

## Lent1-B7 homily by Fr. Gabor

### New beginning

I think most Catholics think that there were only two covenants between God and humanity: Old Covenant through Moses and the New Covenant through Jesus, but actually there were 6 covenants. Today we hear about the first Covenant, which was made through Noah and his sons when the great flood receded. We hear in today's first reading that God sets the rainbow as a reminder of His covenant through Noah. So ever since I have heard about this story the rainbow always reminds me of God's Covenant, of His promise that He would never again destroy the face of the earth. Always when I drive on the road in the countryside and see a rainbow this is exactly what I think of. So to me God's Covenant is the only true symbolic meaning of the rainbow and not anything else that you see today, because this is what God decided the rainbow should symbolise.

The making of the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant with Noah and his sons is significant for the beginning of Lent, because it is about a new beginning in the relationship between God and humanity. Just imagine that Noah opens the doors and windows of the ark and the birds fly out and the animals rumble and run out into the dry land. Life fills the dry land again. ***Similarly the people of Israel, after their escape from Egypt also have to go into dry land, into the desert, and they have to travel for 40 years in the desert so that they can get rid of their attachments to the old idols and old mentality of Egypt and are ready to receive the new life in the Promised Land.*** Before Jesus starts to fill the earth with his life-giving teaching and miracles He is baptised, and then goes into dry land, into the desert and after 40 days He brings new life to the people of Israel. Notice that St. Paul associates the waters of the flood at Noah's time and the waters of baptism. This is important, because baptism is the beginning of our new life with God, just like the great flood is the washing away of sinful society and a new beginning in the history of humanity. Since baptism is also about dying with Christ, leaving behind what separates us from God and then awakening to a new life, it is necessary that we go through a desert experience, the experience of leaving behind what is not from God, like Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and rediscovering the life that God alone can give.

This is still the beginning of Lent, so if you really want to experience new life, the life that God gives, you need to focus back onto your baptism, on its true meaning, namely your closely knit life with Christ, your covenantal life with Christ, and then go into your desert and shed everything that is not from Christ, and be nourished by all that comes from the mouth of God. Renew your baptismal promises, just like at your confirmation when you held a baptismal candle in your hand and said the words of renewal: you rejected Satan, and all

his works and all his empty promises, just like Noah and Moses and Jesus, and then you confirmed your faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and in the Church, the body of Christ, and then you received the Holy Spirit, just like Noah, Moses and Jesus. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert. So now is the time to renew your baptismal Covenant with Jesus, so that you can also be filled with the Holy Spirit who will lead you into the desert of self-control and self-denial where you will have to leave behind what is not from God, but at the same time you will be strengthened and nourished by everything that comes directly from the mouth of God. But when you read His word first always ask the Holy Spirit to illumine your mind and heart so that you don't only hear the word of God, but also understand that particular message which the Father sends you through it for your desert journey. God also feeds us through other speakers He has appointed to teach in His name. I can recommend you some spirit-filled teachers on YouTube, such as Bishop Robert Barron, Fr. Robert Spitzer, Bishop Hugh and I am sure some of you have your own favourite inspiring speakers. Remember what the psalmist says: *'The Lord...shows the path to those who stray, He guides the humble in the right path, He teaches His way to the poor.'* However, don't just listen and understand, but also put into practice what you hear. To achieve this you need to discipline yourself spiritually, and be ready to make sacrifices.

So to me the key expression for this Lent is 'self-discipline in love with Jesus'. If you like it, join with me and let's journey together through the desert of Lent, united in the same Spirit! Let us reject Satan's temptations in daily life, and all his works and all his empty promises in our thinking, and return to life with Christ.