



St. Anne
CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY

February 26, 2012 First Sunday of Lent

God said to Noah, "See I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature..."—Genesis 9:8

"The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert."—Mark 1:12

Dear Friends;

Each year during Lent I set out in a prominent place a small sculpture from Peru of Noah and the animals on the Ark. I like this small ceramic piece because it is reflective of its country of origin. There are llamas and alpacas as well as other creatures. Noah looks like an indigenous person of the altiplano, the high desert. In some ways it brings together the two images that are presented to us for Lent.

The story of Noah and the Ark begins with God's desire to purify the earth. People had become corrupt and God desires to make a new beginning. There is one just man on earth Noah. God tells him to build this large vessel and gather his family and a sampling of all the creatures of the earth. Those who were on the ark were preserved from the destruction of the flood. And they will become the beginning of a renewed creation.

In this story the early fathers of the Church, like St Augustine, saw a pre-figuring of baptism. In baptism we are preserved from the chaos and destructive forces of sin and death. Those who are baptized also become part of the new creation that begins with the death and resurrection of Jesus. They who are baptized become part of the community of the Church symbolized by the boat. It is a powerful image. I once saw this image on a baptismal fount.

The other image that is presented to us today is the desert or wilderness. The wilderness was a frightening place for our ancient ancestors. It was the place of danger and evil spirits. No one ever enters it alone. Jesus after his baptism enters into the wilderness, not alone, but accompanied by the Holy Spirit. He is there for forty days.

The number forty recalls the forty years that Israel wandered the desert after they had left Egypt. Later the prophets would see this time as a type of honeymoon between God and his people. Despite their difficulties it was in the desert that Israel drew close to God and learned to rely on God alone. And while Israel was tempted and failed Jesus will be tempted and not succumb.

Lent is a time for us to recall our baptism and the covenant we made between God, ourselves and God's Holy People. We are all in the same boat—we are sinners, we are in need of mercy and yet are love and redeemed by God. Lent is a time to deepen our relationship with God—to spend time with the one who loves us as no one else can. And so we enter into the wilderness, not alone, but to be with the one we love.

Let this Lenten season lead us to a renewed love for God and our fellow passengers on this ship we call planet earth. And let us not forget that God's care does not end with us. There were also other creatures on the ark, because God cares for all his creation and so should we. Part of our Lenten journey should be to sharpen our respect for earth and all her creatures.

During this time I also invite you to pray for all who will be baptized, confirmed and make first Eucharist during the season of Easter. May they be led to the Lord who bathes us in love, anoints us and nourishes us for his service.

Peace

Fr Ron