

Blessed Trinity Catholic Community † Spirit of Christ Mission
THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, February 18, 2018 B
Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15
Homily: Father Ed Hislop

We sang with the Psalmist words of hope and promise as we begin our journey to the new waters of Easter faith—waters no longer bringing destruction but flowing waters that promise life; water *“that will never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings.”* Now, the promise tells, the waters will save, bringing new life and restored hope. And so we sang, *“Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant”* (Psalm 25).

But we also hear in God’s word today of Christ’s suffering, His being put to death in the flesh. Put to death in the midst of a harsh and often cruel world, handed the cross because he named the darkness, confronted the sin and sought to heal with compassion, mercy and a change of heart. He lived with the oppressed and yelled for justice; He confronted the powers of his day and named their dishonesty, oppressive acts and duplicity and always, *always* inspired a change of heart, a new way and a restored vision.

Wherever he and those who truly follow him are present, then and now, a new rainbow is seen in the sky, the promise of a new hope and a new way, a rainbow of color filled with the diversity of life and hope inviting a new covenant and a new Holy Communion.

But he began in the desert, tempted not to speak, tempted not to name the dark ways, tempted not to embrace the diversity of the human family, tempted not to speak of new ways and good news. Tempted to retreat to the security of silence and to keep separate the ways of God from the ways of the city. Satan promised success if he would be silent, if he would keep his word distinct from the words and acts of the world. The same promise is offered to us these days.

We begin in the desert of Lent to be tempted. Tempted to silence, tempted not to hope, and tempted to give up or turn away; tempted to separate ourselves and our faith from the struggles, tragedy, grief, hopes, aspirations and the shared love and joy of others. Tempted to isolate ourselves forgetting that we are indeed “the keepers” of our sisters and brothers—our neighbors—in every place. But tempted though we may be, as Christ himself was tempted, our hearts are easily broken when horrible tragedy and violent hatred, and untreated mental sickness strikes our human family, as once again it happened this past week.

The flood of tears well up when we see the loss, the grief, the despair and hear the plaintiff cry, “Why?” “Why here, why again?” We are more connected than we sometimes remember. Connected when the violent floods return, despite the rainbow promise, as we feel the earth devastated again.

We must have felt connected if we saw the young mother, marked with the same ashen cross of Ash Wednesday, which we bore, waiting and then hearing that her daughter was a victim. In her and so many others, Christ suffers again.

Enduring such a destructive flood listen to this prayer from the desert of these days prayed by Rabbi Joseph Black before the Colorado State House in the aftermath of the Ash Wednesday/ Valentine Day horror. He prayed:

“Our God and God of all people, God of the Rich and God of the poor. God of the teacher and God of the student. God of the families who wait in horror. God of the dispatcher who hears screams of terror from under bloodied desks. God of the first responder who bravely creeps through ravaged hallways. God of the doctor who treats

the wounded. God of the rabbi, pastor, imam or priest who seeks words of comfort but comes up empty. God of the young boy who sees his classmates die in front of him. God of the weeping, raging, inconsolable mother who screams at the sight of her child's lifeless body.

God of the shattered communities torn apart by senseless violence. God of the legislators paralyzed by fear, partisanship, money and undue influence. God of the Right. God of the Left. God who hears our prayers. God who does not answer. On this tragic day when we confront the aftermath of the 18th School shooting in our nation on the 46th day of this year, I do not feel like praying. Our prayers have not stopped the bullets. Our prayers have changed nothing. Once again, a disturbed man with easy access to guns has squinted through the sights of a weapon [a weapon no one needs], aimed, squeezed a trigger and took out his depraved anger, pain and frustration on innocents: pure souls; students and teachers; brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers: cut down in an instant by the power of hatred and technology.

We are guilty, O God. We are guilty of inaction. We are guilty of complacency. We are guilty of allowing ourselves to be paralyzed by politics. The blood of our children cries out from the ground. The blood of police officers cut down in the line of duty flows through our streets. I do not appeal to You [O God] on this terrible morning to change us. We can only do that

ourselves. Our enemies do not come only from faraway places. The monsters we fear live among us.

May those in this room who have the power to make change find the courage to seek a pathway to sanity and hope. May we hold ourselves and our leaders accountable. Only then will our prayers be worthy of an answer."

A prayer prayed by a Jewish rabbi from the desert of these days in the midst of being tempted to be silent, tempted to keep such a prayer and such words of challenge apart from worship.

As lent begins someone comes out of this desert of our making. Can you hear him?

***"This is the time of fulfillment.
The kingdom of God is at hand.
REPENT, AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL."***

Make a new covenant, act in a new way ...then look and see the rainbow in the clouds.

"Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant."

Fr. Hislop can be reached at
edjh1455@gmail.com



1475 Eaton Street ~ Missoula, MT 59801
406-721-2405 Web: blessedtrinitymissoula.org