



BIBLE STUDY FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT YEAR B

“At once the Spirit drove him 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.”

Reading I: Genesis 9:8-15

HOPE IS KNOWING THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL! Pope Francis declared that, *“Lent is the sacramental sign of our journey from slavery to freedom, always to be renewed. It is certainly a demanding journey as it rightly should be, because love is demanding, but it is a journey filled with hope. Cleanness of the body was ever deemed to proceed from a due reverence to God.”* During this Holy Season of Lent, we will embark on a journey of Hope. As Pope Francis reminds us, *“Lent is a time of Hope,”* we have adopted following Lenten Theme: LENT, A JOURNEY OF HOPE. Each week during Lent we will examine an aspect of hope and provide tasks that will allow us to live up to our obligation to bring others to Jesus Christ. The theme for the First Sunday in Lent is: *Hope is knowing that god is faithful.*

God’s love and faithfulness is the foundation of hope!

In the first reading, God’s faithfulness is shown in the covenant with Noah, his descendants, and all the animals who came out of the arc. The Story of the Flood in Genesis Chapters 6-8 is like comparable catastrophic stories in mid-eastern cultures. In this story, there is one God who is loving and faithful enough to come to mankind when mankind was at its worst. In Genesis, the flood which destroyed everyone in the region where the flood occurred resulted with the covenant that God would never again destroy the earth with a flood. The sign of that covenant is the rainbow. (vv. 8-17) Usually, a covenant is between two people, but this one is unilateral. God promised to spare mankind even if mankind became sinful once again. By sparing Noah and his family and his innocent way of life, God provided a way to carry on the knowledge of Himself down to Abraham’s time.

Hope survived the flood. Imagine the state of mind of Noah and his family as they entered the arc as the wind raged and the waters rose. God said He would be faithful to them and He was. The rainbow is the sign of God’s faithfulness. The knowledge that God is faithful was the foundation of their hope. God’s love and mercy is the foundation of all Christian hope. Hope is knowing that God will never abandon us even for a moment. Discussion Questions: Define Hope. How has God shown His faithfulness to you?

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH - GOD’S NAME SAYS HE IS FAITHFUL!

207 By revealing his name God at the same time reveals his faithfulness which is from everlasting to everlasting, valid for the past (“I am the God of your fathers”), as for the future (“I will be with you”). God, who reveals his name as “I AM,” reveals himself as the God who is always there, present to his people in order to save them.

211 The divine name, “I Am” or “He Is,” expresses God’s faithfulness: despite the faithlessness of men’s sin and the punishment it deserves, he keeps “steadfast love for thousands.” By going so far as to give up his own Son for us, God reveals that he is “rich in mercy.” By giving his life to free us from sin, Jesus reveals that he himself bears the divine name: “When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you will realize that ‘I Am.’”

Reading II: 1 Peter 3:18-22

HOPE IS KNOWING THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL! In this portion of 1 Peter, the writer encouraged Christians to live in a manner that shows that they have hope. In doing so he shows them the source of their hope, Jesus Christ. He does so with a catechesis on Baptism.

Baptism is how Christians share in the death of Christ. He reminded them that just as Christ’s death is life producing, so too is a Christian’s suffering. Even though Christ died in the flesh, He remained alive in the spirit. In the same way, Christians put away the ways of the flesh in Baptism and live a life in the spirit. A life of hope, therefore, is a life in the freedom that comes from knowing that God loves us, sent His Son to redeem us, and united us with Him in Baptism. A life of hope is living blameless lives through Jesus’ resurrection.

Just as Noah and his family (the few) were made new through the waters of the flood and the subsequent covenant with God (vv. 20-22 see Reading I), Baptism, is a sharing in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians are required to live in hope, knowing that God is faithful and will never abandon us in times of suffering. Discussion Question: How does your life resemble a life of hope?

Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

HOPE IS KNOWING THAT GOD IS FAITHFUL! It has been said that a person can live eight days without water, forty days without food, four minutes without air, but only a few seconds without HOPE. We all know someone who needs hope. Hope is not some foggy or strange hallucination of the future. It is facing the future remembering how we made it through tough times with God's help. Hope is knowing that God is faithful.

In the Gospel, Jesus began His ministry knowing that God is faithful. Beginning with the reference to the prophet Isaiah in verse 1, to the voice from the heavens confirming that Jesus is the Son of God in verse 11, the Gospel of Mark shows that God fulfilled His promise to redeem the world. Redemption is difficult. God's faithful Spirit compelled or drove Jesus into the wilderness to test Him with an obstacle, Satan (v. 12). Perhaps resembling Israel's time of testing in the desert, Jesus continued the preparation for His ministry by spending 40 days in the wilderness. There is evidence that the Israelites considered inhabited lands as a blessing and the wilderness as a curse. Jesus, who took the form of man, was baptized by a man even though He needed no baptism, spent 40 days in a place that the people He came to save considered as cursed, where He was tempted by Satan. He was in for a tough time in which He could not afford to lose hope. He had assumed the role of both Adam and Israel as a measure of His act of redemption.

His association with wild animals symbolized the chaos that threatens to eclipse the ordered world (v. 13, Job 5:222; Ezek. 5:17; 14:21). To bring God's order of forgiveness and reconciliation into the world, He could not lose hope. He had to remember the faithfulness of His Father, who said that He was pleased with Him (v. 11).

God the Father was faithful to His Son and sent angelic servants to minister to Him during His time of testing (v. 13, see Heb. 1:14). His Father did not abandon Him in His time of need but provided grace to sustain Him. God is Faithful. In this way, we see that the first Adam surrendered to Satan in an environment that was beautiful and friendly. Jesus, the new Adam, defeated Satan in an environment that was hostile and desolate. Hope is knowing that God is faithful. Jesus lived knowing the fidelity of God would sustain and never abandon Him. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** How do you find hope during times of distress?

GO AND LIVE THE GOSPEL!

GOD WAS FAITHFUL TO NOAH'S FAMILY. HE IS ALSO FAITHFUL TO OUR FAMILIES.

Welcome God into the daily life of your family by:

- E**ating at least one meal together daily as a family;
- P**ray daily with the family at meals;
- B**egin a fast from social media during meals;
- B**less your family as members as they leave and when they return home.

These efforts may cause us to consider how we define "family" in our parish. Traditional families, families separated by distance or choice, divorced and widowed families, single parent families are all God's family. We are all united in the Baptism of Jesus Christ and saved by His precious blood.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES THAT THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION CAN CLEAN YOU UP.

1446 Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as "the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace."

Resources: Genesis, Pauline A. Viviano, Collegeville Bible Commentary, Ole Testament, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN., pp. 47-52. The Gospel of Mark, Philip Van Linden, C.M., the Collegeville Bible Commentary New Testament, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN. pp 903-908.; 1 Peter, Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J. 1228-1233; The College Bible Commentary, New Testament, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year B, 2018, Brian Schmisk, Diana Macalintal and Jay Cormier, Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 66-69. Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner. <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-;The-Sunday-Readings,-Cycle-B,-Kevin-O-Sullivan,-O.F.M.-Franciscan-Herald-Press-1971,-pp-115-121;The-Gospel-of-Mark,-Catholic-Commentary-on-Sacred-Scripture,-Mary-Healy,-Baker-Academic,-©-2008,-pp-29-39>

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