

First Reading, Genesis 9:8-15. ¹

1. Proclaim the Text. James Owen Reads the First Reading, NAB translation.

All the listeners write down words, phrases, images which resonate in their hearing.

2. Echo Back a Response

Participants share words and images which struck the heart and mind and imagination as they listened.

There is **no discussion, no questions** except for clarification.

3. Echo The Tradition (Fr. Pat's Presentation)

There are two main version of the Flood story, and they are blended together in Genesis 6-9.

There are interesting differences.

In one version Noah takes one pair of each type of animal into the ark.

In the other version, Noah takes **seven** pairs of clean animals into the ark and one pair of unclean animals.

Version 1

Although God's name (Yahweh, LORD -- more shortly) was not revealed until the time of Moses

One version portrays Noah in relationship with the LORD. Scholars call this the J version.

This was first noticed by German scholars, and they spelled it Jahweh, with a J.

This version was probably written down about 950 B.C. in the time of David or Solomon

Version 2.

The passage we read today does not use the divine name. Noah is in relationship with "God."

This version was probably written about 550 B.C., during the Babylonian exile.

This author does not use the divine name in his story, until after it is revealed to Moses

The main concerns of this author are "priestly" -- notice the

Priestly Author and Covenant.

The J author knows of only one covenant -- the Mosaic covenant at Sinai.

The P author portrays God in covenant relationship with humanity even before the time of Moses.

He portrays a covenant with Abraham!

He also portrays a covenant with Noah! (The J author speaks rather of a "promise" to Noah)

Covenants are sealed by **sacrifice**.

This is why the author needs more than one pair of clean animals in his story.

Some of them are going to be sacrificed when God makes a covenant with Noah.

Imagine 1 pair of poor animals making it through the flood in the ark, and then being made extinct by sacrifice!

Priestly Author and Creation

The priestly author wrote the 6-day creation story in Genesis 1.

There God is portrayed as making order out of chaos.

He makes a "firmament" (solid sky) to divide the waters above the heavens from the waters below the heavens.

P portrays the flood as the "undoing" of creation, as the return of chaos, as the result of human sin.

Liturgical context

When we bless holy water, one of the phrases is:

The waters of the great flood made an end of sin, and a new beginning of goodness.

¹ My main resources for this course are: Reginal H. Fuller, *Preaching the Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today* (Liturgical Press, 1984); Dianne Bergant, with Richard Fragomeni, *Preaching the New Lectionary: Year B* (Liturgical Press, 1999).

Lent is a time when

- 1) new Christians are preparing for baptism
- 2) those who are already Christian remember their baptism.

This theme will be picked up by the second reading.

In Ordinary Time the Second Reading has no connection with the First Reading.

In Lent, often the Second Reading relates to the First Reading, the Gospel, or even both.

4. Echo the Tradition Again: Questions, Comments, Observations

5. Proclaim the Text. **Margie Caplis Reads the First Reading from the Jerusalem Bible**

6. Name the Good News

Participants share the good news of the text: for the original listeners; for the present-day hearer.

7. Name the Challenge

Participants share. Participants share the challenges of the text for the first hearers.

How does the text challenge the experience and understanding of the present day listener?

What is the pain and bondage and brokenness in the human situation touched by this text?

Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

X Reads the Psalm, NAB translation.

All the listeners write down words, phrases, images which resonate in their hearing.

Response: Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant.

2. Echo Back a Response

Participants share words and images which struck the heart and mind and imagination as they listened.

There is **no discussion, no questions** except for clarification.

3. Echo The Tradition (Fr. Pat's Presentation)

V. 4. Your ways, O LORD, **make known to me**

teach me your paths.

This is synonymous parallelism: 2 similar ideas that reinforce, mutually interpret each other.

Your ways || your paths

make known to me || teach me

It is also what scholars call a chiasm. The Greek letter *chi*, X, looks like an English X.

A chiasm is considered very beautiful.

Also, the poet is calling special attention when he makes a chiasm. You can be sure this is an important theme.

Life is considered a journey -- a series of journeys.

The main focus of Lent is our journey of baptism.

RCIA teams are working with catechumens on the final stages of their preparatory journey.

This is a time when we remember our own baptismal journey. Everyone's story is different

How did I come to be baptized, and in this assembly today? How has God acted in my life to bring me here?

