

## Homily for the First Sunday of Lent, February 18, 2018

**“Why are there so many songs about rainbows and what’s on the other side ... rainbows are visions, but only illusions and rainbows have nothing to hide ... so the song goes.**

**Have you ever seen a mom/dad with their young child when a rainbow crosses our sky – “Look, sweetheart, it’s a rainbow. Isn’t it beautiful?” It can place a child, or the child in all of us, in kind of awe and wonder for a moment. Somehow, like the song goes, rainbows are more than what they seem – a reflection. So it’s no surprise that in the telling of the beginning times God uses a rainbow in the sky to speak of a covenant that would last forever. There is also a sort of double entendre here since in biblical times a sign of a truce or peace between warring parties was to hang the bow (as in bow and arrow) on the wall. Hanging a bow in the sky would have been understood as God’s way of forgiving us, that God would never seek our destruction or even our rejection. And that was manifest in Jesus Christ when God appeared to exchange a rainbow for a cross and seal the covenant of love for us with his own human life.**

**We always begin Lent with Jesus being driven into the desert by the Spirit. Mark’s account is the shortest, saying simply, he “*remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.*” Satan, wild beasts & angels. Images of evil and good. Or perhaps an image of paradise – tempted, like Adam and Eve, but, unlike them, the very human Jesus chose away from Satan. Even the wild beasts were not a threat in paradise. And perhaps what’s found at the end of a rainbow is not a pot of gold, but rather the fulfillment of the covenant - now made fully present in this Jesus Christ – God himself come among us, facing what we face and showing us the way.**

**Someone going through RCIA asked me once, “Why would Jesus leave the desert if he was being ministered to by the angels?” A great question whose answer can be found in what Jesus did in the very next lines of Mark’s gospel. He came to Galilee even though John had been arrested, continuing his message but now proclaiming it like no one could before: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand Repent and believe in the gospel.” Sound familiar? It is the same words we used to mark you with ashes on Ash Wednesday a few days ago. Jesus came to minister to us**

**through a love that speaks best in a rainbow and a cross – wonder and total self sacrifice. Believe in the Gospel!**

**His story of ministry begins with the Spirit coming upon him in baptism, and then driving him into the desert. In our second reading St. Peter says that baptism is not a removal of dirt from the body but a pledge to God for a clear conscience and he goes on to call us to a “*good conscience before God so as not to spend what remains in life on human desires but on the will of God.*”**

**The “Rainbow Connection” song continues ... “Have you been half asleep and have you heard voices, I’ve heard them calling my name ... I’ve heard it too many times to ignore it, it’s something that I’m supposed to be.” “*Repent and believe in the gospel*” for it will show us what we are supposed to be and the gospel will take us to the realm beyond simple rainbows, together ... “someday we’ll find it, the rainbow connection” ... The gospel will take us all there. Let us purify our conscience in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.**