

Homily for the First Sunday of Lent, Year – B

Readings Genesis 9: 8-15; 1 Peter 3: 18-22; Mark 1; 12-15



Fr Michael says:

Our time of renewal! It is Spring again! We need a fresh look at things and this is what Lent, lived positively can do for us! Our Genesis Reading underlines this with the introduction of the idea of Covenant, that intimacy and relationship with God, Who seeks us out: Noah and all creation are the partners in it. The waters of the Flood are a sign of the Baptism to come, which brings us salvation as Peter reminds us and it is in the waters of Jordan that Jesus is prepared for His Mission and sent by the Spirit to the desert to discern its meaning and what it demands. We see His Victory achieved already here, as we are assured of victory if we renew ourselves and live our Baptismal Covenant to the full!

Janet Frame is a New Zealand author, who had been gravely mentally ill; eventually she sought further treatment in England and was greatly helped by her doctor – “I was grateful that my doctor was someone who was not afraid to acknowledge and voice the awful thought that he belonged, after all, to the human race, and that there was nothing he could do about it – pretending to be a god could never change it! In that hospital the management had wisely included doctors who were themselves handicapped by disabilities. Those doctors were more able to communicate with their patients.”

Compassion is only learnt through suffering. Unless we have cried, walked in darkness ourselves we cannot really be pathfinders for others. Today, we see Jesus’ temptations, showing how He identifies with us in all things but sin, as the letter to the Hebrews reminds us. So He can identify with us in all things and in every way! In good times and in bad, He is there! This is the profound mystery of His love for us! He is fully human, but not only human – sin is not something which can be identified with us as human beings essentially: it is a falling away from our humanity! He is with us in the mud and pain of life, as He is present to the Jew who was in the concentration camp, cleaning up the latrines on his hands and knees, with his guards taunting him by asking where his God was now! “He is here with me in all this muck and slime!” What a glorious testimony of faith: may it be ours too!

Each year the trees give us an example in renewal! We start with the bud, the blossom and then the shoot: Spring makes them young again, but this is only possible because in autumn they let go their leaves and endure a period of nakedness. Lent is the springtime of the spirit! “Lord help us not to be afraid to let go of old habits and to face our spiritual poverty, in order that you may renew us, and so at Easter, we will feel young again in our discipleship!”

Reflection 1st Sunday of Lent B, 2015



Fr. Tom says:

Lent is derived from an old English word meaning ‘*Springtime*’. Spring, a time of new growth when trees begin to bud, the first flowers appear and life springs forth from what appeared to be barren earth – it is a time for uncovering the hidden joy and beauty of creation. But all new birth comes with pain and struggle. The seed has to die in order to bring new life. In Lent we are offered a time of struggle that will involve challenge and suffering but this is the only way that we will uncover the true joy and beauty of the life that Jesus offers us in his resurrection. We cannot reap the rewards without making the journey.

We begin every Lenten journey with ashes, reminding us that this is our origin and the wonder of a God who breathed life into these ashes and gave us life. We are asked to choose between life and death and of course we choose life and thus begin a journey like taking a boat along a river in which we will experience calm waters, white water rapids, loss of control, and face the uncertainty of not knowing what lies ahead. Maybe this is why the first reading is about Noah whose boat saved him from death in the flood. Just as in the waters of Baptism this story tells us that God wants life for us not death; and life to be shared with others. In a sailing boat when we push the tiller one way the boat moves the other. Sometimes the current is so strong the tiller makes little difference to our movement. Fortunately we do not travel alone but the ultimate aim is not to use the tiller at all and let God steer the boat for us.

In order to help us make this journey we are given certain tools: Prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and this is just what Jesus did before embarking on his journey. He went into the desert (driven by the Spirit) he wanted to tune in to God (prayer); it involved self-discipline, perseverance, sacrifice of self (fasting) and the aim was to prepare to give himself totally to God and for others, for you and me (almsgiving).

“Repent, and believe in the gospel.” The call of Ash Wednesday will echo throughout this journey. It is a call to a change of heart, changing the way we live so that our belief in the Gospel will grow stronger and we will better witness the Good News to those around us. Just as Jesus was radically challenged in the desert, we too will be radically challenged. In Jesus’ case he left home and became an itinerant preacher but he never journeyed alone he chose companions and others followed. Similarly, we never journey alone we have others who will support, challenge, encourage, and motivate us just as we will for them, and, gradually, we will hand over the tiller to Jesus who we realise has been with us all the time.

Hillsong sing the following in “Where feet may fail . . .” We, like Peter, are invited to step out onto the water . . .

You call me out upon the waters,
the great unknown, where feet may fail.
And there, where I find you in the mystery of Oceans deep, my faith will stand . . .
Your grace abounds in deepest waters,
Your sovereign hand will be my guide
where feet may fail and fear surrounds me.
You have never failed and will not start now.