Lord and LORD

If you have a missal or a lectionary notice that “Lord” is spelled normally in the response.

However, in the psalm it is spelled with ALL CAPITALS -- “LORD.”

Whenever this happens, the English word is translating the Hebrew name of God, YHWH.

Scholars often render it YHWH out of respect for the Jewish custom of not pronouncing it.

At the time of Jesus, “the name” was pronounced by the high priest -- only once a year.

In ancient times, “the name” had been pronounced “Yahweh.”

If you are reading the OT, sometimes you will also see the word “Lord.” This word is not translating the divine name.

A feature of the JB and the NJB is that these translations have “Yahweh” where most bibles read “LORD.”

v. 6. Remember that your **compassion**, O LORD and your **love** are from of old.

v. 7. In your **kindness** remember me, because of your goodness, O LORD.

Remember

Why do we ask God to remember? Doesn't God know everything? Isn't it impossible for God to forget?

The **God of the theologians** cannot forget. The **God of storytellers** forgets all the time!

Note that the purpose of the rainbow in Genesis 9:14 (1st reading) is to help **God** remember his covenant!

When God “remembers,” God acts to save.

Gen 8:1 God remembered Noah . . .

Gen 9:15, God says: I will **recall** (NAB) **remember** (NABRE) the covenant I have made

Exodus 2:24 The LORD remembered his covenant with Abraham

The people had been enslaved for 4 centuries. They **felt** forgotten.

And so the storyteller has no problem saying that the LORD (YHWH) remembered his covenant!

Luke 23:42, “Jesus, remember me . . .”

Thus we make this prayer our own -- whenever God has forgotten us.

Compassion *rachamim*²

Islam: All praise to Allah the beneficent (*ar-rachmān*) the merciful (*ar-rachim*)

rechem (Arabic *rachm*) = “womb”

Love / Kindness

Both of these words translated the same Hebrew word *chesed* in the early NAB -- the one in the missal.

In the later translations the word will be translated “**mercy**” both times.

The Greek Bible renders it by the noun *eleos*.

Many will remember the related verb for “have mercy,” *Kyrie eleison*.

This is not simply a prayer for forgiveness.

4. Echo the Tradition Again: Questions, Comments, Observations

5. Proclaim the Text. **Margie Caplis Reads the Psalm from the Jerusalem Bible**

6. Name the Good News

Participants share the good news of the text: for the original listeners; for the present-day hearer.

² This is the “popular” spelling. If you read something more scholarly, you will see these words spelled with a “dotted h,” e.g. *rahmim*, *hesed*. Hebrew also has a “regular h.” Scholars use the dot to remind themselves that “ch” is representing only one Hebrew (or Arabic) letter, not two!

7. Name the Challenge

Participants share. Participants share the challenges of the text for the first hearers.

How does the text challenge the experience and understanding of the present day listener?

What is the pain and bondage and brokenness in the human situation touched by this text?

Second Reading, 1 Peter 3:18-22.

1. Proclaim the Text. **Mike Bradley Reads the Second Reading, NAB translation.**

All the listeners write down words, phrases, images which resonate in their hearing.

2. Echo Back a Response

Participants share words and images which struck the heart and mind and imagination as they listened.

There is **no discussion, no questions** except for clarification.

3. Echo The Tradition (Fr. Pat's Presentation)

Brief Overview ³

It is possible that this work was written by St. Peter, more likely by a later disciple honoring Peter's memory.

OUTLINE

A. Opening Formula	1:1-2	
B. Body	1:3-5:11	
	1:3-2:10	Affirmation of Christian Identity & Dignity
	2:11-3:12	Appropriate behavior for bearing good witness in a pagan world
	3:13-5:11	Christian behavior in the face of hostility [today's reading]
C. Concluding formula	5:12-14	

Christ in the Underworld

In the Creeds we say "he descended to hell" or "he descended to the dead"

(two different ways to translate the Greek idea of *Hades*)

This passage in 1 Peter portrays the risen Christ preaching in the underworld.

There are two interpretations.

1) He preached a message of salvation to righteous souls who preceded him. He led them to heaven.

This is called "the harrowing of hell," and has inspired many artists.

