

NOAH AND THE FLOOD



FROM THE PSALMS

“Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.”

—Psalm 51:2

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“... God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience,

—1 Peter 3:20–21

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“The Church has seen in Noah's ark a prefiguring of salvation by Baptism, for by it “a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water”:

‘The waters of the great flood
you made a sign of the waters of Baptism,
that make an end of sin and
a new beginning of
goodness.’”

—CCC, 1219

NOAH AND THE FLOOD

INTRODUCTION

Adam and Eve had children, and their children had children until there were many people on earth. Sadly, there was a lot sin as well. How does God respond to sin when it dominates the lives of the people he created?

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

God created Adam and Eve good and he gave them many gifts so they could be like him, but they rejected these gifts when they sinned. This meant all their children after them also lacked the gifts to act in God's likeness. Our story today tells us about the almost complete degradation of the human race that sin caused. One man named Noah and his family and a pair of every animal were saved from the Flood because God told them to build an Ark and they obeyed.

SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 6:11–22

COMMENTARY

The story of the Flood is a sad story. Sin and wickedness had spread to all the earth and people were destroying themselves. To cleanse the earth from sin, God sends a great Flood. Just as we use water to wash dirt from things, God uses water to wash sin from the earth.

God punishes the unrepentant sinners, but he does not abandon the human race altogether. He chooses Noah, a descendant of Adam and Eve, to continue the human race. God preserves the relationship with his people even when they are sinful.

As we keep reading the Bible, however, we will see that the Flood does not completely solve the sin problem. Not long after the Flood, Noah and his children fall into sin once again. Sin still lives in the human heart. This shows that we need more than water: we need a Savior.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Jesus does what the Flood in Noah's time could not do: he washes the sin from our hearts. He washes the world from sin by his death, and then he empowers the waters of baptism to give us the grace which he won for us on the Cross.

We know Jesus is connecting his death to water and baptism because of his conversation with his disciples in Mark 10:38. Here his disciples ask Jesus to be on his left and on his right when he comes into his glory. The apostles seem to think coming into glory will involve praise and adoration—something they want to be a part of—but Jesus understands “glory” quite a bit differently. In Jesus' mind, his glory is his death on the cross. He responds to their request by asking, “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” He then says that he cannot determine who is on his left or on his right when he comes into his glory. Why can he not determine it? Because he comes into his glory on the cross, and he is not the one to determine who is crucified with him. The two thieves that are with him on Good Friday are described as being “on his right and on his left.” Jesus' baptism is his death. His death is how we are washed from sin. We receive the effects of his death when we are baptized. Jesus unites the saving effects of his death with the cleansing waters of our baptism.

IN THE LITURGY

When we are baptized, we are “buried” with Christ and we are raised with Christ. We are given a new heart so we can live as resurrected people, united to Christ and filled with his grace.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in Heaven, in baptism, you have washed me and given me your Holy Spirit. When I am tempted to sin, help me to know the truth that you have made me a new creation in Christ. Give me the grace to resist sin. Amen.

RESOLUTION

Read Psalm 69 together. How does it remind you of Jesus? How is water used in this Psalm?

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC



FROM THE PSALMS

“Offer right sacrifices, and
put your trust in the Lord”

– Psalm 4:5

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“By faith Abraham, when he
was tested, offered up Isaac,
and he who had received the
promises was in the act of
offering up his only son....He
considered that God was able
even to raise him from the
dead, from which,
figuratively speaking, he did
receive him back.”

—Hebrews 11:17, 19 ESV

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“Christian hope takes up and
fulfills the hope of the
chosen people which has its
origin and model in the hope
of Abraham, who was
blessed abundantly by the
promises of God fulfilled in
Isaac, and who was purified
by the test of the sacrifice.”

—CCC, 1819

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC

INTRODUCTION

Today we are going to learn about two people who lived many years after Noah. Their names are Abraham and Isaac. Isaac is Abraham's beloved son. God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to the Lord. Why would God ask this? How does this sacrifice help us understand the Cross?

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

Abraham was a good man and God wanted to bless him and his family. God promises Abraham and his wife a son—a surprising promise since they were very, very old. Sure enough, God keeps his promise and gives them a son, Isaac. He promises Abraham that all the world would be blessed by the descendants of Isaac. In today's reading, God puts Abraham's trust in that promise to the test.

SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 22:1–12

COMMENTARY

God tested how much Abraham trusted him. Would God would keep his promises that all the world would be blessed by Isaac? If so, then Abraham reasoned that God would either stop him from offering this sacrifice or, if Isaac died, Abraham believed God would raise him from the dead. We read this in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament which says, "[Abraham] considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead" (Hebrews 11:19). Isaac also trusts God and he trusts his father. Since he was old enough to carry the wood for his own sacrifice up the mountain, he would have been old enough to escape his elderly father if he wanted. Isaac willingly agrees to offer his life. Isaac carries the wood up Mt. Moriah. It is the third day of their journey when the angel stops Abraham from killing Isaac. Abraham and Isaac offer a ram whose horns have been caught in a thorn bush.

