

DESERTS AND RAINBOWS

Every First Sunday of Lent, in all three synoptic Gospels, we find Jesus in the desert where he comes to terms with his mission in this world. Matthew and Luke give us a rather detailed account of Satan's unsuccessful temptations; but Mark (this year's Gospel), provides only a very terse temptation account before Jesus launches into his proclamation of the Kingdom following the arrest of his cousin, John the Baptist.

The desert is possibly the perfect image for where we might feel ourselves to be after eleven months of limited living in a virus afflicted world. The thing is, we're not meant to remain forever in a desert any more than Jesus was. His time in that arid place was simply a preparation for the work the Father sent him to accomplish. And that might also be the best way for us to consider these present days. That's where the rainbow comes in.

Our first reading this weekend from the book of Genesis give us the beautiful (albeit metaphorical) story of Noah once the waters of the "flood" had receded. God "speaks" to Noah and his family and says: "This is the sign that I am giving for all the ages to come....I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth....between me and you and all living beings...." That rainbow image, that brilliant and colorful sign we see on those rare occasions when the sun bursts forth in the midst of a storm, invites us to see beyond the dark skies that might surround us to the enduring promise of God's faithful love.

Bottom line: like Jesus, we're not meant to remain in a desert, in a dry and arid place, in a Covid-confined world. We're meant to raise our eyes to the heavens and see, even on the darkest days, that covenant rainbow – or, as Kenny Chesney sings in *Happy Does*, "When it's all black clouds, find the sun." May the coming Lenten days help us to see clearly that rainbow promise and to find the sun – and the Son – no matter how dark the clouds become.

Fr. Bob