

Homily for the 1st Sunday of Lent

“Pitch within. Pitch without.

300 cubits long. 50 cubits wide.

30 cubits high.”

Can you imagine how ludicrous Noah must have looked?

Picture him in a place we now call Iraq building his mighty Ark. Like the character in “Field of Dreams” who obeys the voice that says, “If you build it, they will come,” Noah obeys the command of God and builds what others see as a foolish ship in the middle of a desert. And everyone laughed at him, scorned him, and shouted out to him that he has lost his mind and was living in a dream world.

And yet at a time when the Bible tells us “how great was man’s wickedness on earth,” God uses this foolish Ark in order to preserve the world...to be a place of refuge and protection from the laughter and mockery and evil of the world around it.

The world continues to laugh. And the Ark is still here. But the Ark is not measured in cubits. The Ark today is measured by faith. The Ark today is our Church and every faith community that prefers the guidance of the Spirit of God to the mockery of the world.

The secular world is at war with faith. No matter what tenets of faith you agree with or don't agree with, the primary influence of faith cannot be put aside in favor of a simplistic approach to morality that rests on the rule of the majority. Faith demands more.

Faith demands a respect for life and for all that supports and enhances life. Faith cries out for the needs of the poor. Faith does not negotiate the presence of God in our world. Faith should champion the equality of all peoples and should be unafraid to challenge a world that wants to push faith aside as something to be done only on Sunday.

Whether the issue is a presidential order dictating the values to a Catholic Hospital or a nearly 50 year old banner hanging in a public school auditorium, the society in which we live should never be able to silence the voice of God. Our Constitution did not intend to create a wall dividing faith from government. Rather, it wanted to protect faith...all faiths...from government not government from faith.

By example, by words, by determination and by a critical evaluation of the values that so devastate our culture, we are called as a people of faith to witness to the presence of God in our lives. The Ark of Faith should never be laughed at.

Noah went into the desert to build God's Ark. That Ark became the vessel that preserved life. Jesus went into the desert to

conquer evil and overcome the temptations of life. Noah brought forth new life from the Ark and Jesus left the desert to bring the new life of God's Kingdom to the world. We who have been born in the waters of baptism and live God's Word in the Ark of Faith are also called to bring God's Kingdom to the world. In this Lenten Season let us learn by our sacrifices that faith should never be silent but should call to the world that the Kingdom of God is indeed at hand.