

**As we come together for this first Sunday of Lent**

**We see a theme in our readings**

**A theme that will permeate the 5 weeks of Lent**

**Leading us to Holy Week**

**The Old Testament explores God's covenantal relationship**

**And how far He is willing to go to restore that relationship**

**We will see signs like the rainbow**

**A test of Faith with Abraham**

**Moses receiving the 10 Commandments**

**A pagan king cooperating with God's plan**

**And the New Covenant promised to Isaiah**

**As Francis Thompson wrote in his famous poem *The Hound of Heaven***

**God does not give up on us**

**His chosen people turn away again and again and again**

**But He remains faithful**

**And renews His covenants**

**Always there waiting for us to return**

**Our Epistles also have their theme**

**It is the identity of Christ**

**And our identity in him**

**Showing us just how far God is willing to go**

**To show us His love and Mercy**

**Even offering His Only Son on the cross**

**And the Gospels are a journey through salvation history**

**The story of God's hand in our lives**

**Leading to our salvation**

**Today's first reading is God's covenant with Noah**

**The flood has ended**

**A great purification has taken place**

**Noah finds himself on solid ground**

**We see God's desire to establish a covenant with Noah**

**A covenant with all his descendants**

**A covenant with all of creation**

**A multi-generational covenant**

**One that remains in force even today**

**As a reminder**

**He promises to place His bow in the sky**

**For the ancients this had a deep meaning**

**Like a warrior returning in victory from doing battle**

**He would hang up his bow as a sign the battle had been won**

**He could now rest in safety**

**The flood recalled the beginning of creation**

**When water and chaos covered the entire earth**

**God defeats chaos and establishes order**

**With the great flood**

**Chaos gains the upper hand momentarily**

**But God again establishes order and defeats chaos**

**Now, He promises that this time is the last time**

**We can rest in security**

**And God hangs His bow in the sky as a promise and as a reminder**

**This covenant is now partially fulfilled in Jesus Christ**

**It will be fulfilled in its fullness at the second coming**

**We live between these 2 events**

**It was the Spirit that was sent to bring order from chaos in Genesis**

**The Spirit that guided the judges of Israel**

**The Spirit led the kings of Israel**

**Bringing about a nation**

**The Spirit brought them through the wilderness after they fled Egypt**

**In our Gospel today**

**This same Spirit drives Jesus into the wilderness**

**Preparing him for 40 days**

**These 40 days are significant**

**The flood came about after 40 days and 40 nights of rain**

**Moses fasted for 40 days and nights before he was given the 10**

**Commandments**

**The Israelites were led in the dessert for 40 years**

**The wilderness is where the Israelites failed to measure up**

**Again and again they failed to pass the test**

**This is the wilderness Christ defeats**

**We continue this today with the 40 days of lent**

**Days spent preparing for something special**

**Emptying our hearts so we can receive the grace God desires for us**

**Jesus spends these 40 days preparing himself for his mission**

**And for the ultimate sacrifice he would offer on the cross**

**A mission he announces today**

***This is the time of fulfillment***

***The kingdom of God is at hand***

***Repent and believe in the Gospel***

**The time announced is not a chronological time**

**Not a specific year**

**It is an eschatological moment**

**The time of fulfillment is today**

**The kingdom of God is at hand**

**The Israelite people had been expecting this moment**

**But again it is a moment that is not contained in time**

**It is at hand today**

**For each of us to realize**

**To grasp**

**To live**

**To build the kingdom in our world**

**How do we go about building the kingdom?**

**Realizing it is God who does the building**

**But he desires our cooperation**

**So we have these 40 days of lent**

**Yes, to offer prayer, sacrifice and almsgiving**

**But that is secondary**

**We do this to empty ourselves of our pride and egoism**

**So we can receive from God**

**Whatever it is He desires to give us**

**Doing this, God will accomplish great things for us and in us**

**Defeating not physical floods**

**But the floods that continue to threaten us**

**Floodwaters of greed, lust, drugs and alcoholism**

**Floodwaters of materialism, communism and socialism**

**All with their own god**

**Seeking to replace the Triune God**

**There is evil in our world**

**An evil that becomes real in all these mass-shootings**

**Satin is very busy in these attacks**

**Through people cooperating with him**

**But they have been defeated**

**As we read in our letter from St James**

**The flood of Noah was a prefigurement of the flood of grace in  
baptism**

**This flood of grace does not destroy**

**But brings life**

**Opening us to a relationship with our merciful Father**

**A relationship that is strengthened by the body and blood of His  
Only Son**

**So we may enter into our mission**

**So God may build His kingdom**

**Our invitation these 40 days is simple to grasp**

**But a challenge to live**

**Repent, and believe in the Gospel**