



build. plant. grow.
the word this week



lent



lectionary
reading

Cycle B

1st Sunday of Lent

Lectionary #23

Reading I: Genesis 9: 8-15

This passage presents us with the second **covenant** God makes with humanity, the first being the act of creation itself. This is the first time we hear of the word “**covenant**,” and there will be many more times as God continues his relationship with us throughout history. This first explicit **covenant** is with Noah and his sons. God promises to never destroy the world again by a flood and places a rainbow in the sky as a sign and reminder of that **covenant**. As time goes on, God will make future **covenants** with other figures, such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah. The ultimate **covenant** between God and all of humanity is made in the person of Jesus Christ.

Reading 2: 1 Peter 3: 18-22

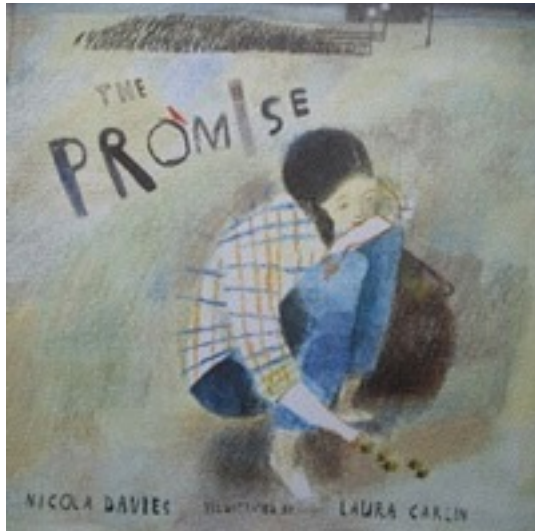
The letter of Saint Peter selected for this Sunday clearly places emphasis on **covenant**. The **covenant** of God’s love for His people is manifested in the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The letter proceeds to speak of the Rite of Baptism as an individual’s entry into a **covenant** with God. This passage and the first reading have become an essential part of the blessing and invocation over the baptismal waters. **Covenant** language will permeate the invocation and blessing prayers within the Rite of Baptism.

Gospel: Mark 1: 12-15

In today’s gospel passage, we accompany Jesus into the desert. The desert experience illustrates Jesus’ preparation period prior to entering into his public ministry. For Saint Mark, the primary emphasis of Jesus’ ministry is to proclaim and make known the Kingdom of God. The focus is **covenant**, for Jesus proclaims the Good News that God desires a relationship with us and as such, we are called to respond by entering into a conversation that will move and change our hearts in order to be partners in the **covenant** with God.



children's
story



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character
education
activity

A covenant is a very special kind of contract whereby each individual enters into a promise that is based on love and fidelity in relationship.

The Promise

This is a story of how hope and **promise** can have transformative power despite the bleakness of a given situation. On a mean street in a mean city, a thief tries to snatch an old woman's bag. But the thief is surprised when the old woman says *you can't have the bag unless you make a promise in return*. The old woman tells the thief that whatever she finds in the bag, she must promise to *plant them all*. When it turns out that the bag is full of acorns, the young thief embarks on a journey that changes her own life and the life of generations to come. The story could well become a classic for a new generation of people that need to have hope in the fact that, even in what can be an uncertain world, there are those who will keep their promises. It can easily become a parallel for talking about the most faithful promise keeper—God.

Activity: Learning how to make a covenant contract

Step One: Explain to students what it means to be involved in a contract. That is, that each party in the contract has certain obligations and intentions that are to be met by each of the individuals. For example, if two people wish to share in the use of a toy or game, there must be a decided upon set of rules that need to be met by both individuals.

Step Two: Have the pairs of students determine something that they both find valuable and would be willing to share. Then, assist them in designing a contract (**covenant**) that will direct their responsibilities towards one another. This should help them understand that these **promises** or **covenants** are the things that help people live good and orderly lives by assuring a just approach to things and relationships. Similarly, they can learn that breaking a contract is an offense that can cause a rift in the relationship.

Step Three: This might be a prime time to develop a "Classroom **Covenant** of Behavior." This is done by having the students brainstorm words that they believe contribute to a healthy, safe, and friendly environment. After the brainstorming, the instructor should write out the **covenant**. Once the final Classroom **Covenant** has been constructed, have the students each sign their name to it, just as they would if they were entering into a contract. Make copies for each student, and enlarge the contract to poster size and mount it on the wall as a sign and symbol of the **covenant** the students have made with one another.

The most well known covenant is the one that God made with Moses in giving the people of Israel the Ten Commandments in order to guide them in living good and holy lives.



case study

Look.
Feel.
Know.
Act.

What could you do today?

Being honest and truthful is an absolute essential for remaining faithful in any **promise, covenant,** or contract that we enter into. There can be written **covenants** or **promises,** but most often the promises we make on a daily basis are based on our word. You will often hear the phrase *I give you my word.* This phrase has great meaning, especially when the one saying it holds fast to their word and has proven themselves trustworthy.

Before making a commitment to do something, think clearly about whether you are willing to put forth the energy and effort for that particular promise you might be making to someone. There are many occasions when we might truly wish to make a promise, but we must think about whether we have the capabilities of fulfilling that **promise** or **covenant.**

Look Feel Know Act

Notice from the news or even from your own experience what the results were when someone walked away or broke a **promise.** Can you recall the disappointment and the sadness (or anger) that you might have felt? As you recall that feeling, make a commitment to strive to make good on your word or your **promise** so that another person will not be subjected to sadness, disappointment, or anger due to your failing to remain true to your **promise.** Recall the earlier thought that it is crucial for anyone entering into a promise to know if they have the ability to remain faithful, and if not, to explain that to the person asking for the **promise.** Unlike God, we are not perfect and capable of all things, and so it is crucial to recognize whether we should or should not enter into a **promise** or **covenant.**

Recall the story *The Promise*. Can you imagine the outcome of the story if the young girl had not followed through on the **promise** asked of her? God and humanity have entered into a **covenant** with one another, and time and again, it is God who continually remains faithful in loving us. We, on the other hand, find ourselves faltering in maintaining our part of the **covenant**, and yet God consistently calls us back into the **covenant** by offering us forgiveness and love. This love that God has for us is a perfect, unconditional love. The **promise** that God has made to love us can become the motivation for us to love God and our neighbor a little better with each passing day. After all, practice makes perfect, and what better thing would there be to be perfect in than in love!



closing
tool

Pray always that you will know if you are able to enter into a promise or covenant, understanding full well what it will entail, and then strive to remain faithful to that promise or covenant. Call upon the Holy Spirit that dwells within you to guide you in these things. Amen.



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