

**FIRST READING**

The covenant of God when Noah was delivered from the flood.

A reading from the book of Genesis

9:8-15

**G**od told Noah and his sons:

“I am going to make a solemn promise to you  
and to all who will live after you.

This includes the birds and animals that came out of the boat.

I promise every living creature on earth  
that the earth and those living on it  
will never again be destroyed by a flood.

“The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign  
to you and to every living creature on earth.

It will tell you that I will keep this solemn promise forever.

When I send clouds to cover the earth,  
and the rainbow appears in the sky,  
I will remember my promise  
to you and to all other living creatures.  
never again will I let flood waters destroy all life.”

The word of the Lord.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

25:4-5abc, 6 and 7 cd

*R. (see 10) Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth  
to those who keep your covenant.*

Show me your paths  
and teach me to follow;  
guide me by your truth  
and instruct me.  
You keep me safe.

*R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth  
to those who keep your covenant.*

Please, Lord, remember,  
you have always  
been patient and kind.  
Show how truly kind you are  
and remember me.

*R. Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth  
to those who keep your covenant.*

## **VERSE BEFORE THE GOSPEL**

Matthew 4:4b

*R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

No one lives on bread alone,  
But on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

*R. Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.*

## **GOSPEL**

Jesus was tempted by Satan, and the angels looked after him.

† A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark

1:12-15

**R**ight away God's Spirit made Jesus go into the desert.  
He stayed there for forty days while Satan tested him.  
Jesus was with the wild animals,  
but angels took care of him.

After John was arrested,  
Jesus went to Galilee and told the good news that comes from God.  
He said, "The time has come!  
God's kingdom will soon be here.  
Turn back to God and believe the good news!"

The gospel of the Lord.

## First Sunday of Lent—Cycle B

**Prayer:** Dear God, We ask you to guide us as we begin this Lent. Help us to hear Your Word speaking to our hearts. Thank you for sending Jesus to show us the way. AMEN.

**READINGS:** Gen 9:8-15; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15

### Reflection and Discussion

Lent is a very special season for the Church and for us. It is a time to remember God calls us to be his special people. It is a time to remember the many signs of God's love. It is a time to remember we don't always act like we know we are God's special people. It is a time to remember we don't always respect the signs of God's love.

The stories from the Bible we will be read during the 5 weeks of Lent are some of the most important stories of God's call, promise of faithfulness, love and mercy. The stories tell us, that from the very beginning, God made us and no matter how lost or disobedient we were or are: God is faithful! God made special covenants—special agreements—to remind us: I will always be here for you!

Lent is 40 days because Jesus spent 40 days in the desert. It also reflects the 40 days of rain and flooding while Noah was on the Ark with his family, descendants and members of every living creature. 40 is a sign of significant time. A time of 'letting go' and 'letting God' into the situation of our lives. Lent's 40 days is a time for us to "put God" back in our lives in very conscious ways. Lent is believing you and I are to put aside any attitude or behavior that doesn't announce the Kingdom is at hand!

The Gospel says the Spirit guided Jesus to the desert. It was a hard time of testing for Jesus. He had good thoughts (the angels) and bad thoughts (Satan). In the end, Jesus comes out of the desert, after 40 days, believing God is with him! Just like Noah. Being guided into the desert, is similar to us having "a time out." When we are not doing the right thing or thinking correctly, we are 'guided' to a special place where we are 'tested' to change to be a better self. Just like Jesus and Noah, it is a hard time. But at some point, the hard part is over. When we leave the quiet, desert place, of our time out, we promise (like a **covenant**) we are going to be our best self! That's GOOD NEWS.

Jesus and Noah believe "the time of fulfillment"—all things can work together for good—if people "repent" from thinking like God isn't in charge and believe the 'good news'—God is in charge and is present even when we are tempted not to do good news acts! Perhaps our brothers and sisters tell us: Unless you change and be your best self, things are going to be hard! When you are in 'time out' you don't feel like your parent(s) love you---but when it is over: You know they love you and you love them!! When we 'repent'/change, and do good to others, we live like the kingdom is at hand..

**Activities:** Create a Sunday Lenten booklet: Fold an 8-1/2 by 11 sheet of white paper in half—top to bottom; then fold it side to side. You will then have 4 pages. On the front,

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make a big cross and color in with black ink pen or magic marker. (Keep the booklet because we will use it each week.)

Talk about **ASHES** and the **SIGN OF THE CROSS** as 'signs' of God's **COVENANT**. Ashes, made from palms used on Palm Sunday remind of us that Jesus is the sign of God's ultimate love and faithfulness to us. Ashes remind us that things of earth don't last. We are born, and signed with a cross at Baptism, and sign ourselves each time we pray, to remember: God is where we are from; God is where we are headed!

Especially for Lent we have the sign of "**ASHES**" in the form of a **CROSS** on our foreheads because we believe we are **MARKED** by the **SIGN of the Cross**. The sign of the cross is a special sign. It is like hand shake or hug—it reminds us that we are meeting or talking with God when we pray and gather at Church in a special way.

Being blessed with **ASHES**, in the form of a **CROSS**, reminds us to be **REPENT...change...and believe** in the gospel. The gospel of God's love, forgiveness.

And "I am here for you" presence. So, besides thinking of "going without something" or "giving something up," change: **DO MORE GOOD ACTS; OBEY QUICKLY; BE KIND TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T FIND EASY TO LIKE.**

**To conclude the session:** Practice making the sign of the cross. Have each child/adult make the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person to their right. Say, while tracing the Cross: God loves you forever!

**Or if time allows, use the following ideas:** We are God's special people. What does that mean to children? What are the "signs" of God's love? Special people have pictures. We have holy cards, stain glass windows, pictures in Bible story books are our 'family pictures' of stories of God in history. What are the 'signs' in your church windows? Signs of God in our lives: Churches are houses for God to gather God's special people. We have signs at mass—candles, water, wine, bread, Word of God, special prayers.

**If you choose to read the story from the Genesis Reading,** discuss the meaning of **COVENANT** and the signs of **COVENANTS**. From 'the flood' story, usually, the sign is the rainbow. But it could be the dove Noah sends out that returns with a branch. It could be the Ark itself which protected "all living creatures" as a sign of God's Covenant.

Help the children to think of times—like the tsunami and hurricane Katrina—when flood waters destroyed people, lands and living creatures. If God has promised not to destroy all living creatures by flood waters, what message can we take from natural disasters?

**MESSAGE:** That God allows the natural world to unfold. God is bigger than the world. God is still with us and for us. Like Lenten ashes, the things of earth are here today and then gone. God is **ALWAYS** with us. It is an act of faith to see God working in these situations. But we "see" God by the good deeds of others. Our tasks, as believers, is to bring signs of love, compassion and peace to those whose lives are destroyed by natural disasters.