

## “Noahs’ Hope”

Reflecting on the myth of Noah, the author of the Book of Wisdom, writes:

“...the hope of the world took refuge on a raft and,  
steered by your hand,  
preserved the germ of a new generation  
for the ages to come.” (JB Wisdom 14:6)

Our minds try to bring a reasoned world and a mythic world into dialogue and in the process we wrestle with the clash of narratives, each with their own powerful and valid contributions, and whose methods and purposes are different.

Engagement with great myths offer us an opportunity for wide and different perspectives into how we comprehend the world. Their lenses, acting through the power of metaphor, arch toward an integration of understanding, never complete, but sometimes very compelling.

To engage the myth, we must let ourselves fall into the world of myth. ---

As the tale goes, Creator God starts to regret having created humankind.

Why?

Because humans were causing confusion, destruction, and chaos on Earth.

God, tested beyond any compassionate measure, finally says – “Enough, your conduct is serving no good purpose.”

Yet, God still finds favor with one, and so decides to save a remnant of life.

But not with one bold swish of a wand is God’s saving work completed. –  
Not even in a myth!

Rather, Noah and his clan had to work and build, using crafts and skills that were hard learned.  
Thus, it was that they built a great raft, *an ark*.

Then, when all was ready, they embarked on the gala march of the creatures into the ark.

Hopes and fears were high, but with faith in something greater than themselves, and in themselves, and in each other -- they all entered the ark.

The steerage is packed and cramped, and the wheelhouse folks are cracking and jump-ing-ly busy. – It was a great undertaking, and they all knew it. —

The weather forecast anticipated rough head winds, lots of rain, high seas, and flooding. A kind of hurricane, tornado, tsunami, and *derecho* all in one.

Pounding waves, oppressive rain and the ocean-y dark soon enclosed upon the tiny raft of an ark.

At times, the wooden vessel would creak, heave, groan, and spring a leak, or two, or three.

--*But doesn't creativity just love adversity?!!*

— *More than survival* was the task of the few, the remnant on the ark. *More than survival* ...

They, now, lived under the radical awareness of a *double hope*:

First, for the healing of the Earth, that it would once again be hospitable to the flourishing of life, and second — hope in themselves, that they would be prepared and committed mentally, morally, and spiritually to live upon the Earth, with each other, and all others as attentive, generous, and wise beings, ordering their lives to a greater Source.

Needless to say, there were tough times on the ark.

When they felt their own internal resourcefulness could go no further, when hope's flame faded. This is when they met that formidable bottomless dark night.

In the night of all times, they were stripped of many of their assumptions and drawn as if by an unrelenting undertow to contemplate what was their bare identity and mission, the bare dispositions of the soul of who they were.

In the storm of the night, these mariners looked deep inside for that guiding star.

In what came to be the hallows of the ark, they came to know it was their privilege, duty, and joy to stay open to new possibilities, to learning and pondering, to mentoring the young, to good questions, old and new, and to live large a practice of appreciation, kindness, mercy-justice, and truth seeking, as if life depended on it.

Then it was . . . that the rain stopped.

It took 40 days of deluge, a solid bit of time, for a soul's journey and the journey of a community's collective soul, carried, afloat, on a piece of wood, to travel the course.

These 40 days remind us of other great wisdom stories, like 40 years in the desert to form a people, and Jesus' 40 days of prayer to clarify and fire his own heart for mission.

But what happens in the between time NOW that the rain has ceased, but the water has yet to recede.

They cannot get off the boat --- and cabin fever is on a rampage of contagion.

“What do you do in *quarantine* time?” ----

They flung open the windows and began hyper House cleaning, Community building, Skills building, Collaboration, Development of new tools. — Make real new possibilities!

—Dream, vision, and ground with practicalities and with more questions.

What is our mission, now, in light of our history, in light of what we have experienced and learned, in light of this new world and its present and emerging needs, and in light of our own talents, resources, limitations, and our relationships . . . with each other, among us, and with the Mystery we call God?

As the waters receded, Noah and his companions had to learn to read the signs of a new time, and while some signs were clear and supported with good data, other signs were just as real but took extra careful discernment, subtlety, and nimbleness . . . in order to read them well, though never perfectly. Some of the mariners were particularly talented with this and shared their gifts generously.

Attentive to the pattern of the raven and the flight of the doves, they learn that waters have receded and that the land is dry.

Soon God says: Come, all of you, out of the ark, come, now as you are, into this new world, and so they did.

First, Noah and the whole of the ark's community built a table, around which they gathered, offered thanksgiving, and realigned their dreams, values, priorities, passions, and mission.

When God sensed the sweetness of their offering and their sincerity, God said, "Never again will I destroy Earth because of the heart contrivances of humans."

— More so, God says: "Be as one on Earth — AND— I will want an accounting of how you are with one another, and with all others."

God blessed Noah and all of every kind.

Then it was that God's Covenant was established . . . with them all.

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According to the ancient myth, a bow was draped across the sky, to be seen as storms rise and pass, an enduring sign and reminder of what we call the "Spirit's Promise."

The symbol of 40 days of rain speaks of the need for inner and outer work of ongoing growth and transformation as human beings, personally and together — mentally, psychologically, spiritually, and ethically, over the course of our lives, or until we are as old as Noah, 950 years.

We can imagine that we have been on an ark . . . the rain has been pouring, the waves have been thrashing.

And like the radical double hope of Noah, we hope for the healing of Earth and the healing and maturing of humankind. Like Noah, we know we have to engage the healing and maturing process with the Creator Spirit *and with each other*, intentionally, supportively, with gratitude for

the legacy and bonds that we share, and in a way that enriches the broad communities in which we live and work.

For love of the commons and the common good, the Spirit of Promise issues, to all of us, more than a call, but rather a pointed loving demand to live in the Promise.

And in light of our particular Mission of higher education, during these amazing and challenging times, God's Promise compels and guides us as a community of Mercy and hope.

Catherine McAuley knew God's Promise and the hope it cradled. Her free response to the movement of the Spirit in her life, to God's loving demand, still flows around the world.

Today, we humbly embrace the invitation to live in God's Promise with hope, and to do so together, as we grow in trust and mutuality, with a distinct Mission as Mercy Catholic higher education.

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