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

The sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac helps us to understand Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. God asks Abraham to offer his "only beloved son" but he does not require him to go through with the sacrifice. God the Father gives us his only beloved Son who really is sacrificed. God then raises him from the dead because he truly is *that powerful*.

Like Isaac, Jesus is a willing victim. He carries his own wood for the sacrifice when he carries the cross to Calvary. In fact, the place where Abraham took Isaac to be sacrificed, Mt. Moriah, is where Jesus dies on the Cross. The Bible tells us that Isaac's life was spared "on the third day" (Genesis 22:4) Jesus is raised from the dead on the third day. Even the ram whose horns were caught in the thorn bush is an anticipation of Christ. Jesus wears a crown of thorns during his crucifixion. He is the sacrifice that the Lord provided for the salvation of the world.

IN THE LITURGY

In one of the rites of Mass the priest prays, "Be pleased to look upon these offerings with a serene and kindly countenance, and to accept them, as once you were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith..." In the Eucharist, we present to the Father the perfect offering of his beloved Son and ask him to be pleased with us because of Jesus' sacrifice because Jesus is one of *us*.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in Heaven, help me to offer you the very best of myself everyday. Help me to trust that you will reward every sacrifice I make. Amen.

RESOLUTION

Make a sacrifice today. Let a brother or sister sit in your favorite seat in the car.. Choose to help your parents instead of watching television. Your sacrifice is an expression of trust that you will be able to enjoy that activity again in the future.

JOSEPH IS SOLD INTO SLAVERY



FROM THE PSALMS

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth....Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!

—Psalm 80:1, 3

FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,¹ for those who are called according to his purpose.”

—Romans 8:28 ESV

FROM THE *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*

“In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: From the greatest moral evil ever committed - the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men - God, by his grace that "abounded all the more", brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good.”

—CCC, 312

JOSEPH IS SOLD INTO SLAVERY

INTRODUCTION

Isaac grew up and had children. One of his sons, Jacob, had twelve sons of his own. We are going to read about one of his sons, Joseph. How does Joseph show that it is right to trust in God even when we face suffering?

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, open my mind to your word and bless me with the gift of understanding so I might come to know and love you better. Amen.

BACKGROUND

Joseph's brothers were jealous of him because he was their father Jacob's beloved son. They came up with a plan to hurt him. Even though they were wrong to plot evil against their brother, God turned their wrongdoing into a blessing.

SCRIPTURE

Read Genesis 37:23–28

COMMENTARY

Joseph is betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery for twenty pieces of silver. Even though this is tragic, God will bring about great good from Joseph's misfortunes. Once Joseph goes to Egypt, he quickly gains the favor of his Egyptian master and rises to power in the foreign land.

Unfortunately, Joseph's fortunes take a turn for the worst when he is falsely accused of trying to harm his master's wife. He is not given a fair trial and is sent to jail. While he is there, he helps other prisoners by telling them the meaning of their strange dreams. After many years, the Pharaoh himself has a strange dream and needs help understanding it. He sends for Joseph who, with God's help, interprets his dream for him. He warns the Pharaoh of an upcoming famine. The Pharaoh stores up extra grain so the Egyptians are prepared to feed their people.

Joseph's brothers back in their homeland are also affected by this famine. They hear about the extra food the Egyptians have and they travel to Egypt. In a touching story, Joseph is

reunited with his family as he helps them survive the famine.

Joseph's father, Jacob, was so happy that the son who he thought was dead is still alive. Joseph suffered a great deal, but says to his brothers, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Genesis 50:20).

FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

Like Joseph, Jesus is the beloved Son of the Father. He is betrayed by one of his friends for thirty pieces of silver and handed over. Like Joseph, Jesus provides food for his people. During his public ministry, he feeds thousands of hungry people. This miracle prepares us for an even greater miracle: he feeds all of his disciples in the Church through the miracle of the Eucharist.

Like Joseph, Jesus is falsely accused and arrested. He is handed over and given an unfair trial. Though Jesus suffered most unjustly, God turns the greatest evil into the greatest blessing. By Jesus' suffering and death we are given the gift of eternal life. God can bring good from our suffering because he is all-loving and all-powerful.

IN THE LITURGY

The crucifix is a sign of the blessings God can bring about from suffering. At Mass, we actually *celebrate* the death of our Lord because it is through his suffering that we know the love of God and we are able to be saved.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in Heaven, help me to trust in you when I suffer. Do not allow me to lose hope or fall into sin. Let me be confident in your saving plan. Amen.

RESOLUTION

When something you do not like happens to you today, ask the Lord to help you see his will in it. Pray, "Lord, help me see how you will bring good from this."