

**Lectionary readings: Genesis 9: 8-17; Psalm 25: 1-10;
1 Peter 3: 18-22; Mark 1: 9-15 (First Sunday in Lent)**

For reflection and prayer

- **Genesis 9:** God's covenant is with the whole of creation. We are called to live in harmony with creation and to treat the created world as precious. Lent is a time for reflection, for turning to God, for moving forward in our journey of faith, with faith and in hope, just as Noah did, and just as many do today after experiencing tragedy, rebuilding their lives and starting afresh, always in the knowledge that we have God's promise to be with us, no matter how dark or hopeless our situation may be. May we share our questions and doubts with God this Lent, and may we determine to commit ourselves to move on in our spiritual journey, by taking practical steps to develop our faith, spend time in spiritual reading and prayer etc.
- **Psalm 25:** The Psalmist declares his faith in God, a God of compassion and unfailing love and mercy and goodness. v10 in The Living Bible never fails to touch me deeply: *'And when we obey him, every path he guides us on is fragrant with his loving-kindness and his truth.'* May we feel the fragrance of God's presence, as we journey through Lent, whatever our circumstances. Lent is a time - not for giving up things, but for drawing near to God and opening ourselves to the fragrance of His loving presence - a time of grace. And we each need to work out how we might do that.
- **1Peter 3:** I don't pretend to understand this passage, but it talks about salvation. I wonder what we understand

by salvation? Can it mean becoming fully human, being healed, becoming whole? Jesus preached to *'the spirits in prison'*. I don't know what that means, but I do know that we are all imprisoned in some way and God wants to set us free now from our prisons of fear, guilt, prejudices, resentment, unforgiveness, bitterness, self-centredness etc. Lent is an opportunity for us to look at those things that are keeping us bound and preventing us from becoming the full human being that God created each one of us to be, a time of transformation and growth.

- **Mark 1:** v11: *'You are my beloved son; you are my delight.'* (The Living Bible) Why not hear God say to you: *'You are my beloved child ...'* This was Jesus' true identity, and it is our true identity. This revelation was not followed by a time of bliss, but by a time of testing as Jesus, in the silence, stillness and solitude of the desert, engaged in soul-searching and asked questions about how He would fulfil His mission. Lent is a time for reflecting on who we truly are, about facing up to whether we want to live God's way or go our own way. May we each hear God in His love call us His beloved child, His delight, and may we take time to be still in God's presence rejoicing in His love and asking what we are prepared to do in response to His love.

A prayer

Lord, in these days of mercy and grace, may we be quiet and prayerful and reflective. In these days of challenge, may our faith be strengthened and our eyes opened to Your presence with us. In these days of emptiness, may we turn to You that You might fill us and enlarge our lives with Your life. In these days of waiting, may our hearts be opened to the Mystery of Your love, so that we are filled with wonder and longing.