

# Head and Heart

18<sup>th</sup> February 2024 First Sunday in Lent

## Readings

Genesis 9: 8 -17

Psalms 25:1-10

1 Peter 3:18 - 22

Mark 1: 9 - 15

## New Me: New People: New World

There has been water everywhere!  
Many people this year may have wondered about God's promise that the world will never again be destroyed by flood. They have watched rivers burst their banks, islands submerged, and possessions destroyed. From Queensland to Bangladesh, in France and Germany, from California to Kent and Wales..... we have seen pictures of devastating floods. Today we are reminded of the ever-popular tale of Noah's Ark – the world's longest and heaviest rainy season! A great story but barely credible. All those creatures! It must have been like living at a zoo with just eight staff members, waiting for the waters to subside. Just think of all the complex issues involved. Cooking, washing and general hygiene for a whole year just short of five days! Feeding and mucking out all those animals of many kinds cooped up on a filthy, floating family farm! I don't suppose it was just for a raven and a dove Noah opened a hatch. I have an idea as to why the raven did not return!



Of course, it will be a fable based on watery facts gathered from the sagas of several ancient cultures. The story is told to illustrate the world's neglect of God and his laws and his desire to start again with a renewed creation. It's about a beautiful world of wonderful people which had lost its way, seeking evil things – greedy corruption, immorality, paganism, all turning them from their allegiance to their creator God, who now decided it was time for a restart – for the whole world – time for him to make a new covenant with all that he had made. Maybe the moment had come, once again, for the reshaping of hills and valleys beneath raging waters and the rebirth of humanity. When Noah's imaginative boat construction, based on God's blueprint, at last rested on the Ararat Mountain range north of the river Tigris, he and his family opened hatches to view a greening new world tinged with rainbow colours. The rainbow was the sign of God's promise of justice after his people's storms and trials. A sign of a new way for his world and his people. A covenant was established assuring the world and its people of his continual care while, in return, we gave him supreme honour by obeying his rules of personal and communal living.

It is a message which I believe should be read at every Climate convention and every court of law. It has been expressed many times in many ways in scriptures and by everyday prophets. As with the prophet Jeremiah (5:25) *The Lord says, you have stubbornly turned aside from me, and the harvests have been kept from you.* BUT if my people change so will their world and their lives. AND that is Jesus' Good News!

The apostle, Peter refers to the Noah story in his letter which we read today. He saw the flood water and the world's new beginning as symbolic of Christian baptism – the sign of whole life renewal. The opening scenes of the Gospel story tell of John baptising as a token of repentance and new resolutions, but there is so much more. The Christ is coming. He is already with them. He will baptise, not just, like John, with the token of water, but with God's Spirit – his own spirit – a whole life in a new spiritual dimension. Peter explains how this has come about now through the death and resurrection of Jesus, through his suffering for our miserable failures and the new life of his risen self, in us. Our sign is more than a rainbow. It's a cross – cross of our dying and living God - who through us longs to bring a whole new world into being.

Putting these scriptures together, there is hope for our world, however dark, fearful, and crippled by evil it may seem to us. We have the Father's promise of a new start – for creation – for families, communities, for all civilisations. It begins with personal baptism into the Christ dimension – new life in Jesus.



That's a promise from God whose sign is a cross for us and a rainbow for all his creation. Life by life, neighbour by neighbour, it need not take too long to accomplish it – if we really want to believe it, work, and pray for it. Just one word of caution. As soon as Jesus accepted his baptism, and the father affirmed his call and the devil grabbed him – but without success.

A Prayer – based on Psalm 25:1-10

Lord, help me to trust you:  
Trusting you brings real life, peace, and purpose.  
Failure to trust you can mean rebellion and failure.  
You are my God. I WILL trust you.  
Teach me your ways of humility, love and faithfulness  
to your covenants and promises  
I claim my baptism in your Holy Spirit.  
Remember me, Lord