

Only twice in my Navy career did I have the opportunity to be “at sea.”

The first time was onboard the Seventh Fleet Flagship, the USS Blueridge (LCC-19) - on a 15-day cruise to Qingdao Harbor following President Clinton’s trip to China the summer of 1998.

The second time was onboard the USS Fletcher DD-992, for a month as we moved from Hawaii to Thailand by way of Hong Kong.

There’s something awesome about being a tiny spot in the middle of an enormous ocean. Beside the twelve-hour shifts, and almost too-regularly occurring battle-stations drills, the peaceful beauty of the sunrise over the ocean contrasts with passing by the occasional tropical storm or typhoon.

While I wouldn’t trade the experience for anything - I probably wouldn’t necessarily do it again either.

In today’s first and second readings we hear about Noah’s Ark. St. Paul, in the second reading parallels the Flood Story with our own Baptism; and the covenant God made with Noah after the Flood with the covenant God made with us in our Baptism.

Figuratively, the Church is sometimes called the Barque of Peter. Barque - not the sound a dog makes, nor the outer covering for a tree trunk - but rather B-A-R-Q-U-E which is a type of sailing vessel with a particular type of masting and sails.

With all this talk of boats and ships, we might consider our own relationship with God and Jesus Christ in the Church.

We can ask ourselves, are we onboard this ship - or do we find ourselves hanging over the side or maybe floating somewhere nearby? If we’re on the Barque of Peter - are we below deck, perhaps a bit seasick - or are we on deck or up on a mast eagerly performing the needed work?

And we might also ask ourselves - where have the waters of Baptism taken us? Are we out on the high seas - or near to shore? Maybe we’ve run aground - or even find ourselves high and dry in the middle of a desert.

Here we are in the first few days of the Holy Season of Lent. Let us join with Our Lord in the desert - what we’ve heard in the Gospel story. And maybe ask ourselves - Where has the Spirit driven us?

As we begin our Lenten journey - where ever we find ourselves ... may we heed Jesus’ words that we heard today in the Gospel:

*This is the time of fulfillment.*

*The kingdom of God is at hand.*

*Repent, and believe in the gospel.*