Scripture
Genesis 6:9–9:17

God’s Saving Presence

Jesus invites us to celebrate the arrival of God’s kingdom.

- In today’s gospel, Jesus ends his temptation in the desert by proclaiming the good news.
- Because we do not want to omit the great stories of the Old Testament, today we focus on the story of Noah and the ark.
- In today’s session we also explore the Old Testament story through a story-review game, storytelling, fine art and books.

Question of the Week
God cared for both Noah and Jesus. How does God care for us?

Core Session
- Getting Started (glass or dish of water, mirror or prism)
- Old Testament Story
- Story-Review Game: The Great Flood
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Welcome the Good News
- Singing Together
- Old Testament Story: The Boat and the Bow
- Art: Lawrence’s Eight Studies from the Book of Genesis, #3 (chalk, watercolors)
- Info: Children and the Lectionary
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More about Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- Liturgy Link: A Spirit of Prayer
- The World of the Bible: Covenant
✓ Getting Started (5-10 minutes)

Children hunt for rainbows as an introduction to today’s story of Noah and the rainbow. Set up a glass or dish of water in a sunny spot of the room. Lean the mirror in the water so that it reflects sunlight onto blank walls, floor or ceiling. As the water grows still, look for patches of reflected light refracted into rainbows.

Invite the children to find rainbows in the room. Give children white paper or index cards to lay in the patches of light. The rainbows will show up more clearly.

If sun is unreliable in your area, arrange to have the children look through prisms or crystals. Invite children to share stories of rainbows they have seen. Then say:

◆ The Bible has a rainbow story, too—and that’s the story I want to tell you today.

✓ Old Testament Story (5-10 minutes)

Tell the Old Testament Story found on pages 3-4.

✓ Story-Review Game (5-20 minutes)

The Great Flood

Children compete in teams to fill newsprint boats with animals in today’s story-review game.

Invite children to help you make pieces for the game. Ask one volunteer to draw a big boat on newsprint.

Ask the other children to make 12 animal figures from construction paper. Children glue construction-paper shapes together to form the animals, then use crayons or felt pens to add details.

Invite children to fill the ark with animals by answering questions about today’s story. When the children answer correctly, they can add one animal figure to the newsprint boat.

Story review questions:

◆ What did Noah build? (an ark or large boat)

◆ Can you name at least one of Noah’s sons? (Shem, Ham or Japheth)

◆ With what was God going to cover the earth? (rain)

◆ What people were going to ride in the boat? (Noah and his family)

◆ Who else did God want on the boat? (animals)

◆ For how many days did it rain? (40 days)

◆ What animals did Noah send to see if the land was dry? (birds)

◆ What bird brought back a green twig in its mouth? (a dove)

◆ One day, the birds did not come back at all. Why not? (The birds had found dry land—a new home.)

◆ What did Noah do when the land was dry? (Noah led his family and the animals from the boat.)

◆ What did Noah see in the sky? (a rainbow)

◆ What promise did God make to Noah? (God promised that floods would never again destroy the earth.)

✓ Praying Together (5 minutes)

Gather the children around you and say:

◆ 40 was a special number in today’s story. Do you remember what happened for 40 days?

◆ 40 is a special number in other Bible stories, too. One story tells how Jesus once prayed for 40 days.

◆ 40 days is a special number for the Church, too. For 40 days, we keep a season called Lent.

◆ In Lent, we get ready for Easter. One way we get ready for Easter is by praying.

◆ Each Sunday during Lent, we will try a different way of praying.

◆ This week we will pray two by two—just as Noah and his family filled the ark with animals, two by two.

Divide children into pairs, taking any extra child as your own partner. Explain:

◆ Tell your partners how you want them to pray. You might ask your partner to pray for you or to say “Thank you, God,” for you.

◆ Take turns praying.

After 1 minute, close by praying:

◆ God, thank you for your promises to Noah and to us. Help us to remember your promises as we get ready for Easter. Amen.

Note: Distribute this week’s At Home with the Good News to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.
Welcome the Good News
(5-10 minutes)

On page 1 of today’s Welcome the Good News, children will find a short version of today’s Old Testament story.

