

The Ascension of the Lord
May 16, 2021
Year of the Eucharist and Parish (Reflection #18)

“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’ (Genesis 9:1)

The Bible story of Noah’s Ark has fascinated countless generations across our globe. I remember watching programs of modern-day adventurers who set out to find the resting place of Noah’s Ark. To this day, I would imagine, many cannot look at a rainbow in the sky without recalling the covenant promise of God: He would not destroy the world via a flood. Yet, this beautiful story of one man’s faithfulness is only a small part of God’s covenant with His children. To understand how God continues to express His love for mankind, let us reflect upon the events that occur after the rainbow had appeared.

The story of Noah continues with him and his family settling down and continuing the command God gave to Adam when He said to “Be fertile and multiply.” Noah, for his part, plants a vineyard. As time presses forward, the grapes ripen and are gathered to make wine. Scripture recounts how Noah became intoxicated from the wine and lay “uncovered” in his tent. Of his three sons, Ham is the first to see his father in this unflattering position. He chooses to leave his father inside the tent and go tell his two brothers, Shem and Japheth. These two brothers grab a covering, walk backwards into the tent, cover their father, and promptly leave the tent. When Noah finally does awaken, he curses Ham for not assisting him. He would also bless Shem and Japheth for what they had done for him.

Some here may never have heard this portion of the story of Noah. For our part, relying upon the English translation for “seeing a person uncovered,” the story may present Ham as a sympathetic figure. We may think Ham is a victim who just so happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is where we would be misled. The actual meaning for what took place is further illustrated in the Book of Leviticus Chapter 20 verses 10-21. By using the same connotation in both instances, Moses presents Ham as acting out in a most inappropriate fashion with someone very close to Noah. Many scholars would take this approach, thereby the curse of Noah toward Ham would make much more sense than just a father being angry for being seen in an unflattering position.

Right now, you may be thinking: “Well, alrighty then. Now what are we supposed to take home from this?” The point in our reflection that I would like you to consider is the fact that Noah and his family are all that are left to begin populating the world again. Adam and Eve are long dead by this time. Cain, who slew his brother, is also dead. The descendants of Cain are all dead. If only Noah and his family are left, then where did this sinful act come from? It came from his son. It came from within the heart of man. Even with God starting over from the beginning and rewarding Noah and his family with a covenant of love, sin is still very much at work within the heart of man. Sin, and the many ways it is expressed within the lives of future generations, will plague mankind from now on, limiting his ability to give himself completely to God. We have come to define this as man’s life long struggle with the weakness of concupiscence. Yet even with sin now operating within mankind in this profound way, God will

continue to extend love, making covenant after covenant waiting for man to go where He leads;
which leads us to our father in faith, Abraham.