

1st Week of Lent, 2018

There is a new attraction in Kentucky and it's not what you might think.
It's a life size version of Noah's ark and it's a tourist attraction and interactive museum.

There's always been a fascination with the whole Noah's ark story with the animals, flood and rainbow.
It seems to be relegated to the nursery or children's room these days.
but what does all that symbolism mean to us today?

The church has often been referred to as a ship , the baroque or boat of peter or the mother ship.
As Gods faithful are on board the ship gets tossed through storms of heresy, avoids collisions with apostasy,
and fends off the pirates of schism, with the pope at the helm guiding her through it all. I know Sometimes it
might feel like the pope is the storm.

But regardless of how it might feel to us today, When Jesus started this church, this one, holy, catholic,
apostolic church, he meant for it to be an all-inclusive package. A way to live a life in Christ from cradle to
grave.
It wasn't intended to be a pleasure cruise and it wasn't intended to be a battle ship either.

It was intended to be a vessel that carries us safely to our final destination through the storms and attacks of
daily life.

Sometimes people abandon the mother ship because they want their own boat to sail.

They are still our brothers and sisters, but they just got busy building their own boat, using supplies from the
mother ship.

Some of them became experts in their particular field of theology from which they take their name.

Methodist have a method in their worship.

Pentecostals became experts with the Holy Spirit, Presbyterians, means priesthood, developed the priesthood
of all the baptized.

Baptist became experts at baptism.

When Baptist baptize a person they follow the full immersion method, it is a dramatic image of what happens to
the persons soul.

Baptist Churches often have the baptistery, long glass bathtub, installed above the choir which is behind the
preacher.

The minister and the one to be baptized will enter the water up to the waist. The minister will stand behind the
person and lower them down backwards into the water as if they are falling backwards like they are dying.
Then the minister raises them back up out of the water as if they are rising up from the dead.

And the Catholic Church accepts any baptism, whether it's full immersion or christening, as long as it includes
water and the words, I baptized you in the name of the father, son, and Holy Spirit,

Because the water and words together do something to the human soul.

It doesn't matter if it's full immersion or a sprinkle of water, when that combination is used, a flood of original sin
washes that soul clean and a tsunami of forgiveness and grace flows in and leaves a permanent mark that will
never disappear.

That's what the Noah and the ark and the rainbow is all about.

Sin had grown so great in the world that it needed to be wiped clean and started over. What was the sin? Mostly, I want to do things my way. I don't need your ship. I'll build my own boat, from materials off the mother ship of course, but I'll sail my own route.

I don't need God, the Church, or anyone else telling me what to do or how to do it.

That's what was happening then, and it's happening today.

So This great flood wiped the slate clean and started over. God made a covenant with Noah and His family and promised He would never do that again and sealed the covenant with a rainbow.

A covenant is not a contract. A contract can become invalidated if one or both parties don't uphold their end of the agreement.

A covenant on the other hand is an agreement between two un-equals. Like between a king and a duke, A covenant binds two or more persons together beyond the mere contractual agreement. Marriage is a prime example. While marriage has "contractual" elements and promises, it is a covenant that binds two persons together.

The Marital covenant is between God and the man and woman.

So a covenant with God stays in effect even when we break it.

You and I break the covenant on a routine basis.

So today is the first Sunday of Lent. Lent means a new spring time. A rebirth or renewal. So the countdown is on for this renewal.

The church asks us to do this thing together, to let go and let die the thing inside of us that is sick or toxic. That stuff doesn't get to come on the boat. It's not good for you or the rest of us.

At your baptism you died with Christ. That thing or thorn that you struggle every day died too. But every day we have to let it die again.

At your funeral the priest will sprinkle holy water on your casket and say,

that at your baptism you died with Christ and now at your death may you rise with Him in glory.

Then the pall is placed on your coffin as if you are being clothed in the risen glory of the transfiguration.

But every day we have to die to ourselves and rise again in Christ.

In the old Jewish tradition of Yom Kippur, a goat was chosen each year for all the sins of the people. The sins were ritually attached to the goat and was then sent out into the wilderness. It was the scapegoat.

Today after Jesus was baptized He is driven by the Spirit into the wilderness and tempted.

Jesus takes on our sins.

And he will strip away our sins by his bloody death on the cross.

Sometimes we may find it hard to come up with anything serious to confess.

Or we may think that since it's just the same old sins what difference does it make.

It made a difference to Jesus. He carried his cross for me whether I cared or not.

St. Peter- Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God.

Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit.

Today/Sunday- the Archbishop calls upon our catechumens to become our elect. Our catechumens have been in a formation period for close to a year and now they take their final steps toward the Easter sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist. Their names are written in the "book of Life" which is presented to the archbishop, who signs it.

We in the parish community must pledge that we will support our Elect by our prayers and example. This means a renewed effort on our part to restore our own baptismal dignity.

If you haven't started a Lenten discipline then I invite you to join me in extra prayer and fasting for both our catechumens and candidates. Each Friday of Lent the chapel will open all day for Eucharistic Adoration until 5:30. Then we move to the church for a holy hour, Taizei Prayer, stations of the cross and a Lenten meal in MH.

Making a small sacrifice for another is the mortar of building bridging and becoming a community of light that guides all ships to a safe harbor.