

Noah and the Flood

READ GENESIS 6–9

*Go into the ark, you and all your household,
for I have seen that you alone are righteous.*

GENESIS 7:1

The story of Noah is told to illustrate how deeply the human family has fallen into sinfulness. Sin is now so universal that a troubled God decides to complete the work of destruction that the human family has begun (Genesis 6:13). However, God sees that Noah is a good man and decides that humanity will survive through Noah's family. God tells Noah to build an ark, which God will use to save Noah's family and members of the animal kingdom. God is pained by and disappointed in humankind, but in his mercy he will save the human family through Noah.

Noah builds the ark and, following God's instructions, loads himself, his family, and the animals into it. God closes the door of the ark, showing his care for all inside and for the future human family.

The flood comes, joining the waters of the sky with the waters on the earth. As the ark floats higher, everything beneath

it drowns. For forty days and nights it rains. It is another 150 days before the water recedes.

Then God remembers Noah. In his remembering, God begins the process of re-creation: “And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided” (Genesis 8:1). Noah sends out birds to see if it is safe to disembark. He first sends a raven, then a dove. The second time he sends the dove, it returns with an olive branch in its beak. God then tells Noah to leave the ark with his family and all of the animals and begin to repopulate the earth.

God makes a covenant with all the living beings. Although the evil in the human heart continues to flourish, God promises that never again will he destroy the earth in a flood. The sign of this covenant, or promise, is the rainbow.

The story of Noah shows how, even in the face of terrible sin, God wants to save the human family.

CCC, 56–58: The covenant with Noah