On page 2 children learn about the meaning in Lent and find activities they can do at home during Lent. You can incorporate these ideas in the remaining sessions of Lent, too. Children will also find a With Your Family activity they can lead at home or practice in the group.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)

From Singing the Good News you and the children can sing together:
◆ “God Makes Promises” (p. 28 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)
◆ “Friends with God” (p. 32 of the songbook; also available as an MP3)

(Open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News to access both the songbook and the MP3s.)

Old Testament Story (10-15 minutes)

The Boat and the Bow

“Old fool! What are you doing building a boat like that? No water around here could hold a boat half its size!” The villagers laughed at old Noah, patiently hammering on his giant ark.

“Father, are you sure this is what God asked you to do?” Shem whispered to Noah.

Noah took another board—the last board—from Shem. “Son, trust God!” was all Noah said. He laid the board carefully into place.

Shem and his brothers looked at each other and shook their heads. For weeks, all they had done was help their father Noah build his boat. How could old Noah just abandon his fields and vineyards like this? And what would he do when this giant boat was finished?

For days, Noah and his sons rubbed the boat, inside and out, with pitch, to keep out water. “Not that there is any water,” grumbled Japheth.

“Now we can load it!” said Noah, satisfied at last. Noah’s wife and daughters had spent weeks preparing giant pots and baskets of grain, dried fruits and vegetables.

Shem picked up a basket, but dropped it when he heard a thundering roar. “What’s that?” he shouted.

“It sounds like a lion,” said his brother. They listened. “It is a lion—and his mate! And they’re headed this way!” The brothers leapt behind a pile of hay, just as two huge lions sprang into sight, tossing their golden heads as they roared.

But before them, unafraid, walked Noah. “Here you may rest, my friends,” said Noah. The lions curled into a corner of the deck. Noah bowed and turned. “My sons! This is no time for us to rest. Gather the food and the animals!”

“What animals...” they began, but stopped. Up the planks, into the ark walked crocodiles, gorillas and jackrabbits. Honey bees and birds flew overhead. (Pause to ask, “What other kinds of animals do you think came on board?”)

Noah and his family hurried to load the food and make the animals comfortable. Finally Noah and all his family went into the boat, too. And the waters came. For 40 days rain poured down on the earth, pounding so hard on the roof of the ark that you could hardly hear all the animals roaring, growling, hissing and shrieking.

When the rain stopped, Noah’s youngest daughter ran to look outside. “Father, all I can see is water!”

The family came to her side.

“Will we have to live in this boat forever?” she asked. “Has God forgotten us?”

“No,” said her mother. “Trust in God.”

Noah took a bird in his hand and let it fly outside. The bird flew over the waters, looking for dry land. When it grew tired, it flew back to the ark. Day after day, Noah let the birds search for land. Then one day, a dove flew in the window with a green twig in its beak.

“God remembers us!” said Noah’s daughter. “The trees are beginning to show.” Days later, the birds flew away and did not come back. They had found a home.
“The day has come,” said Noah’s wife. “Open the door!”

“Yes,” said Noah. “Put down the planks. God has saved us from the waters!”

“Come out! Come out!” Noah’s family called to the animals. The animals raced into the sunshine, squawking, growling, stomping and flapping.

Noah’s family danced around an altar of stones. “Thank you, God!” they shouted. “Praise you, Lord!” they sang. And as they danced, a bow of color took shape in the sky—red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. “Look!” they whispered, one to another. “A sign from God!”

And they heard God promise, “Never again will floods destroy the whole earth.”

Art (10-20 minutes)

**Lawrence’s Eight Studies for the Book of Genesis, #3**

Gather children around Jacob Lawrence’s painting *Eight Studies for the Book of Genesis, #3* found attached to this document. This colorful poster shows an animated, modern version of preaching. We will use this poster several times in Spring to help children enter into the experience of sharing our stories of God and God’s people.

Ask children to talk about what they see in the picture. Can they find people in the picture? What are the people doing? If they could be in the picture, too, where would they like to be? What would they do?

Explain:

- Some people in the picture are listening to stories about God.
- One person in the picture is telling stories about God.
- Let’s take turns reading aloud words from scripture that tell us about God.