2) He preached to the **evil spirits** who had been imprisoned at the time of Noah

The "sons of God" who had sexual relations with human beings in Genesis 6 before the flood.

The message was not "good news" to them. Rather it was the announcement:

"Ha ha! We win! You lose!"

Paul Achtemeir one of my "scholarly grandfathers" supports this interpretation in the Hermeneia Series.⁴

He was the Doktorvater of Fr. Frank Matera -- who was one of the readers of my dissertation

Liturgical Context -- The Reference to Baptism

This ties in with the first reading and also with the major purpose of the Lenten season: baptismal renewal.

Evangelical Christians often feel the need of a "revival." The Catholic equivalent is a "mission."

But every year we Catholics have a 40-day revival / mission built into our Church Year.

³ See the table, "Summary of Basic Information" in Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the NT* (Doubleday, Yale 1997).

⁴ Hermeneia is a multi-volume, top of the line, scholarly commentary on the Bible, published by Fortress Press.

4. Echo the Tradition Again: Questions, Comments, Observations

5. Proclaim the Text. **X Reads the Second Reading from a Second Translation**

6. Name the Good News

Participants share the good news of the text: for the original listeners; for the present-day hearer.

7. Name the Challenge

Participants share. Participants share the challenges of the text for the first hearers.

How does the text challenge the experience and understanding of the present day listener?

What is the pain and bondage and brokenness in the human situation touched by this text?

Gospel, Mark 1:12-15

1. Proclaim the Text. **James Owen reads the Gospel, NAB translation.**

All the listeners write down words, phrases, images which resonate in their hearing.

2. Echo Back a Response

Participants share words and images which struck the heart and mind and imagination as they listened.

There is **no discussion, no questions** except for clarification.

3. Echo The Tradition (Fr. Pat's Presentation)

Liturgical Context

We skipped this reading earlier! -- when we started to read Mark's beginning of the Jesus story.

We "saved it" for Lent, so that it would fit in with our Catholic Liturgical Year.

Biblical Context

The longer version of Matthew & Luke has inspired more artists over the centuries.

Mark's version does not mention that Jesus was fasting!

It also does not mention any specific temptation!

In fact, the notice that "the angels ministered to him," might mean that they fed him

Elijah was miraculously fed by an angel before his journey to Mount Horeb [another name for Sinai]

The Spirit drove him out

This is violent language! "Driving out" is what Jesus is going to do to demons later in the Gospel!

This is the same Spirit that came upon the Judges.

The Spirit of God came on Samson, and he killed a lion with his bare hands.

The same Spirit had a more permanent relationship with the Kings of Israel.

The spirit of the LORD came upon David **from that day forward.**"

The same Spirit inspired the OT prophets.

This story puts Jesus in the tradition of OT prophets and saviors (Judges & Kings).

40 days

This expression will call to mind the 40 days that Moses was on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:18)

It will call to mind the 40-day journey of Elijah to Mount Horeb

It echoes more distantly the 40 **years** that Israel, the first "son of God" was in the desert.

Say to Pharaoh: "Israel is my firstborn son. Let my people go!"

This expression ties the Marcan Son of God to the tradition of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah).

These two figures will be in the Transfiguration scene, a high point of Mark's Gospel.

Repent

NT notion, *meta-noia* -- change of mind, change of heart [In Hebrew & biblical Greek you **think** with your **heart**]

Believe in the gospel

Gospel is “good news,” but not just any good news.

Someone in the time of Jesus would not say, “Have you heard the gospel? I got a raise!”

It is often good news of a victory. “Have you heard the gospel? Our troops defeated the Parthians!”

The Bad News is that the Devil is in charge of the world.

That’s why the NT calls him the “Prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

This is why we, who believe in the one true God, pay taxes to the Romans, who believe in many false gods.

This is why there are so many lepers, cripples, etc.

The Good News is that, through Jesus, God is about to take it back.

4. Echo the Tradition Again: Questions, Comments, Observations

5. Proclaim the Text. X Reads the Gospel from a Second Translation

6. Name the Good News

Participants share the good news of the text: for the original listeners; for the present-day hearer.

7. Name the Challenge

Participants share. Participants share the challenges of the text for the first hearers.

How does the text challenge the experience and understanding of the present day listener?

What is the pain and bondage and brokenness in the human situation touched by this text?