

Ps 90

(Somerville R 93)

FADE ANGELUS

"It was through his faith that Noah, when he had been warned by God of something that had never been seen before, felt a holy fear and built an ark to save his family. By his faith the world was convicted; and he was able to claim the righteousness which is the reward of faith." - from the Letter to the Hebrews, part of the 2nd scripture reading you'll hear at Mass on Sunday. It refers directly to the first reading, about the flood, with which it ties in neatly; and the Gospel passage is also about faith, and grace, and water - that long piece in St John's gospel about the conversation of Jesus with a woman of Samaria at Jacob's well at noon-time. St John's very rich and deep presentation of that event alone would provide many themes and starting-points for homilies on the scripture for this coming 3rd Sunday of Lent. Unfortunately, from the point of view of deepening your understanding and appreciation for the scripture readings chosen this year on the 3rd Sunday of Lent, it's most unlikely you'll hear them expounded this week. So it would be helpful if you read them yourself, in prayer and thoughtfulness, before you go to Mass on Sunday. And I shall try to give a few pointers today which may help your prayer and reflection. Instead of the homily on Sunday, there's to be a special session dealing with the forthcoming HK diocese Convention - a meeting which will bring together representatives of the whole Church here, priests, religious and lay-people, in order to bring about a renewal in Catholic life, institutions and living in HK. Of its nature, this concerns every single

Catholic in the diocese, and its success will depend on the co-operation and interest of all of us. Instead of muttering to oneself, or one's friends, about what's wrong with the Church in HK, now is the time when each of us has the opportunity, and responsibility, to make our minds known, so that we can, as a community of faith and as individual Christians, be able more effectively to live full Christian lives, giving witness to this city of God's love and concern for all who live and work here. In our prayer, too, let's remember to ask God's blessing and the light and strength of the Holy Spirit for this effort of renewal, which must begin in the hearts of each of us, and which is also the purpose of our observance of Lent. PRAYERS

<sup>Correct to Spring -</sup>  
<sup>I know the text 26</sup>

MUSIC

- Water: well, there was plenty of it around in the days of Noah. Not unlike HK, water was an important and uncertain commodity in the ancient Middle-East in biblical times: and they had storage problems too. In the bible, water is used as an image of peril and death, and also as a sign of life, blessing and abundance. That's no more contradictory than our situation where we need and hope for abundant rain to fill our reservoirs, though that same rain can cause landslides, damage and even loss of life. In the New Testament, starting from Jesus' own promise that He wd. give 'living water.. leading up to eternal life' (St John's gospel), water takes on a new symbolism in the sacrament of Baptism. It isn't merely, as most unimaginative, literal-minded westerners tend to think first, a 'washing' symbol - that's very secondary in the imagery of

Baptism. Life, liveliness, health, sparkle, freshness, newness — these are more immediate connotations of the "living water" Jesus spoke about. The reason this passage is chosen for Sunday stnd. is obvious when you remember that Lent is a preparation for Baptism, and for those of us already baptized, for a renewal of what ~~our~~ <sup>this sacrament</sup> ~~our~~ baptism of faith really means for us. The Flood story has the same purpose — recalling, in thanksgiving, one of God's saving works, in which the faith-trust of one man is high-lighted. The fact that it was through destructive water that Noah was saved is not an accidental link with the gospel. The Flood marked a new creation, a new beginning, and Noah was privileged to be saved, to be part of the new creation because he alone was responsive to God's word and had trust and faith in His Lord — what his faith convicted the rest of the world of (convicted is the strong word in the Jerusalem Bible translation) was its lack of faith and unwillingness to accept God's lordship over his own creation. Baptism too is a sign of faith, made with the symbol of live water, indicating a fresh life: it's a new creation, of a different kind, brought about by Christ in the way He lived, suffered and died and sealed by His rising from death. Before we celebrate these <sup>saving</sup> events at Easter, Lent gives us an opportunity to reflect, try to understand and pray in meditation on the other great events of God's saving power shown to the world in anticipation of Christ definitive act of love and salvation for all mankind.