

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

A Prayer to Be Open to the Spirit

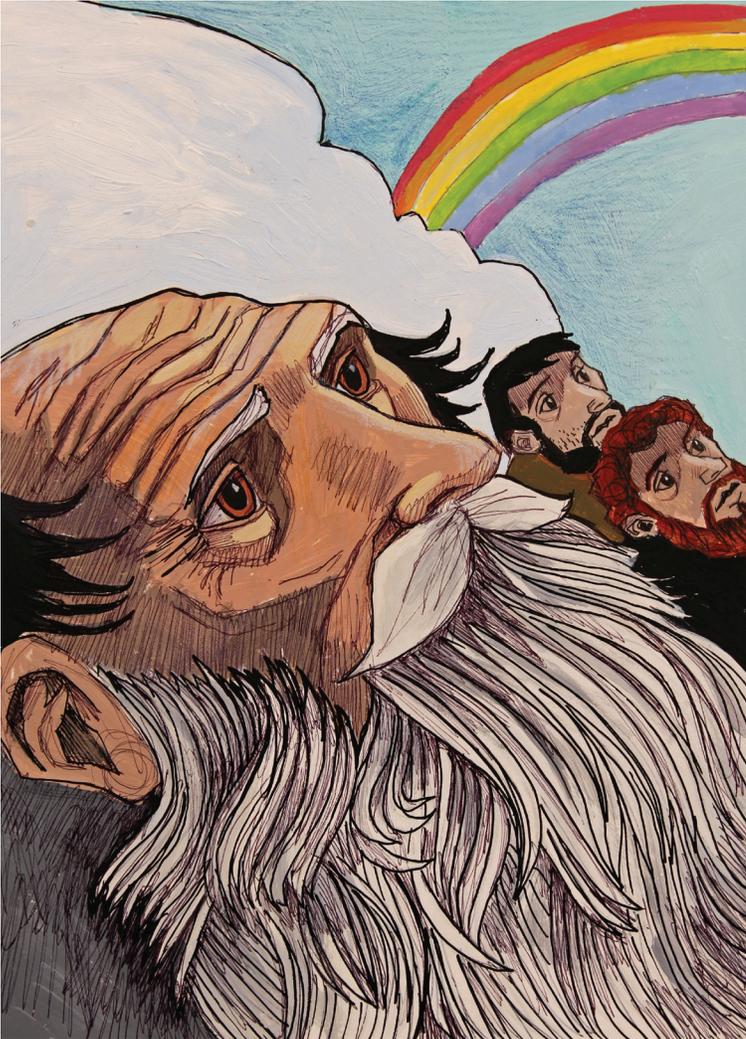
Father of all creation,
You set a bow in the skies as a sign
of the covenant
that you made with every living being.
Never again would a flood purify the earth
by destroying all of its creatures.

In your mercy, you sent your Son to save us
from our sins.

Through our Lord's Death and
Resurrection, we have been redeemed.
Now, in the waters of Baptism, we are
cleansed, become your children,
and are granted a new life with you.
Open us to the Spirit during this Lent
that we may seek to deepen our lives
in you.

As we prepare to live out our baptismal call,
may we heed your words to repent and
believe in the Gospel.

We ask this 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.



Sunday, February 22, 2015

A New Covenant



Today's Readings: Genesis 9:8–15; Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9 (10); 1 Peter 3:18–22; Mark 1:12–15. Today's First Reading flows into the Second Reading as we hear of the covenant that God made with Noah and then of the fulfillment of the covenant in Jesus Christ. Noah was promised that never again would a flood cleanse the earth. Christ, the righteous one, suffered, died, and rose to save the unrighteous. The flood was a one-time event that prefigured Baptism. The suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Christ was a one-time event that frees humankind for all time. Baptism is an appeal to God, "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

In the Gospel, we see Jesus going to the desert for forty days, a period that parallels the time on the ark. Jesus was among wild beasts and tempted by Satan, but the angels

ministered to him. During this time alone, Jesus prepared for his ministry of preaching God's love and repentance. He needed this time to be strengthened in prayer to do God's will. The forty days of Lent parallel the forty days in the desert. How do we use this period to prepare ourselves to do God's will so that through our lives others will "repent and believe in the Gospel"? We keep these days as a time of preparation for living out our baptismal call. You might want to consider how your Lenten practices are readying you to discover how God calls you. Perhaps you would like to read the Second Reading again and consider how Baptism enters us into the Paschal Mystery, Christ's suffering, Death, and Resurrection.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, February 23, 2015

Regarding Others as Sacred

We hear Jesus tell us today that when we care for the hungry, the thirsty, or the sick, we are caring for him. Pope Francis helps us to think of others as Christ when he states that, in accompanying others, we “remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other” (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 169). We often think well of ourselves for providing assistance to another, but here Francis helps us look at the holiness of those we aid. Today’s Readings: Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15 (John 66:63b); Matthew 25:31–46.

Tuesday, February 24, 2015

Meditative Prayer

It could be tempting to just glance over today’s Gospel passage. After all, the verses from Matthew contain the text of the Lord’s Prayer, and we know that prayer by heart. But do we really know it? Perhaps as a Lenten exercise, you might spend time with the prayer. Begin with the phrase “hallowed be your name.” What does it mean that the Lord’s name be kept holy? Do you find that hard to do in a society that takes God’s name lightly? Consider the meaning of each phrase of the Lord’s Prayer. Doing so could change the way you pray. Today’s Readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–5, 6–7, 16–17, 18–19 (18b); Matthew 6:7–15.

Wednesday, February 25, 2015

Being Open to God’s Mercy

The Gospel today is directed at a people oblivious to the sign in front of them. Though Jesus is in their midst, those who hear and see him do not have faith. We cannot miss the Gospel’s connection to us. Are we reluctant to put our faith in Christ, even though he has done works in our midst? The Ninevites heeded Jonah and changed their ways. Do we possess that same faith in Christ to repent and take in God’s mercy? Where in your life do you feel the need for God’s mercy? Today’s Readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19 (19b); Luke 11:29–32.

Thursday, February 26, 2015

Ask, Seek, Knock

Jesus continues to teach us about prayer. We are called to ask, seek, and knock, so that the door will be opened for us. A curious word here is “seek.” It is not often that we see that word linked with prayer. We are, though, seeking God when we pray. Perhaps all we need to do is trust that God is there and will provide good things for us just as would a parent. During this Lent, will you seek to deepen your trust in God? Today’s Readings: Esther C: 12, 14–16, 23–25; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8 (3a); Matthew 7:7–12.

Friday, February 27, 2015

Reconciling with Others

Lent can be considered as a time of retreat in which we examine how we can deepen our relationship with God and others. During this time, we look inward to see how we might have harmed our relationships and begin to take the necessary steps to reconciliation. Today’s Gospel explains that our relationship with God cannot be considered separate from our relationship with others. We cannot offer our gift at the altar without making amends with our neighbor. Today’s Readings: Ezekiel 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8 (3); Matthew 5:20–26.

Saturday, February 28, 2015

Loving When It Is Difficult

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” These words from today’s Gospel can be challenging. It can be difficult enough to forgive and get along with our children, spouse, and parents. We are required, though, to love even those who have intentionally hurt us. Such love might seem impossible, but as the Second Vatican Council document *Lumen Gentium* states in article 40, the Holy Spirit strengthens us to do so. Today’s Readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8 (1b); Matthew 5:43–48.

