

REFLECTION

By **Kate Fowler**, Catholic Apostolate Center and Former CVN Volunteer

LENT 2021

First Sunday

"Repent and believe in the Gospel." (Mark 1:15)

Such a small collection of words above that sum up the entire Lenten season—they form a microcosm of the spiritual life itself. We have just embarked on our Lenten journey, which started a few days ago on Ash Wednesday. How are we entering into this season? Are we already fatigued from an emotionally draining 2020? Are we burnt out from stress, fear, or navigating the unknown? Are we ready for rest, renewal, resurrection?

In the First Reading, we are reminded of God's covenant with Noah. It is a covenant of hope and restoration. He speaks the same words to us: "See, I am now establishing my covenant with you." As baptized sons and daughters of God, we are His beloved children living in a covenantal relationship with our Heavenly Father. God stands ready to renew and restore.

This relationship is made possible as a result of Christ's sacrifice. Peter tells us in Sunday's second reading, "Christ suffered for sins once...that he might lead you to God." He models the way for us even now: "Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit." This is what our Lenten journey is all about: dying to self, to our desires, addictions, or sins in order to live out true freedom—life in the Spirit. While Christ died literally for our sins, this Lent we are called to imitate this death by putting aside all that does not lead us to Christ. It is for this reason that many of us choose to "give something up" or to incorporate a spiritual practice (such as Scripture reading, Liturgy of the Hours, or the Rosary) into our prayer lives during Lent.

As we begin the Lenten season, I invite you to remember that the rainbow God promised Noah can only show forth as a result of the rain and clouds. If you feel like you walk in darkness or that you are tired of the storm, God is with you and promises you His grace, love, and presence.

FOCUS: SIMPLE LIVING

After a hard year with the pandemic, it can be easy to focus on all that has changed or is outside of our control. As human beings created in the image and likeness of God, we are also made for communion. Throughout this Lenten season, let us find ways to creatively engage with, serve, and love others—be it virtually or safely in person. Let us also find a few moments each day to give thanks for the blessings, both hidden and apparent, that we have in our lives. By reaching out to others in charity and spending moments each day expressing gratitude, we can be renewed and recharged throughout our Lenten journey.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, many of us begin this Lenten season tired, hopeless, or saddened. We may feel we do not have much to give. We ask you now to renew us and strengthen us so that we might encounter you throughout our Lenten journey more deeply. May we give all of our frustration, stress, anxiety, or fear, trusting that you lead us always to your Son. Your ways, oh Lord, are love and truth.

SERVICE SUGGESTION

When we express gratitude, it can change our hearts and the hearts of those around us. Throughout the Lenten season, I invite you to express gratitude for different people in your life: postal workers, cashiers at stores, those who deliver food or packages, neighbors, or friends. Let them know why you are grateful for them or if they've helped you in some way. You'll likely make someone's day and come to see God's work and blessings in different ways throughout your life.