



Forty Days of Renewal

THEME FOR 2011

BULWARK BUILDING
KINGDOM LIVING

...a People of the Covenant

Week 1 (August 8-² 14)

God Remembers His Everlasting Covenant

Genesis 9:8-17

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” ¹⁷ God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.”

Commentary:

After the waters of the destroying (and purifying) flood have receded, God makes a promise to Noah that never again will he allow a flood to destroy the earth. God’s concern is the *preservation of life*, because he is first and foremost the God of the living, the God of life. The promise is made using the language of *covenant*, together with a *sign* to be the perpetual remembrance of that covenant. The significance of the rainbow is that it is in the shape of an archer’s bow, a weapon of warfare. God, as it were, surrenders his bow and decides no longer to wage warfare against a sinful human race. Instead, God reaffirms his original intention, his consistent disposition towards us: to be the giver and sustainer of life.

When scripture says that God “remembers” something (*verses 15 & 16*), it is not as if he *has forgotten* or as if he *can forget*. Rather, by “remembering” his covenant, God *acts* to bring to fruition his plans and purposes: he upholds his promise, pours forth his blessings, turns toward us in mercy and compassion, and brings us fullness of life.

Up to today God stands fast on his promise that “never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” because he, the life-giver, is intent to destroy only those things which prevent his people – the **People of the Covenant** – from enjoying fullness of life. The New Testament recalls the flood and understands it as a prefiguration of sacramental baptism (cf. 1 Peter 3:21). Baptism, the waters of the new covenant, destroys sin and gives us a new relationship to the Father in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For Reflection:

1. Begin by thanking the Lord for taking the initiative in establishing a covenant with you personally. (“Who am I that God should make a covenant with me?”) Keep in mind who this Covenant-maker is: the God of the universe, the source of all life.
2. Do a *lectio divina* on this passage. This traditional method of praying the Bible has three steps:
 - **Read** every word, phrase and verse slowly; read to understand.
 - **Repeat** words or phrases which strike (console, reassure, challenge, bother, etc.) you. Why do they strike you?
 - **Pray** those phrases or ideas; converse with God.
3. God sets aside his bow (his weapon of warfare), forgives you, and pledges an everlasting covenant with you.
 - For what things are you especially and profoundly grateful to God that he has forgiven you?
 - Pray for grace in overcoming continuing areas of weakness and sin. Remember that God does not wish to destroy you, but hastens to heal you and bring you to himself.

Scripture-Prayer:

“But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.” (*Lamentations* 3:21-23)

Intercession:

Let’s pray for all our brothers and sisters in *Ang Ligaya ng Panginoon Community*:
That as we begin these “Forty Days of Renewal” we might become even more that **People of the Covenant** in whom God will be pleased and through whom he will be glorified.