

THE EMMAUS SERIES

1st Sunday of Lent, Year B

Genesis 9:8-15

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:12-15

Jesus proclaimed the Good News: 'The Kingdom of God is at hand'

Undertaking an important journey we must be well prepared. As we set out on our journey to Easter, we must be clear about the destination that gives meaning to this journey.

Today's gospel reading invites us to prepare ourselves in the company of Jesus. As he set out on the journey that was to lead to Easter, he prepared himself by withdrawing to some desert place, and confronting the temptation to avoid the great task that lay ahead of him. This is an astounding moment in the life of Jesus. Have we taken seriously the fact that, in sharing our human experience, Jesus knew the weight of human decisions and the temptations involved – though, of course, he was without sin in the response he made? This testing brought Jesus new strength, and he began to proclaim the Good News of the coming reign of God. In his company, during the coming days, let us recognise the nature of our temptations, and the bonds of selfishness from which we want to be freed as we make our journey to Easter.

Jesus found strength in the certainty with which he looked to the end of his journey. Though what lay ahead would not be easy, he knew that God's goodness and mercy would be victorious in the end – through his generous response to the call of his Father.

The first reading from the Book of Genesis invites us to share in this hope and expectation as we set out on our journey. It is the conclusion of the story of Noah and the ark which saved him from The Flood – one of the old stories in the introductory pages of the Bible, describing a wayward humanity, in need of the salvation God was to give. The story ends on a note of hope and promise – the rainbow will be a sign of the covenant God makes with humanity, promising that he will always be merciful.

What a magnificent symbol - reminding us of the trust we can place in God, whatever our difficulties and failings! Whenever we see the rainbow and know its promise of fine, clear weather after a storm, we should remember God's promise, and renew our trust in God's mercy, and the final triumph of God's goodness.

The second reading interprets the story of the flood and Noah's being saved as a kind of foretelling of the wonder of baptism – the destination of our journey to Easter, because it is through our baptism that we share in the risen life of Christ.

The beginning of our journey is a time for personal reflection for each of us. Perhaps, however, we need to ponder more deeply the astonishing fact that Jesus knew temptation, though he was without sin in his response to its challenge.

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