

Homily for March 12, 2000  
1st Sunday of Lent Cycle B

By Father Charles Bowes

Genesis 9:8-15  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:12-15

## *We travel in good company, for God follows and desires us.*

Getting there is half the battle... sometimes days are like that, aren't they? We start out trying to get ready to go to work, to school, to church...and the journey...climbing Mt. Everest can sometimes seem simpler. "Where's your other shoe?" says mother to child. "Could you drop these off at the Post Office on your way?" one spouse asks another. "We're going to be late again," says the ever-punctual sibling to those who are not so blessed.

...And the baggage...the *impedimenta*...the word baggage in Latin, aptly named - impediments to the journey. All those worries; the unloving choices and the struggles..."I have to face those folks again today." ..."How will I ever get this work done?"

But here we are today...we have journeyed here...and here, as hard as it might have been to arrive, here we follow behind a cross and not alone. Here each week during the Easter season, folks will stand in our midst, fellow companions, themselves companioned by their sponsors and by us all... and to

this journey to the table we bring not our solutions, not our virtues, not our reputations - but our sinfulness. The very things that are our struggles and unloving choices - these are the things that unite us here. The very things that block our journeys elsewhere become the vehicles for our unity. For here, at least here, we are not alone ever and we are reminded during this Lenten season that our brokenness is really our strength, for there and only there can God be God to us, and we God's children.

Our catechumens and candidates for full communion each week by their presence and by their dismissal have invited our companionship of them - and we have been here for them and they for us. Our struggles are what unite us to one another. Their struggle to believe and ours to cope and believe - these are all one - all God-given and spirit-laden.

In a few moments our catechumens and candidates will again stand in our midst. We shall hear from their sponsors the testimony about their journey and from their own lips their yearning to come to the table. In my conversations with them they speak of the support they sense from us all.

Is this not God's own action - God's touching one person through another? Are we not God's own spirit made flesh for them and of course for one another? Is

not the spirit of Jesus that real, that close, that tangible that it has a name and a face? Are not our names baptismal names related to saints to remind us that God is that close as we undertake our journeys? Surely the world wants us to worry about arriving on time and solving all the problems, personal and otherwise. But our great God wants merely to be with us, to journey with us. "He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him," says Mark chapter one about Jesus in the desert. Jesus has done battle with the wild beast and through his cross and resurrection has become our assurance that the new age has begun and that our journey is never alone, no matter how deep or dark. With joy we companion our Elect this day who remind us that all of us are so companioned always and everywhere.

Dorothy Day, the Catholic radical and founder of the Houses of Hospitality, went so far as to claim that God pursued her relentlessly...like a hound. She got the image of God as the "Hound of Heaven" from poet Francis Thompson who wrote, "I fled him, down the nights and down the days; ...I fled him down the labyrinthine ways/of my own mind; and in the mist of tears/I hid from him..." Reflecting on this poem, Day wrote, "Through all my daily life, in those I came in contact with, in the things I read and hear, I felt that sense of being followed of being desired; a sense of hope and expectation."

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