

# FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

**12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

## **Saints this Week**

### **Reflection – *St Valentine***

**Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. 1 Cor 13:4-8**

**ST VALENTINE** is a figure from third century Rome when Christianity was a proscribed religion. He met a martyr's death and there is a Roman catacomb and an ancient church dedicated to him. In 496 AD Pope Gelasius marked 14<sup>th</sup> February as St Valentine's Day. There are conflicting legends and stories and in the 1969 reforms the day disappeared from the Church Calendar. Nonetheless secular customs can be stronger than religious ones and 'Valentine's Day', celebrating romantic love, remains firmly in the Calendar of florists and suppliers of chocolate and greetings cards. The connection of Valentine with romantic love seems to derive from an edict of the time that young men could not marry. Roman society was promiscuous and polygamous but the romantic marriage bond of young people was thought to impact on the bravery of soldiers. One of Valentine's subversive acts – at a time when simply being a Christian was seen as subversive – was to encourage couples to marry secretly within the Church. This commended Christianity to serious-minded young people and encouraged marital and sexual fidelity. Valentine was eventually caught, imprisoned, and tortured for disobeying the edict of the Emperor.

## Week 6 (Year 1)

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### Collect

**O GOD,** who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true: grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to you. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever

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## Monday of Week 6(Year 1)

### Reading

*Genesis 4:1-15, 25*

#### *Cain murders Abel*

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.'<sup>2</sup> And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.<sup>3</sup> In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,<sup>4</sup> and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,<sup>5</sup> but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.<sup>6</sup> The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?<sup>7</sup> If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.'

<sup>8</sup> Cain said to Abel his brother, 'Let us go out to the field.' And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'<sup>10</sup> And the LORD said, 'What have

you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. <sup>11</sup>And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup>When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.' <sup>13</sup>Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear. <sup>14</sup>Behold, you have driven me this day away from the ground; and from your face I shall be hidden; and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me.' <sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to him, 'Not so! If any one slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.' And the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him. <sup>25</sup>And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, 'God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him.'

## **Reflection**

**IT IS** hard to understand why it is, when the sons of Adam and Eve each brought an offering to the Lord, that the sacrifice of Abel, the younger brother, is accepted, but the sacrifice of Cain, the older brother, is not accepted. This early story introduces the crime of murder and the deadly consequences of sibling rivalry. It also introduces the notion, perhaps, that, from the economic perspective of a millennium before the coming of Christ, sheep farming is more highly regarded than the sowing and harvesting of crops. God punishes Cain for the heinous killing of his brother but, just as he punished Cain's parents, Adam and Eve, without abandoning them, so he offers protection to Cain. The mark of Cain is a sign of protection. The famous saying from this passage is Cain's response to God: 'am I my brother's keeper?' The Lord's questioning of Cain – like his questioning of Adam and Eve – reveals the distance created by sin. Sin places us at a distance from the love of God and from the community in which we live.

## Tuesday of Week 6(1)

### Reading

*Genesis 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 10*

#### *The Story of Noah*

<sup>5</sup> The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. <sup>7</sup> So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' <sup>8</sup> But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD.....

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said to Noah, 'Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. <sup>2</sup> Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate; and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate; <sup>3</sup> and seven pairs of the birds of the air also, male and female, to keep their kind alive upon the face of all the earth. <sup>4</sup> For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground.' <sup>5</sup> And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

...<sup>10</sup> And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

### Reflection

**THE FLOOD** is a story that every school child knows and both the ark as a haven of safety and the rainbow as a symbol that all will ultimately be well have become part of a shared language of hope. There is no evidence from pre-history of a global flooding but there are Mesopotamian - Middle Eastern - myths, of which the story Genesis is not the first, that describe what must have been a very widespread and perilous flood in pre-historic

times. In the Genesis account, God is disillusioned with his creation and, as it were, goes back to the drawing board. He returns Earth to its pre-creation chaos. We have two accounts here: in one, the Flood lasted forty days (Gen 7:17) and in the other 150 days (7:24). In one there are a pair of each animal species (Gen 6:19) and in the other one pair of the unclean animals and seven pairs of clean animals (7:2). Did Noah release a raven or a dove or both? These discrepancies reflect different sources, sources which we met last week and identified as J and P, the Jahwistic and the Priestly sources. The story culminates in a covenant that humans could eat animals but not drink their life-blood and that God would not ever again destroy all life by a flood.