Help volunteers take turns reading aloud verses about Noah, found in *Genesis 7–9*. We recommend *Genesis 9:15*: “Whenever the rainbow appears, I will remember my promise to you.”

Ask each child to create a rainbow on his or her paper, using one of the methods described below.

**Wet Chalk**

Soak colored chalks in sugar water. Show the children how to use sponges to dampen their papers and the soaked chalk to draw rainbows. The damp paper will help the colors blend; the sugar-water soak will give bright colors with less smearing.

**Watercolors**

Show the children how to use sponges to dampen their papers. Invite the children to paint rainbows with the watercolor or tempera paints, using brushes to blend different colors.

**Children and the Lectionary**

In Lent, we explore several Old Testament stories especially appropriate, both to the season and to the interests of children. Today’s session for the First Sunday of Lent tells the story of Noah’s rescue from the flood, focusing on the rainbow as a sign of God’s promise of life to Noah.

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**

- Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  - Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures*.
  - A helpful handout on *Using Models of the Faith* content. (You’ll find Spring-B’s *Models of the Faith* in your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder.)
  - A guide for *Preparing Your LTGN Session*.
  - An optional activity titled *Catholic Basics*.
  - A shareable story script of today’s *Old Testament Story*.
  - Suggestions for children’s books in a handout titled *Book Corner: Noah’s Ark*.
  - Lawrence’s *Eight Studies for the Book of Genesis*, to be used in today’s Art activity.
  - This week’s *At Home with the Good News*, to distribute or email to group members.

- Open your Spring-B Seasonal Resources folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  - Information on Spring-B’s *Models of the Faith*.
  - For catechists and/or families, an article titled *Season of Lent*.
  - For catechists and/or families, an article titled *Covenants*.
More about Today's Scriptures

Today's readings affirm God's promise of continuing relationship. In Genesis 9, life begins anew, sealed by God's promise to all creatures and confirmed by the rainbow. The author of 1 Peter explains that we are saved through the cleansing water of baptism. In the gospel, Jesus’ 40 days of temptation in the wilderness end with the proclamation of God’s good news.

Genesis 9:8-15
Both Jewish and Christian tradition attribute the writing of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, to Moses. Modern scholars now recognize that the Pentateuch is composed of several strands of tradition preserved and edited over centuries of Jewish history. The story of the flood is itself an ancient one, shared by several Near Eastern cultures, but the biblical account has its own unique theological perspective.

Through Noah, God makes the first covenant, a covenant with all humans and animals for all generations. The sign of the covenant, the rainbow, is a sign of peace, showing that God's wrath was over and the stability of the natural order was guaranteed. This first covenant demonstrates the trustworthiness of God who makes promises and keeps them.

1 Peter 3:18-22
For many scholars, the excellent Greek style of this letter, its use of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) and the lack of direct reference to Jesus’ teaching all suggest that the letter was not written directly by Peter, but perhaps by a companion, disciple or scribe of his.

In this reading, the author seems to have used parts of a hymn to frame statements about Jesus’ authority and the meaning of baptism. Christ died “once,” not only as a model to be followed but also to bring new access to God.

The author draws parallels between the destructive but cleansing waters of the flood and the cleansing, saving waters of baptism. Verse 21b is translated more literally, “a pledge to God from (or of) a good conscience.” Thus, the believer’s baptism is effective not as a physical washing, but as a sign of one’s new life in Christ.

Mark 1:12-15
Today’s reading recounts Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. The event of empowerment by the Spirit at Jesus’ baptism (vv. 9-11) immediately leads into a time of testing. The 40 days recall the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:2), the 40 days of Moses on the mountain (Exodus 24:18; 34:28) and the 40 days of Elijah’s journey (1 Kings 19:8). Exposure to temptation is a continuing theme of Jesus’ ministry, in the desire of the crowds for a sign (8:11), in Peter’s rebuke (8:32-33) and in the jeers of the crowds at his crucifixion (15:29-32).

Apparently Jesus was prompted by the end of John the Baptist’s active ministry to begin his public work. Jesus now proclaims that “the time is fulfilled.” The work of the prophets, including John the Baptist, was to prepare for God’s kingly rule. In Jesus, however, all God’s prophetic words find their fulfillment. The prophets were called to speak God’s message, while Jesus is God’s message. “The kingdom of God has come near” (v. 15), that is, the kingdom of God is more than merely nearby, it is present in Jesus.

