

Monarch

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Romans 12:2 NRSV

A cold, light rain penetrated our bones as our van entered the Monarch Reserve at Michoacan, Mexico. The outdoor scene reminded me of the West—wood shanties with smoke curling skyward, vendors selling hot food inside, warmly dressed men guiding trail horses saddled for riders; warmly dressed hikers, including families, ready for the 40 minute trek.

Two choices—hiking or horseback riding. I chose to hike down the rugged trail. Tiny rocks? Slippery mud? I was an experienced hiker. No narrow path around puddles or slimy rocks would stop me! Reach for the nearest tree! Challenged and precariously picking my way along, I appreciated the helping hands offered by friends.

Reaching our destination, I peered into the stark black misty tree branches for hanging Monarch clusters. I chose an easier target to photograph—Monarchs clinging to spring-green leaves in groups of twos and threes, flapping their wings in harmony. Look high, search low for the orange and brown spotted butterflies... move several together for a colorful portrait. I shivered in the morning mist.

I challenged myself to return on horseback. The high view brought the pleasure of seeing yellow and blue flowers, the sun momentarily brightening the scene. My plodding horse brought comfort and confidence... shattered at trail's end by our challenging descent! My horse walked faster over jagged stones and mud as I held on tightly, concentrating on reaching the corral safely. As I was assisted off my horse, a friend snapped my picture... victory at trail's end!

Prayer: *God, thank you for the challenges in our lives to overcome; to motivate us to grow stronger and be transformed into leading more creative lives. Amen.*

- Diane Seeger