

### The First Sunday of Lent

By: Fr. Larry Gillick, S.J

The next Sunday in Ordinary time will be June fourteenth. Between now and then we celebrate various seasons in the liturgical year beginning this week with Ash Wednesday and the First Sunday of Lent.

This is a “joyful season,” because it is a time for growing. Here in the northern half of the globe, spring and Lent go together; Lent actually comes from the German word for “spring.” It is the time for raking away the deadly things and rearranging and straightening our gardens and our spirits.

It is also a “joyful season,” because we, as a Church, are preparing to receive those who will enter full-communion with us at the Easter Vigil. They are presently being introduced to our faith and its traditions and ways. We join more closely during these days of final preparation, lest we be embarrassed by their finding in us a community, not being faithful to what they had expected. We will renew our own baptismal promises at Easter with them and so, in a sense, we are also preparing to re-enter, and perhaps more deeply, the Catholic Church.

This Sunday’s first reading pictures God promising never to flood the earth again with water, even though there may be reason for God to be angry. When God sees the unprepared and unresponsive human family, God promises also to see a rainbow which will be the covenantal sign of God’s ever-lasting love and mercy.

The second reading is a baptismal instruction to those baptized recently. As Noah was saved from the waters of destruction by being in the ark, those who have been baptized in the flood-waters of Christ, are saved by being in the ark of Christ.

The gospel pictures Jesus being lead out into the desert for forty days and then returning to proclaim that “the

kingdom of God is at hand.” Jesus, as did the Jews before Him, was lead out to face Himself and His demons. The Jews wandered for forty years facing themselves and whether they believed and trusted in God’s care.

WE have begun our forty-day prayer-journey. It is our time to face themselves and our demons. It is a time for seeing if we are doing what is good for us and whether we know what is good for us, at all.

We could give up doing those things which are harmful to our spirits as well as our bodies and our relationships. As well, we could spend these days doing actions of charity which are both good for others and very good for our souls.

We are the church into which others want to come and pray and live out their faith with us. We are invited to check whether we are worthy of their entering. They have been examined and checked themselves to see if they are of the right spirit. We spend time seeing if we are of the right spirit ourselves.

There are many things to do for our outside-the-house lives; raking, picking up, washing, rearranging plans and getting ready for the growing season. There is much to do also for the inside-our selves, selves. We are offered time, liturgy and encouragement to re-church, re-enjoy and re-lent.

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Genesis 9:8-15 Psalms 25:4-9 1 Peter 3:18-22 Mark 1:12-15

February 22, 2015

# 靈 修 生 活

## 重 生 的 奧 秘

小明這天特別興奮，因為他首次與家人乘飛機旅行，但他不明白飛機載有那麼多乘客和貨物，為何不會在空中掉下來。空氣竟能承托飛機的重量，使飛機抗衡地心吸力，不致跌下來，還把它維持一定的高度安全直達目的地，這是一名小孩子不能明瞭的。同樣，人如何能得新生、悔改是怎麼一回事，也是我們不能明白的，像尼苛德摩的反應：「人已年老，怎能重生呢？難道他還要再入母腹重生嗎？」最後尼苛德摩還是不明白的說「這事怎能成就呢？」（若望福音第二章）

復活節是候洗者接受入門聖事的時刻，他們經過漫長的慕道過程，決意除去不合乎基督徒精神的生計習慣。這事又怎能成就呢？伯多祿前書形容得非常恰當：「基督曾一次為罪惡而死，是義人代替不義的人……」相信慕道者就被基督的贖罪之愛所感動，如同那與耶穌同釘的那個悔改的盜賊所體會的「……但是這個人從未做過不正當的事」就是這份替罪的行為所軟化「耶穌，當祢為王時，請祢紀念我。」（路加福音第廿三章）當人放下自己的執著，接受天主愛的呼喚；在給予和接受的互動中，事就這樣成了。

創世紀洪水滅世的情節被看成洗禮重生和天主救恩的預象，新生命竟然從毀滅的洪水中浮出，就在人犯罪遠離天主處於無望的黑暗中時，盟約和生命就在懲罰中許諾。若不是天主的恩典在工作，事又怎能成就呢？生命與毀滅、盟約與懲罰、恩典與罪惡、光明與黑暗……人類的悔改旅程在歷史中交織著；馬爾谷福音所記載的耶穌在曠野受試探給我們看到尋找天主時所遇到的掙扎，交織著撒殫、野獸和天使的經歷……。

這不單是耶穌在曠野中獨特的經驗，也是人類在悔改的漫長路程中所反覆掙扎的共同歷程。回歸天主的悔改道路，一定遇到罪惡勢力的挑戰和混淆，使人失去方向和鬥志，好像改完又犯，犯完又改，並看不見在整體上有很大的突破，有時覺得原地踏步，付出的努力好像白費的，甚至有想放棄的念頭。在過去我常把精力放在與這肢體內罪惡週旋，花了很大的氣力，把精神提升，舉心向上，但過了不久，那地心吸力般的罪惡，把我拉下馬來，一切好似又要從新再來……；是的，六歲的小明不明白這飛機不下墮的道理，因他未有足夠的理解能力；尼苛德摩不能參透重生的奧妙，因為基督還未從十字架被舉起來；今天有甚麼阻礙我去明白和相信呢？

幾百噸重量的飛機，竟然會飛上天！其實原理在於飛機以每小時的幾百公里的速度向前奔馳的時候，空氣的壓力把它升起，只要它在空中仍有向前的動力，它就會在空中飛翔，但當它沒有動力時幾百噸的物體就會從天上掉下來。是的！只要有目標，知道方向，再加上有足夠的動力，向前奔馳，那屬地心吸力般的罪惡，就不能把我們難倒！所以我們要認清方向，以望德導向那位坐在天主右邊的基督就能解開尼苛德摩的困擾：事就這樣成了。就這麼的簡單嗎？有時就是簡單到我們也不敢相信。

**禱文：**全能永生的天主，祢使人因投奔基督而成為新的創造，現在求祢使我們謹記基督是我們的道路、真理和生命，靠著祢使我們能與候洗者一同內外革新，在主的愛內重生。亞孟。

摘自「公教報」

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 五 年 二 月 廿 二 日

創 9:8-15; 伯前 3:18-22; 谷 1:12-15