The Flood story is important in Christianity because of the mention made of it in the New Testament (Mt 24:37-39, Lk 17:26-27, 1 Pet 3:18-22; 2 Pet 2:5, 3:6, Heb 11:7). The Flood is a foreshadowing of salvation in Christ, the Flood serving as a type of Baptism. The 'nave' ('ship') of a church reminds us that the Church is the ark of salvation.

## **Wednesday of Week 6(1)**

### **Reading**

*Genesis 8:6-13, [14-19], 20-22*

#### *God's Promise to Noah*

<sup>6</sup> At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made, <sup>7</sup> and sent forth a raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. <sup>8</sup> Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; <sup>9</sup> but the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put forth his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him. <sup>10</sup> He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; <sup>11</sup> and the dove came back to him in the evening, and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf; so

Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. <sup>12</sup> Then he waited another seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she did not return to him any more.

<sup>13</sup> In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried from off the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the face of the ground was dry. [<sup>14</sup> In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry. <sup>15</sup> Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup> 'Go forth from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. <sup>17</sup> Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh—birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth—that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth.' <sup>18</sup> So Noah went forth, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. <sup>19</sup> And every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves upon the earth, went forth by families out of the ark.]

<sup>20</sup> Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup> And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odour, the LORD said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I ever again destroy every living creature as I have done. <sup>22</sup> While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.'

## Reflection

**WE CANNOT** know whether there actually was a Flood, and if so if it was a global event – as recounted in the Noah story – or a local flood. There are a number of stories in the Near East which together suggest that there was a calamity or two involving water which could easily have been interpreted as encompassing the whole of the world as it was known. Equally, these stories, such as found in the *Enuma Elish* or the *Epic of*

*Gilgamesh*, might simply be myths, without any historical basis but expressing eternal verities about the force of nature, the frailty of living things, and dependence on the supernatural.

## Thursday of Week 6(1)

### Reading

*Genesis 9:1-13*

#### *The Covenant with Noah*

**9** And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. **2** The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the air, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. **3** Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. **4** Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. **5** For your lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning; of every beast I will require it and of man; of every man's brother I will require the life of man. **6** Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image. **7** And you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly on the earth and multiply in it.'

**8** Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, **9** 'Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, **10** and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. **11** I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' **12** And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: **13** I set my

bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.'

## Reflection

**EARLIER** in the week we reflected that the Flood story is important in Christianity because of the mention made of it in the New Testament (Mt 24:37-39, Lk 17:26-27, 1 Pet 3:18-22; 2 Pet 2:5, 3:6, Heb 11:7). The Flood is a foreshadowing of salvation in Christ, the Flood serving as a type of Baptism. The 'nave' ('ship') of a church reminds us that the Church is the ark of salvation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* wisely does not try to settle the question of whether the Flood was historical in the normal sense of the word but sees the Covenant with Noah as a real part of the narrative of salvation history and indeed as a Covenant which remains in force. It is a belief of Jews and Christians, therefore, that under the terms of this Covenant, symbolized by the rainbow, God will not destroy humankind – though whether he will allow humankind to self-destruct remains to be seen.

## Friday of Week 6(1)

### Reading

*Genesis 11:1-9*

*The Tower of Babel*

**11** Now the whole earth had one language and few words. <sup>2</sup> And as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup> And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. <sup>4</sup> Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.' <sup>5</sup> And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. <sup>6</sup> And the LORD said, 'Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; and nothing



that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup> Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' <sup>8</sup> So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. <sup>9</sup> Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

## Reflection

**THE MASS** lectionary omits Genesis 10. Largely it is a list of the families of the sons of Noah, and from them the seventy nations which 'spread abroad on the earth after the flood'. Quite a few of the nations listed, from time to time, enemies of the Hebrew people. What we are seeing, then, is the fragmentation of peoples. This process continues in the story of the Tower of Babel where the conceit of humankind leads them to construct a kind of synthetic holy mountain which relies on their own ingenuity. A phrase which summarises their hubris is 'let us make a name for ourselves'. It is a phrase which has become a common saying in our language and the word which stands out is 'name', *shem* in Hebrew. We should bear in mind that, earlier in Genesis, following the murder of Cain by Abel, 'at that time men began to call upon the name of the LORD' (4:26). So making a name for ourselves is moving away from calling on the name of the LORD. So God confounds human pride by scattering the nations and, creating different languages, making it hard for them to communicate with one another. We should note that *glossolalia*, the gift at Pentecost, was a reversal of Babel, endeavouring everyone to hear the Gospel in their own language.