

Rainbow Hope



If you look carefully at the picture above, you will see the beginning and end of a rainbow. In the story of Noah, Genesis 9:13-17, the rainbow is explained as a sign of hope. It was to remind God and humankind of God's promise that never again would God punish wicked people by allowing a flood to destroy the earth and all living on and in it.

The story about Noah, his family and animals saved in an Ark from drowning, was based on ancient stories of floods which inundated all the land the people knew. It is not an authentic account of an historical event but it contains some important truths Christians believe about God and God's relationship with people and the world.

In the story, we are told that after the flood, God accepted that human beings would continue to perform evil acts but those acts would not result in their death.

As Christians, we believe that God did, and does, not condemn the world because of our wrong doings, but sent Jesus into the world to live among us as one of us (John 3:17). In his life and death Jesus showed us how much God loved us and desired us to share in God's life.

To enter this life, we are baptised with water signifying a cleansing, passing through death with Jesus, and being raised up into new life in the body of Christ, the Church. Our new life in Christ begins in this world and, we believe, continues after death when we live in God for eternity.

By connecting Noah's story and our baptism, a rainbow can be identified as a sign of *biblical* hope. Such a hope is not a hope for some vague possibility to occur in the future, but a hope that firmly believes God is faithful and can be trusted to love and care for us now and for ever.

As Christians, we hope for things that are real but may not be tangible. Our faith and hope is affirmed not only by the witness of Jesus' life and death, but above all, by his resurrection from the dead, in which we share. In 1 Peter 1:3-4, Peter declares that God has "given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you."

As we journey through Lent to Holy Week and Easter, we follow Jesus along rough and smooth paths. We might do this by struggling to make decisions that affect others, as Jesus did before commencing his ministry and later, before his capture and death. We are also encouraged to deny ourselves, repent of hurting those around us, forgive others as well as ourselves for mistakes or wrong doings and rise to meet challenges to love others. To do this we are assisted by the encouragement of one another and the strength of God's Holy Spirit in our lives.

When on Good Friday we pause and ponder the painful death of Jesus, we know that this same Jesus has risen, and has promised us resurrection to new life in God's love. We experience this resurrection life each day in our lives here on earth when something, perhaps a relationship, is transformed into glory by the love and care of people. Also, through our service of others we discover we are growing in God's love and, along with God, are desiring this growth for all we meet.

One thing we have all become more aware of during the past year is how closely we are linked to other people, family members, friends and strangers. A virus that arose in China has affected people all over the world. By coughing or speaking in close proximity to anyone, we and others can unknowingly spread Covid 19. Being mindful of the danger of thoughtless acts, can strengthen respect and care between us and others.

When we desire the wellbeing of all, and not just a select few, such as Noah and his family, we find that we must widen our love to include those to which we are not easily attracted. We cannot know the background or hurts others have experienced so we cannot judge them. What we do believe is that everyone is part of God's "very good" creation (Genesis 1:31), and God wants all to enjoy life in God's love now and after death. Further, I believe that God's life and love is not just for all people, but for all living creatures and earth, which have been created by God.

May the presence and beauty of a rainbow we see from time to time in the sky, even a broken rainbow such as on this leaflet, be a sign to us of *biblical* hope—a hope that reminds us of our faithful God who desires all creation to be gradually transformed into glory by experiencing something of life in God's love now and for eternity.

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