



FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

FIRST READING: Genesis 9:8-17

A reading from Genesis.

⁸God said to Noah and to his sons with him,
⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you
and your descendants after you,
¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you,
the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you,
as many as came out of the ark.
¹¹I establish my covenant with you,
that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood,
and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”
¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant
that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you,
for all future generations:
¹³I have set my bow in the clouds,
and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.
¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,
¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you
and every living creature of all flesh;
and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.
¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it
and remember the everlasting covenant
between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”
¹⁷God said to Noah,
“This is the sign of the covenant that I have established
between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

PSALMODY: Psalm 25:1-10

FIRST READING

Here is God’s dramatic and eternal covenant (promissory relationship) with all of humankind and all the creatures of the animal kingdom. There are two delightful components, not to be missed, which the reader may find helpful. First, the rainbow, God declares, will serve as a reminder for God so that God doesn’t forget! As it has been humankind, not God, that has proven forgetful up to this point, there is perhaps a little divine humor—at least irony—to be found in verses 14 and 15. Second, allow the repetitious nature of the words about establishing the covenant and remembering the covenant (and it does get repetitive) to give the text the sound of determination.

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 3:18-22

A reading from First Peter.

¹⁸Christ also suffered for sins once for all,
the righteous for the unrighteous,
in order to bring you to God.

He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,
¹⁹in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison,
²⁰who in former times did not obey,
when God waited patiently in the days of Noah,
during the building of the ark,
in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

²¹And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—
not as a removal of dirt from the body,

but as an appeal to God for a good conscience,
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God,
with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

The word of the Lord. *or* Word of God, word of life.

SECOND READING

Careful! This is not a simple little text. Verse 19 refers to Christ's descent to the dead as affirmed in the Apostles' Creed. The spirits to whom he "made a proclamation" refer to those fallen ones whose evildoing characterized the world in Noah's day. Verse 21 seems to be a tangential change of thought about baptism, stimulated by thinking about the flood. There is an almost "by the way" feel about the transition. The reader will do well to invest some serious time with the text in preparation for reading it to the assembly. It is a rich and hopeful reading that requires some time to "get to know."

GOSPEL: Mark 1:9-15

The holy gospel according to Mark.

⁹In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee
and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water,
he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.

¹¹And a voice came from heaven,
“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

¹³He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan;
and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee,
proclaiming the good news of God, ¹⁵and saying,

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near;
repent, and believe in the good news.”

The gospel of the Lord.

GOSPEL

Here, as often in Mark, the evangelist is succinct. A deliberate delivery will help the assembly assimilate all the information packed into these few verses. Allow each sentence its due. Pause between paragraphs. Treat the semicolons in verse 13 as you would periods. Break the closing sentence into four separate declarative and imperative statements: The time is fulfilled! And the kingdom of God has come near! Repent! And believe in the good news!