

## First Sunday of Lent – February 18, 2018 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Genesis 9:8-15

God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "See, I am now establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you: all the birds, and the various tame and wild animals that were with you and came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall not be another flood to devastate the earth." God added: "This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings."

### Psalm: Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

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

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.

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

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,  
and your love are from of old.  
In your kindness remember me,  
because of your goodness, O LORD.

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

Good and upright is the LORD,  
thus he shows sinners the way.  
He guides the humble to justice,  
and he teaches the humble his way.

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

### Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Beloved: Christ 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. In it he also went to preach to the spirits in prison, 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. This 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, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.

### Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

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



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## **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

## **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

What is Lent? Ash Wednesday was a few days ago, starting the Lenten countdown toward Holy Week and Easter, but maybe some of us are not completely clear as to why these weeks of preparation are there in the first place. One opinion is that Lent is a time to deprive yourself. You give up candy or smoking or desserts or heavy meals or ... choose your favorite. These are good and definitely part of Lenten practice (even if they are like New Year's resolutions, since we usually break those). Lenten deprivation. It gave birth to Mardi Gras, meaning Fat Tuesday, literally. In contrast to tough Lent, eat all the fat you can, parade around in costume, go wild. The public usually does not recall that Mardi Gras has something to do with the quaint old practice of Lent. But that sharpens the question: what have they or we forgotten about Lent and its practice of penance? What if we described Lent as a "Retreat"?

A Retreat, in Catholic and other religions, is a space of days taken to pray and to be with God. Often one goes to a retreat house to have one. In St. Louis, for instance, there is a beautiful place called "White House"—the president has never been there, it is a different one—which has a stunning view of the Mississippi River. For many decades Jesuits have preached retreats there every weekend and sometimes during the week. Sizeable groups of men or of women stay for two or three days to meditate, listen to talks, and to refresh their spiritual lives. No, no, I do not mean that you should disappear for the five weeks of Lent to the nearest retreat house. But what about letting each Lenten day partake of certain retreat practices? For instance, what about setting aside a little time daily to let your insides settle down for a while, to create space within you to welcome God. Maybe set up a special place in your house or someplace else just to pray. How about a picture or crucifix or maybe just a candle? Or just 10 minutes of silence? And why not take some time to read in advance the Gospel from the upcoming Sunday Mass? Sit down, read it slowly, and let the scene described take place within your mind and heart. This week you could ask Jesus how it felt to have the Spirit drive him into the desert, as described in the Gospel.

The point? Let the Lord's loving deeds be your motivation for "giving up" anything during Lent. You might begin to see that you are making a gift of gratitude to God, rather than just "giving up" something you like. How does this prepare us for Holy Week and for Easter? By doing exactly what Jesus does when he makes himself a gift of suffering and death. He is returning a gift of love to the Father. Lent prepares us to witness this reality of our savior. It is the same gift we receive at every Mass when we go to Communion. Maybe we could let ourselves be driven into the desert ourselves, and let the Holy Spirit guide us. That is the meaning of Lent.

## **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. God made a covenant with us, and included every living thing. Does that reconfigure your attitude toward all creation: "our common home," including the environment—How?
2. Baptism is about dying and rising. Do you have any Lenten plans that might impact your dying to self or figuratively speaking, rising from the dead?
3. "He was among the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him." What are the "wild beasts" in your life? What angels minister to you? To whom do you yourself minister?

## **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

## **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

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. Amen