

First Sunday of Lent: February 21, 2021
St. Vincent de Paul Church, Baltimore

A Reflection on the Scriptures *Genesis 9:8-17* *1 Peter 3:18-22* *Mark 1:12-15*

The rainbow is a striking example of the beauty to be found throughout God's creation. This Genesis passage gives us a story to explain the origin and purpose of the rainbow. The rainbow was given as a sign of the covenant God made with Noah and all living creatures, that the earth should never again be overwhelmed by water. By extension, the rainbow has sometimes been viewed as a reminder of all God's promises.

There are some unusual things about rainbows. You don't see them often, so they become more special when they do appear. The conditions have to be just right to form a rainbow—the sun lower than 42° in the sky, etc., but in order to see a rainbow, you also have to take certain actions: you have to stand with your back to the sun and look into the storm and the dark.

The reading from Mark's gospel reminds us of another of God's promises: to send a Messiah to rescue the people of Israel. That promise is fulfilled in Jesus the Christ, who made us a further promise, that he would be with us always. For me, the rainbow has always been a sign of all those promises.

We live in stormy times, with upheaval in our political situation, our environmental crisis, our focus on our own desires that go beyond our needs, the abuses and injustices of racism, and the widespread loss of concern for the well-being of others, of the understanding that we are all in this together.

Let us have the courage to look into this dark and this storm, to stand with the light of Jesus always warming our backs, and look for rainbows, for signs of hope. Let us live so as to become messengers and examples of God's loving concern. Let us do our part in increasing the spread of the kingdom of God, and ask ourselves: Have I done what I can do?

Can we become rainbows in the lives of someone else, living signs of the increasing of God's kingdom?

Peggy Shouse