



Excerpt from *Christ Our Pascha*

c. *The Promise of the Messiah's Coming*

Expressed in the covenant between God and humankind, the fulfillment of God's promise proceeded in historical stages: "As for me, *I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you and your descendants after you*" (*Gn 9:9*, emphases added). The covenant between God and Noah and his sons is a first stage. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons emphasizes God's initiative in the establishment of covenant: "How shall humankind pass into God, unless God had [first] passed into humankind?" The rainbow, which unites heaven with earth, is a visible sign of this covenant. Noah and his descendants, Shem, Ham and Japheth, are the representatives of humankind, of all races, and nations, of the peoples united by "their own language, by their families, in their nations" (*Gn 10:5*). (#164)