

Wellspring

Fransalian Center for Spirituality

February 21, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we celebrate the First Sunday of Lent. The first reading (Genesis 9:8-15), tells us the story of the great flood and the appearance of the rainbow, as a sign of the covenant and the promise of new beginnings. The second reading (1 Peter 3:18-22) speaks of participating in the resurrected life, in the new of life through Baptism. The Gospel (Mark 1:12-15) speaks of Jesus going into the desert, being tempted, rising above the temptations to a new power and strength and coming to call people to repentance and new life in the Kingdom of God.

I invite you to join me in reflecting on the first reading from Genesis 9:8-15. It is the story of the great flood and the appearance of the rainbow, hung colorfully across the sky as a sign of the covenant that God made and the promise of new beginnings. In the Hebrew Bible, the rainbow is a symbol of the Covenant between God and man, a covenant that will never be broken. The rainbow is the sign of the promise of God's unconditional, invincible, unconquerable, enduring, everlasting, unfailing, covenant Love - the symbol of God's steadfast and all-embracing Love.

There is much to learn about the rainbow and its symbolism in the history of world religions. Rainbow occurs when sunlight intersects with water droplets – whether that's rain, mist, waves, or a waterfall. Bright sunlight and moisture create a bright rainbow that stands out against a dull, rainy background. A rainbow isn't a solid object – it's a combination of light and moisture. Take a moment to reflect on what this could mean for our spiritual journey.

Native Americans speak of the spirituality of the moist heart. Reflect on what can happen to us with the moist heart and the light of Christ! Lent call us to have a moist heart – a heart of repentance and sorrow for our failures, sinfulness, and shortfalls. Lent leads us to the light of Christ, the Paschal light – the light that dispels darkness and heals our brokenness.

We are facing different types of darkness and brokenness these days – the pandemic, lockdowns, political and social unrest, inclement weather, cancelling services in churches, etc. During this Lent, let us keep the rainbow, the symbol of God's steadfast love as our symbol of hope. Let us renew our confidence in God's Promise to send us light into our dark moments, healing for our brokenness, forgiveness for our sinfulness and freedom from our restlessness.

I encourage you to find an image of a rainbow or make one yourself or get one of your children to draw or paint a rainbow and keep it in a place in your house that is easily visible. Let the rainbow inspire you to renew your confidence in God's steadfast and all-embracing love.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

First Sunday of Lent

February 21, 2021

Penitential Act

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Take a moment of silence to thank the Lord for all that has been.

Take another moment to remember your sinfulness and to pray for forgiveness and peace.

Lord have mercy Christ have mercy Lord have mercy

Collect

Grant, almighty God,
through the yearly observances of holy Lent,
that we may grow in understanding
of the riches hidden in Christ
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

First Reading: Genesis 9:8-15

In this excerpt, we have the story of the great flood and the appearance of the rainbow, hung colorfully across the sky as a sign of the covenant that God made and the promise of new beginnings.

The ancient sage, the author of Genesis teaches us that God is committed to the covenant with humanity, and he is willing to forgive and is ready to grant a new beginning.

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

After the devastating flood, “re-creation” begins. A new covenant is established. Man is once again empowered to give life and govern the earth!

Be grateful for new beginnings. And be mindful of your vocation to participate in God’s creative, life-giving activity...Be mindful of your vocation to govern (tenderly care for) the earth!

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 25

This is an acrostic (alphabetic) Psalm – each single verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew Alphabet. Read the Psalm carefully and see how the Psalmist speaks of God as “the way, the truth and the life” and asks God to teach him His “way, truth and life”. Jesus will, years later, speak of himself as the way, the truth, and the life. And we have found Jesus as our way, our truth, and our life.

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

This Psalm carries for us many insights such as: Mistakes of the past can weigh heavily upon us and burden our spirit. People can bring us shame, disgrace, and dishonor. But God’s way is a way of compassion. We know God’s way can guide us rightly and bring us peace and make us whole. We must accept God’s way, God’s saving rule, God’s wisdom, with reverence. In God’s way, we find forgiveness, grace and peace.

In God, we find a firm, guiding hand, a warm, loving friend, a strong companion on our journey. God shows the way, and we follow. We seek to know and embrace God’s truth and God’s life.

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

**Your ways O Lord, make known to me
Teach me your paths.
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
For you are God, my savior.**

Pray the whole Psalm now – if not now, pray it later when you have a little more time

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

The original author of this letter was writing to persecuted Christians trying to bolster their faith. To do this, he tries to remind them of their place in a larger history and of God's providence in that history and help them see their present sufferings in a larger context. He draws an analogy between the waters of the flood in the time of Noah and the waters of Baptism. A few people were saved in the ark during the flood. But everyone who goes through the waters of baptism is saved and is able to overcome the powers of evil. The author warns that the waters of baptism as such is no good unless it is accompanied by the pledge to God which proceeds from a good conscience.

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

This excerpt from Mark speaks of Jesus going into the desert, being tempted, rising above the temptations to a new power and strength and coming to call people to repentance and new life in the Kingdom of God.

Soon after his Baptism, Jesus goes into the wilderness for forty days. Forty days is just a Hebrew phrase meaning a considerable time and not to be taken literally. Mark tells us that Jesus was being tested during these forty days. One thing that stands out for us in this wilderness experience is that even Jesus in the fullness of the spirit was tempted. If so, it shouldn't be a surprise that we are often tested on our journey of faith. Mark also tells us that Angels ministered to Jesus during this testing time. We have the Holy Spirit and the angels of God to help and support us during our testing and trying times.

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

From the desert, after being tested, Jesus comes out strong and courageous to proclaim the Kingdom of God and call people to repentance and change of heart. Jesus called them to repent, to turn around because the kingdom of God has come.

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

As we begin the season of Lent, we hear that call of Jesus to "repent and believe in the Gospel, the good news of God's forgiving Love.

Dwell on this thought for a few moments before reading further.

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Intercessions: Take a few moments to pray from your heart.....

Remember our Holy Father Pope Francis, Bishop Joseph Strickland and all our spiritual leaders.

Remember our president and all leaders of our country and the world and pray that God will enlighten them with His wisdom to make wise decisions during these difficult days.

Remember your most urgent need and that of your family and those in your care.

Remember those who are affected by the pandemic and those who care for them.

Remember all who suffer and all who have no one to care for them.

Our Father...

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still: Spend a few moments in silent prayer

Prayer after Communion:

Renewed now with heavenly bread,
by which faith is nourished, hope increased,
and charity strengthened,
we pray, O Lord,
that we may learn to hunger for Christ,
the true and living Bread,
and strive to live by every word
which proceeds from your mouth.
Through Christ our Lord.

May the Lord bless us, keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Let us praise the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Saint of the Day, February 21 - St. Peter Damien and 34 other saints are remembered this day.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

