



Le Christ au désert servi par les anges by Charles Le Brun, CCO

February 18, 2024

First Sunday of Lent

Gn 9:8-15 | 1 Pt 3:18-22 | Mk 1:12-15

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Today is the first day of Lent! It is the beginning of a new liturgical season in the Church, a season of prayer, service and self-sacrifice. It is a time of preparation, culminating in the holiest day of the year: Easter. As we embark on our Lenten journey, we hear a reading from Genesis in which God makes a covenant with Noah where he promises, “the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings.” The Lord has said that no matter our disobedience, sin and rebellion, he will never destroy us! Saint Peter explains how the story of Noah, “in which a few persons ... were saved through water,” prefigures baptism, and baptism, as we know, marks us as the Lord’s own forever. We are sealed with a sign that can never be relinquished. So, just as the great flood signaled a rebirth for the world, our baptism is a rebirth of our soul in Christ. We are washed clean of our original sin, and the door to salvation is opened for us. It is fitting that at the beginning of our Lenten journey we hear the story of the beginning of our eternal covenant with the Lord. Both the covenant, and Lent, will be fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

As a child, Lent meant lentils for dinner, Stations of the Cross on Fridays, and no TV ever. For a 10-year-old, it was a time to be endured. Now, as an adult, Lent can still be hard, but I recognize it as a time of opportunity as well. It is a chance to strip away all the excess in my life and focus on what matters most. While I am not exactly jumping for joy at the thought of fasting, I can’t deny that it is easier for me to spend time in prayer when I’m not mindlessly grazing on chips and chocolate all day long. I may grumble at times, but with God’s grace I have grown in understanding of the Church’s wisdom in encouraging us to fast, pray and give alms during Lent. All three practices invite us to reflect on the great sacrifice of the Lord and prepare our hearts to receive him each Sunday in the Eucharist, as well as on our final judgment day.

PRAY Lent is the perfect time to take stock of your current spiritual practices and add new ones to your daily routine. Remember the words we heard from Jesus today: “The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.” Start off your Lenten season right by taking time to receive the sacrament of reconciliation and designating a time each day to pray. If you aren’t sure what to say to God during this time, choose a verse or two of Psalm 6 and let your heart take it from there.