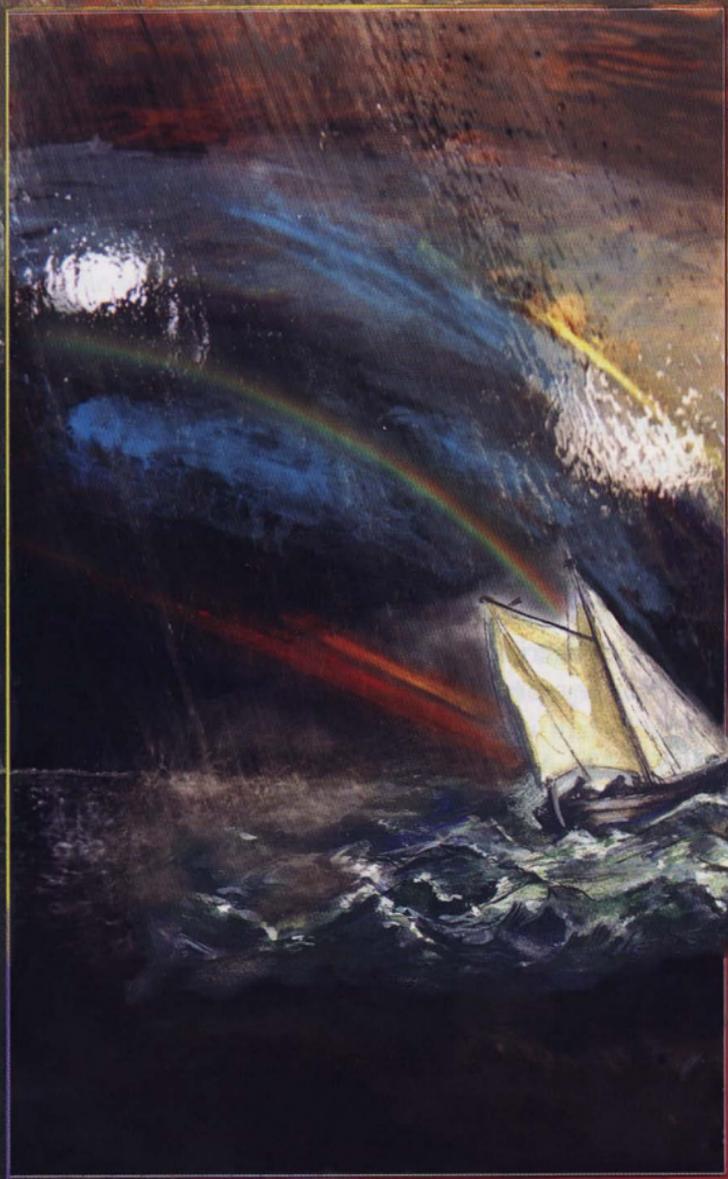


# Lent





## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

### CYCLE B

Genesis 9:8-15

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:12-15

### GATHERING

*(An unlit candle, a bible open to this week's gospel and a picture of a rainbow rest on a table covered with purple cloth. Index cards with the word **Ticket** written on one side, and pens for each member, are held in reserve.)*

As we begin our Lenten season of repentance and reconciliation, we can confidently and creatively set sail for our forty day journey that will be guided by a loving, patient God. Last week we reflected on God's healing word among us. How did you participate in God's work of promoting well being in others this past week? *(Members share briefly.)*

### OPENING PRAYER

*(The candle is lit. The community sits in silent attention to the presence of God. After two minutes, members, two by two, pray the psalm that follows.)*

- I:           Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;  
              teach me your paths,  
II:           Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
              for you are God my savior,

and for you I wait all the day.

III: Remember that your compassion, O LORD,  
and your kindness are from of old,

IV: The sins of my youth and my frailties  
remember not;  
in your kindness remember me,  
because of your goodness, O LORD.

V: Good and upright is the LORD;  
thus he shows sinners the way.

VI: He guides the humble to justice,  
he teaches the humble his way.

VII: All the paths of the LORD are kindness and  
constancy  
toward those who keep his covenant and  
his decrees.

All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever.  
Amen.

Psalm 25

*(A selection of instrumental music is played, after which the leader prays  
as follows.)*

Leader: Loving God, look with kindness upon us now and teach  
us what we need to know to draw closer to you in humble  
obedience. Send your Holy Spirit to keep us on course. We  
ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.

