

Have a Contrite Heart

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Gen 9:8-15)

⁸*God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹See, **I am now establishing my covenant with you** and your descendants after you^g ¹⁰and with every living creature that was with you: the birds, the tame animals, and all the wild animals that were with you—all that came out of the ark. ¹¹**I will establish my covenant with you**, that never again shall all creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth.^h

¹²God said: This is the **sign of the covenant** that I am making between me and you and every living creature with you for all ages to come: ¹³I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a **sign of the covenant** between me and the earth.ⁱ ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵**I will remember my covenant** between me and you and every living creature—every mortal being—so that the waters will never again become a flood to destroy every mortal being.^j

THE FOCUS: **Covenant**

COMMENTARY

- The focus is obvious. It is repeated many times (vv.9, 11,12,13,15).
- The covenant is made by God with Noah and his children.
- In the covenant, God promises never again to send the great flood.
- That great flood which God sent because of sins destroyed all creation, not only human beings.
- God assures to keep his promise. He does it through a sign: bow in the cloud (v.13).



Watercolor Painting on Jesus by the Sea of Galilee by James J. Tissot (1886-1896).

REFLECTIONS

It is God who makes initiatives for the benefit of his people. God rebuilds / re-creates by using good people.

NOAH'S ARK

“Everyone needs to know about life, I learned from Noah’s Ark...”

- One: Don’t miss the boat.
Two: Remember that we are all in the same boat.
Three: Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah built the Ark.
Four: Stay fit. When you’re 600 years old, someone may ask ou to do something really big.
Five: Don’t listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.
Six: Build your future on high ground.
Seven: For safety’s sake, travel in pairs.
Eight: Speed isn’t always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.

Nine: When you're stressed, float a while.
Ten: Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
Eleven: No matter how strong the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting."

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 25:4-9)
**YOUR WAYS, O LORD, ARE LOVE
AND TRUTH TO THOSE WHO KEEP
YOUR COVENANT.**

SECOND READING (1 Pet 3:18-22)

^{18g}For Christ also **suffered* for sins** once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. **Put to death** in the flesh, he was brought to life in the spirit. ¹⁹In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, ^{20h}who had once been disobedient while God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. ²¹This prefigured baptism, which saves you now. It is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God* for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ^{22j}who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

THE FOCUS: The death of Jesus for our sins

COMMENTARY

- The Second Reading talks about Christ's dying for our sins.
- Jesus the righteous is dying for the unrighteous (v.18).
- His death has a purpose: to bring us to God (v.18).
- His death put his/our flesh to death, and makes alive his/our spirit (v.18).
- Jesus' death sought salvation to the few good

- persons in the flood water (v.20).
- The flood that cleansed the earth finds its equivalent to the baptism that cleanses the soul (v.21).
- The cleansing is made possible through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, now in heaven, in God's right hand, with his angels, etc. (v.22)

REFLECTIONS

The Reading suggests conversion (cleansing) through baptism (*water symbolically washing away our sins*), submitting ourselves to God. What are our unrighteousness? Are we aware of what we should be cleansed from?

GOSPEL READING (Mk 1:12-15)

^{12*} ^gAt once the Spirit drove him out into the desert, ¹³and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. ^{14h}After John had been arrested,* Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: ¹⁵ⁱ"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent**, and believe in the gospel."

THE FOCUS: Repentance

COMMENTARY

- The devil is still at work, as in the days of Adam and Eve and Noah. Here Satan tempts Jesus in the time of his weakness (hungry, vulnerable, defenseless).
- As in the First Reading, beasts come into the picture.
- As in the Second Reading, angels come into the picture.
- Observe: the temptations are not spelled out as in Matthew and Luke.
- Jesus did not succumb to the temptation.

FEBRUARY 18, 2018 • FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT (B)

He emerged victorious over the devil, so he has all the right and credibility to preach the gospel: The Kingdom of God is at hand. Therefore, repent and believe...”

REFLECTIONS

Like Jesus, we are not spared from temptations. Repentance and believing in the gospel means belonging to the kingdom of God, rejecting the schemes of the devil.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TO DEVELOP YOUR SHARING/HOMILY

The First Reading talks of the covenant of God with Noah, never to send the deluge again, *to save us from destruction*.

The Second Reading talks of the death of Jesus Christ to save us all: *to bring us to God*.

The Gospel Reading invites us to repent, *to belong to the kingdom of God*.

Suggestion for the homily/sharing

You may say something about the Season of Lent: time of repentance, in the preparation for the celebration of Easter.

Now begin your homily with the recent experiences (*disappearances, arrests, etc.*). These are signs that evil is at work. God is not on the side of those with evil schemes. You may discuss the evils of our society.

Then relate the meaning of repentance according to the Readings: 1) God does not want *gulo* (trouble) anymore, *obedience* to God is our response to him; 2) Jesus died to save us all, therefore let us respond by cleansing ourselves (*make good of our promises* made in our baptism); 3) Jesus after overcoming temptations preaches the good news (kingdom

of God). The proper response is repentance and living the gospel.

Taking a look at yourself and your family, what are the things that need reforms so that there would be no restlessness.

In the church, what are the things we should repent from so that our liturgy may become better, have relationships better, etc.

End the homily relating repentance to the eucharist and the Season of Lent. The participation in the eucharist is a sign of our repentance to God. No one should go to communion without repenting of one's (grievous) sins. Those grave sins are identified in the catechism. Repentance leads us back to God and preserves creation and our communion with God and fellow human beings. It affirms our positive response to the new covenant.

— Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

- Limiting our wants
- Philippine political system prone to destabilization (*people, politicians always think of extra-constitutional means if they don't get what they want through constitutional means*)
- Preparing for vacation or summer activity.
- Fasting for a cause. (HM)