

Over the Rainbow



Everyone loves a rainbow. The arching colours lift our hearts, expressing the loveliness of our world.

A scientist finds in it a wonderful example of how the white light coming from our sun, reflecting in raindrops, splits into the many different wavelengths that make it up – revealing all the colours contained within.

An artist finds in it inspiration to portray the subtle colours that surround us and the majesty of the sky stretching above us.

A dreamer finds hope in possibilities just beyond our reach, making us strive more eagerly and delve more deeply.

A believer finds a promise.

On the first Sunday of Lent this year we hear of the promise made by God to Noah and his family. The rainbow will become a sign of a Covenant that is made with the whole of creation. Notice that this Covenant, this bonding of life and love, is with all creation.

It embraces more than the hero of the story, his children and the reborn human race; all that exists in our world is described as being in a special relationship with God.

We know that the full story of Noah includes the reason why there was a Flood; there had been a problem. Humanity had gone astray and everything was falling apart.

The Flood can be seen as God starting all over again. After all, that is what most of us do when things are a mess.

When poets or playwrights, artists or architects, carpenters or car-makers feel their work is a complete mess and not working out they start again from scratch.

The Flood seems a drastic response. So much destruction was required to put things right. The trouble is things did not seem to improve after the Flood. We are still in a mess.

The descendants of Noah, described in the great sweep of Scripture, proved to be as bad as all those who went before.



This story raises the possibility that God could have decided to keep starting over and over again until we got things right. That is a bit scary.

The story shines a light on an issue that often makes us wonder.

Why does evil seem to thrive? Why does suffering touch everyone and everything? Why does God not step in and start again?

Are we being told that if God responded to our cries for an end to evil and suffering there would be no end to putting things right? It would not be just one Flood but many. We would need a lot of wood!

A new Flood every morning might be fine as long as I always have a place in the Ark but what if I don't? What if I am part of the problem?

This cautionary tale has God preserving in the Ark the essence of all that went before.

True God purifies creation through the waters of the Flood but the essentials of life are kept safe. He could have begun all over again by using the Flood to sweep away every single thing. He didn't – he made sure there would be survivors.

God then speaks of a Covenant which promises a special relationship with everything. It is heart-warming to hear God loves everything in creation without exception.

It is telling us that God is in love with the whole world and all that it contains. This includes you and me and everything that surrounds us from tiny mites to blue whales.

It can be a challenge to think of him loving people and things we don't love. He does not love the evil which infects everything but there is nothing and no-one beyond his love.



This may upset us when we are in difficulty and see the wicked triumph. It is a real challenge to our faith.

It is also a relief when we remember our mistakes.



Perhaps the story of Noah is not telling us that starting over again was the real solution. It prompts us to wonder how the problem of human waywardness is to be finally solved.

God works from within, enters humanity and establishes a new eternal Covenant in his Son.

In every generation the Death and Resurrection of Jesus reaches out to put things right. He draws us into his saving work especially in the Mass.

We can cooperate with Jesus Christ and we do this beginning with ourselves. Lent is a time given to us to turn the world around by turning round ourselves.

A rainbow raises our spirits. God wants us to be happy and confident in his love.

A rainbow encourages us to see that God will not become exasperated; he will never give up on us.

A rainbow challenges us to reflect the light of God within us, revealing the beauty of which we are made.