

SESSION 3

Through Water

Noah, the Household Covenant, and the Bow in the Clouds

TAKE-HOME SHEET

WHAT WE FOUND

We found the word "covenant" for the first time in the Bible, Genesis 6:18, and we noticed the roster: "you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives." The bond that embraced a couple in Eden now embraces a household. And we heard how God holds a breaking world: not like a vendor over a bad account, but "grieved... to his heart," the way only family can grieve you.

The flood turned out to be creation running in reverse and then beginning again: the waters of day two collapse back together, God makes a ruach (wind, spirit) pass over the earth, the same Hebrew word that hovered over the deep in Genesis 1:2, and Noah steps onto a washed world as a new Adam, receiving the opening words of Adam's own blessing, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth" (Gen 9:1; cf. 1:28). His first act is to build an altar to the LORD; God's response is an oath of peace, and he sets his bow in the clouds. Many interpreters see a warrior's bow hung up, turned away from the earth. It is a sign the text says God himself will look at and remember.

Then the New Testament told us what it all pointed to. 1 Peter 3:20 to 21: eight were "saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The ark prefigures the Church, the flood prefigures the font, and the dove over the waters returns at the Jordan. But the story could not end at Ararat: within verses, sin is back in Noah's own tent. The flood washed the world, not the heart. Something more was coming.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine *City of God, Book 15, Chapter 26*

St. Augustine taught that the ark is without doubt a figure of the City of God on pilgrimage, that is, of the Church, saved by the wood on which hung the Mediator. He even saw meaning in the door set in the ark's side, through which all who were saved entered: an image of the wound opened in the side of the crucified Christ, from which the sacraments flow.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage *On the Unity of the Church, Chapter 6 (c. AD 251)*

In the third century, St. Cyprian argued from Noah for the unity of the Church: if anyone outside the ark of Noah was able to escape the flood, then someone outside the Church might also escape. His point was pastoral and urgent: God gave one vessel of salvation, and schism is a decision to swim.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on Genesis*

Preaching on Noah, St. John Chrysostom lingered on the loneliness of righteousness: Noah walked with God for

decades against the current of an entire culture, with no congregation but his household. Virtue, Chrysostom insisted, does not take its cue from the crowd; one faithful family was enough for God to save the world through.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Find out your baptism date this week (ask a parent, or call the parish office). Put it on your calendar as a yearly feast.
- Next time you enter the church, sign yourself from the font slowly and deliberately, and say in your heart: "I came through the water."
- Before next session, read Genesis 12:1 to 9 and Genesis 15. In chapter 15, pay attention to what happens to the animals, and who passes between them.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth."

Genesis 9:13 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session: Read Genesis 12:1 to 9 and Genesis 15. In chapter 15, watch what happens to the animals, and note carefully who passes between them.

Catechism References: CCC 56 to 58, 701, 845, 1219