### Focus Question

What do you do to create some personal space and time for yourself?

## SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

*(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)*

### Commentary

Lent begins and in today's gospel we hear that Jesus was led into the desert by the Spirit for forty days. Perhaps we need to find *a special place* and *some time away* to renew ourselves in covenant with God. From Genesis, we know that Noah and his passengers were kept safe from the great flood by being on the specially built ark. Lent might be described as a time for each of us to build our own *ark* so to speak? As we embark on our forty-day Lenten journey, we are called to use this time and space away to reconnect with and deepen our connection with God and to reaffirm our faith and trust in him. As we travel through these forty days, let us recommit to faithfulness in prayer, self-denial and service to God's kingdom.

God had specific instructions for Noah about his ark. What would God want us to bring onto our spiritual arks? Maybe we could figure out more easily what *not* to bring on our arks if we really want to grow in holiness and stay on a steady course. We are flooded with busyness. We are awash with noise. We are so often inundated with the distractions of daily life. We get in over our heads, hardly coming up for air as we fall prey to laziness, temptations, habits of sin, and sometimes we even forget about God until we need something we can't seem to get for ourselves. We can become haphazard in our spiritual practices or too comfortable and self-indulgent. This is the *baggage* we must learn to toss overboard.

The Holy Spirit is with us on our Lenten ark. Given to us at our baptism and confirmation, the Spirit empowers us to resist temptation as Jesus did. Jesus, our righteous Savior, will guide and instruct us as we take time each day to pray. God, the author of the covenant, will patiently show his guidance, compassion, kindness, love, goodness and truth (Psalm 25). Of course, we shouldn't forget our guardian angels (our *ark*-angels?) who will minister to us just as angels ministered to Jesus in the desert.

God created the rainbow to remind him of his covenant with all living creatures. We can be reminded of God's mercy and love for us this Lent by reading scripture, praying the rosary, attending Mass, doing the way of the cross, sharing God's love stories with others, and celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation. Imitating Jesus' love for the poor can intensify our own awareness of God's providence.

Arks are not meant to have all the *comforts of home*. Perhaps this Lenten journey moves us to give up some foods (fasting) and pleasures (maybe not so much TV, internet, shopping, sports). After all, Lenten arks are not cruise liners. They are vessels of repentance and reconciliation – the spiritual places where we convert our lives. We might not experience smooth sailing all the time; we are also reminded in this week's readings that Jesus and John the Baptist had no easy time proclaiming the coming of God's kingdom. Satan likes to rock the boat. Steady as we go! We have eternal life jackets thanks to Jesus. We will not drown!

## FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ What does *covenant* with God mean to you?
- ◆ Name a difficult *tempest* you have to weather in your spiritual life.
- ◆ Tell of a time you felt your guardian angel ministering to you.
- ◆ Recall a Lenten experience that has had a lasting impact on your life.
- ◆ When has the Spirit led you into a spiritual *desert*? What happened?
- ◆ Who are the *rainbows* in your life – those who remind you of God's love? For whom have you been a *rainbow*?

## RESPONSE IN ACTION

- ◆ Pair off with someone in your small Christian community or a friend and be prayer partners for Lent. Encourage and remind each other of God's covenant of love.
- ◆ Reach out to recently arrived refugees in your area. Call your diocesan office to find out how you might volunteer.

- ◆ Get rid of excess baggage as Lent begins. Celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation this week.

## SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

*(Each member takes a **Ticket** index card and writes down some of the things that he/she will take or do on his/her Lenten ark for the journey through Lent, i.e. spiritual reading materials, some special practice, some behavior change to be worked on. After a few minutes for reflection and writing, the prayer concludes as follows.)*

Leader:            Father, Ark-itect of the covenant with all living creatures, awaken in us a new desire to be builders of your kingdom on earth. Rain your mercy upon us. Help us to assist our brothers and sisters who are spiritual castaways. Let every one of these forty days be days we are mindful of our gratitude and devotion to you. In Jesus' name, we pray.

All:                Amen.

*(Members join in singing, "Lord Have Mercy." The song may be found on the Internet. The session concludes with the exchange of a sign of peace.)*