

Lenten 1B

Water and Judgment

In today's first reading, we hear the familiar story of Noah and the flood. By the waters of the flood God pronounces a judgment on a sinful world that has gone astray. Despite the sinfulness of humanity, however, God does not abandon his creation. Instead, God chooses Noah and his family to restore creation to its original goodness. And so the waters of the great flood wash away an evil generation; and God establishes a new covenant with Noah and a new relationship with humanity.

In today's second reading, St. Peter uses this theme of the flood to explain the meaning of our baptism. St. Peter says that just as the waters of the flood washed away the wickedness of the world; so the waters of our baptism washed away our sin, the sin of Adam and Eve, the sin that we call "original sin." This original sin is the power of Sin and Death that keeps us from God. It is this Sin that Christ conquered by his saving death and his life-giving resurrection so that we might enjoy eternal life with God. By our baptism we entered the New Covenant God that made with us through the death and resurrection of his Son.

Finally, in today's Gospel, St. Mark tells us the story of Jesus' testing in the wilderness. Although brief, this story highlights Jesus' victory over Satan and the power of evil. Whereas Adam disobeys God's commandment, Jesus is completely

obedient to his Father. And because he is obedient to the point of dying on the cross, Jesus becomes the head of a new humanity to which we belong through our baptism.

Today's readings highlight three great themes of our Lenten journey: (1) The judgment of God over the power of Sin; (2) The cleansing waters of baptism whereby we are reborn and become a new creation in Christ; (3) The obedience of Christ who has brought us into a new creation through his saving death and life-giving resurrection.

These readings remind us that Lent is a moment to renew our baptismal promises through prayer, through fasting, through penance, and through renewed works of charity. They remind us that Lent is an opportunity for us to turn away from old and destructive habits to a new way of life in Christ—a way that preserves us from judgment and brings us to the fullness of God's grace.

As we begin Lenten journey that leads to the glory of Easter, we ask for the grace to deepen our sense of commitment to Christ and his gospel. We ask for the grace to live as the new creation that God has made us in Christ. We ask for the grace to pass from judgment to salvation.