1st Sunday of Lent, Year B, Feb. 18, 2018

Genesis 9:8-15

Psalm 25

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1: 12-15

Now is the time for our Journey of Lent. Our ashes designate our starting point and our willingness to embark on this journey. As with Jesus, the Spirit drives us into the desert - alone.

For the trek through the desert, we leave everything behind. We drop all our ego-defenses. No presumptions, no assumptions. We are not rich. We are not poor. We are not smart. We are not dolts. We have no fine clothes. We have no status. All the baggage we carry in our day-to-day lives, we have to leave behind. We cannot bring along all the crutches we rely on to help us walk on this earth. All of our defenses. We walk into the desert naked and afraid.

Wild beasts of doubt, apathy, depression, worry, apprehension, anxiety, fear, unease, discomfort, disquiet, unfaithfulness assail us. “Spirit of God make us strong. Defend us against the wiles of the Satan – the great tempter.”

We bare our chests. We rend our hearts. We open them up. Our own blood is our sacrifice in this desert. “Accept our sacrifice, O God, and heal us. Help us repent of our sins and lead us into your Kingdom.” The desert is a time of purification.

“Your ways, O Lord, make known to us; teach us your paths. Guide us in your truth and teach us, for you are God our Savior.”

We are parched in the desert. Our souls are parched. Our thoughts turn to water- life-giving water. Where is that rainbow, that promise of your covenant with us? Only water can make it real for us. Then we remember that we were immersed in the waters of Baptism. God poured his life-giving water all over us. His water poured into our eyes. We belong to God. No beasts can devour us.

 We are God-beings and with our souls refreshed with his divine life, we can see the rainbow of the new covenant. We can see that this water is not a removal of the dust of the desert but an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him. (1 Peter 3)

This Jesus was led into the desert and tempted by Satan. Jesus persevered and was brought through the desert by the Spirit of God. Jesus reigns. He expends his power to us to see us out of our own desert. We will not die parched and all alone. We will survive. We will see the rainbow. We will receive the promise. We will win if only we have trust and faith in him.

When we emerge from our forty days and forty nights we will be Church purified. We will be a community of believers who will help each other through the trails and trials of the desert. We will be prepared to uphold our end of the rainbow covenant.

Driven by the Spirit, we are to make another Lenten Journey. Natalie and Audrey want to join in our journey with us. They want to be us. Pray for them. Fear not the desert. We will make the trek together. We are God’s people. We are Church. At the end of forty days and forty nights, we will be Church purified.