Reflection

Many of us, finding ourselves in a desert place, wonder how we got there. Was it my fault? Or could I blame some handy moron? If we look to today’s gospel, it’s the Spirit who sends Jesus to the desert.

This might seem like a cruel Spirit indeed, until we read the qualifying phrase: “and angels waited on him.” It is possible that angels attend all our desert places. Where we sense the least comfort, there it abounds. When we feel estranged and lost among wild beasts, something stirs beneath the surface.

At least it was true for Jesus. He emerges from the desert with a spurt of energy that launches his public life. After 40 dry days to consider his message, he bursts forth with good news. Perhaps he knew the
The reign of God was at hand because he had felt it in the hardest trials.

In his streamlined style, Mark offers no explanation of what happened during the lonely ordeal. Perhaps that makes it more universal, so we can all identify. Mark’s brevity makes it even more dramatic when Jesus breaks into speech, and in the next verse, begins his preaching.

**The Scriptures and the Catechism**

Today we are reminded of God’s desire to be in a relationship with us. As Creator, God fashioned the world for us to live in (CCC, #279–301). As covenant-maker, God entered into a special relationship with humanity (CCC, #302–314). And when we frustrated God’s desire for a relationship, God punished sinful humanity. But the punishment also resulted in a renewal of a covenant with Noah and his family. God’s desire for the right kind of relationship with us demonstrates God’s faithfulness and loving care (CCC, #410–12, 422–29, 1647).

**Liturgy Link**

**A Spirit of Prayer**

In today’s society, prayer has become largely personal. It is understood to be a private experience that belongs to the individual, and it should not interfere with public life. According to this understanding, prayer belongs in the heart, in the head, in the home and, at appointed times, in the church, mosque or synagogue.

In contrast to this, Christian worship has always insisted that prayer is a public activity undertaken by the assembly of believers, together and separately. Yes, prayer is clearly private and personal, but the individual’s prayers issue out of and build upon the corporate prayers of the Church. The prayers of the Church affect those inside and outside of the gathering for worship.

**Roots of Christian Prayer**

Much of Christian liturgy developed out of Jewish worship. The first Christians, who were Jews, continued to attend the synagogue until they were excluded after AD 70. Paul usually went first to the local synagogue when he began to preach in a town. Thus it is not surprising to find the influence of the synagogue service on the forms of worship, especially in the forms and the postures of prayer for various parts of the service.

The characteristic Jewish form of prayer is *berakah*, a blessing or a thanksgiving to God. This consists of an opening proclamation of thanks and praise, the recollection of the saving deeds of God, a request that these deeds be realized in the present or future and a concluding note of praise.

Many examples of such prayer can be found in scripture, especially in the Psalms. The *berakah* also had a strong influence on the development of Christian prayers, especially on the eucharistic prayers. An examination of the eucharistic prayers in the Mass reveals that they are in the form of *berakah*.

**The World of the Bible**

**Covenant**

A covenant is a formal agreement between two persons or parties that spells out the obligations of their relationship. In the biblical world, the general expectations were modeled on the customs that guided relationships between persons of unequal honor, status and wealth. These relationships were voluntary and freely entered into and were not required by law. The covenant bound the parties in mutual and reciprocal obligations.

The “patron” or more powerful person (like God) promised to provide for and protect the less powerful “clients” (from the Latin word for dependents). In return, to enhance the honor and reputation of the patron, the clients offered respect, praise and gratitude and other favors when requested.

God’s directives or basic guidelines for the Hebrew covenant community’s life with one another are given as commandments, statutes and decrees. Together they identify the basic attitudes and actions that must be followed to fulfill God’s desires.

**Commandments** refers to the 10 basic “words” that God spoke directly to Moses and the community on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17). When the people are overcome by fear, they request that in the future God not speak to them directly but only through Moses. **Statutes and decrees** describe this further indirect teaching through Moses that makes the many specific applications of the Ten Commandments to the everyday life of the community.