked many amazing miles along the Pennine Way. We did a day at a time, and it was one of the most enjoyable and memorable times of my life. We had so many adventures, met so many people, and animals, and for much of the time, walked in companionable silence, enjoying the stillness and beauty of our Peak District and moorlands. One day we arrived at Horton in Ribblesdale, ready for a really exciting part of our walk, to climb Penyghent. We spent quite a time just looking (from a distance) at this mountain that we were going to climb the next day, we would take a picnic and sit at the summit, enjoying the wonderful views, and nature at its best. We went to bed early, ready for the next day. And what happened - when we woke in the morning the mountain had totally disappeared. There was just a thick blanket of miserable fog, and no way that it would be safe for us to risk the climb. We stood and looked in what we thought was the right direction, and then sadly decided to do other things.

I have often thought of that non mountain day - because in a strange way it has been a comfort to me. When life has been really difficult and distressing, I have remembered Penyghent - not the fact that we didn't manage to climb it, but the fact that although we couldn't see it, on that memorable day, it was still there. It would always be there. What a wonderful picture of God that is - we often find Him so difficult to recognise, we feel that He is not there for us when we really need Him, but of course, He never goes away. Many things in life obscure Him, and make Him seem distant, or hidden, but if we learn to look for Him in a different way, He IS there. If Penyghent had been sunlit and cloud free, Sr. Vi and I would have climbed it with no problems, but it was hidden and so we felt that we couldn't approach it. The wonderful thing about God is, that however hidden He may seem to us, He is, He really is, still there, waiting for us to approach him whatever the conditions. We may need to wait until the fog of uncertainty clears, until the light of faith makes the pathway bright, but He will always be there, somewhere, waiting for us to reach Him.

**Life's not about waiting for the storm to pass; it's about learning to dance in the rain.**

Sr Elizabeth McOwat