

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Begin with a tone of gratitude and prayer.

The people, despite their slavery, could rejoice in their knowledge that God would save them.

The single act of passing through the sea saved the Israelites and destroyed their enemies. Speak with a sense of awe and gratitude.

They prepared for their time of deliverance "in secret" by offering sacrifice and waiting in faith.

For meditation and context:

LECTIONARY #117

READING I Wisdom 18:6–9

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

The night of the passover was known beforehand to our fathers,
that, with sure knowledge of the oaths in which they
put their faith,
they might have courage.

Your people awaited the salvation of the just
and the destruction of their foes.

For when you punished our adversaries,
in this you glorified us whom you had summoned.

For in secret the holy children of the good
were offering sacrifice
and putting into effect with one accord the
divine institution.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 33:1, 12, 18–19, 20–22 (12b)

R. Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.

Exult, you just, in the LORD;
praise from the upright is fitting.
Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people he has chosen for his
own inheritance.

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield.
May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us
who have put our hope in you.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those
who fear him,
upon those who hope for his kindness,
to deliver them from death
and preserve them in spite of famine.

READING I

The night of Passover, replete with startling wonders and divine power, is so central to the identity of Israel that it is remembered and reinterpreted throughout Israel's history. In today's reading from Wisdom, a later generation speaks to God about the original Passover event. According to Wisdom, the ancestors were well prepared for Passover since they had known about it ahead of time. They put their faith in God's oaths and God's fidelity to promises as they

awaited salvation from their enslavement in Egypt. Wisdom depicts their rescue in sharp contrast to the fate of their Egyptian oppressors, who meet destruction and punishment even as Israel is glorified.

As Israel keeps courageous vigilance for God to act in their favor, they offer sacrifice, a reference to their killing of unblemished lambs, and use the lambs' blood as a sign of protection. The keeping of Passover, including sharing in a meal laden with symbols, praying, and keeping vigil, was a

divine institution to be celebrated in obedience to God's command: "all the Israelites must keep a vigil for the Lord throughout their generations" (Exodus 12:42).

Like other Passover reinterpretations, the Wisdom tradition regards people of later generations, including its own audience, to be beneficiaries: "you glorified us whom you had summoned." The descendants, like their forebears, are not only recipients of God's saving acts, but they must also live in faith, act with courage,

Use the greeting to secure everyone's attention, then declare confidently this classic explanation of what faith is.

"Attested" means "commended" or "given approval." Read this line slowly and deliberately.

Stress "by faith" each time it recurs.

Abraham left his home and willingly lived simply to achieve God's will.

"As good as dead" is a colorful exaggeration. Speak it with some playfulness.

They died still holding on to faith despite not having seen its complete fulfillment. Speak with admiration.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Pay attention to the pace of your reading. Varying the pace gives listeners clues to the meaning of the text. The most common problem for proclaimers new to the ministry is going too fast to be understood.

keep vigil, and celebrate the divine institution of Passover.

READING II

The reading from Hebrews begins with a statement about faith, not as a definition, but as a motivating foundation for people who live by faith. Throughout the reading, including the foundational statement, the word "faith" (*pistis*) has several meanings, as it does throughout the Bible. At times faith means trust, or assurance, signifying a rela-

READING II Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

[Brothers and sisters:

Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.

Because of it the ancients were well attested.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go.

By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country,

dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise;

for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God.

By faith he received power to generate, even though he was past the normal age—and Sarah herself was sterile—

for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy.

So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as good as dead,

descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore.]

All these died in faith.

They did not receive what had been promised but saw it and greeted it from afar and acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth, for those who speak thus show that they are seeking a homeland. >>

tionship between God and people who put their confidence in God. In both the Hebrew and Greek, "faith" also signifies faithfulness, an attribute seen both in God's abiding faithfulness to the covenant and the expected response of God's people.

These first two meanings center on the relationship between God and individuals, or between God and the whole people. A third meaning of *pistis* is the content of what is believed; creeds and dogmas are expressions of this kind of faith. Although

faith in this sense does not have the same relational emphasis as the first two meanings, professions of faith, such as in a creed, arise from the trust people have in the God of revelation, and in God's own fidelity. In the examples of persons of faith in the Hebrew Scriptures, each of these meanings has a place.

The primary example of an Old Testament person of faith in today's reading is Abraham, although other examples precede him in Hebrews: Abel, Enoch, and

Let your voice suggest that you, too, desire that "better homeland."

This is the climactic example of Abraham's exemplary faith. Speak with awareness of how remarkable a demonstration of faith this was.

Abraham's faith was so strong that he trusted God would find a way to undo what he was asked to do. Use *ritardando* on the final phrase.

The challenging directives that follow are shared in the context of God's unending love and the dismissal of fear.

While these are imperatives, the tone should be one of gentle persuasion.

Take a substantial pause after sharing this profound truth.

Renew your energy and deliver these instructions with upbeat vitality.

Blessed = BLES-uhd or blessed

Jesus offers one of his stunning reversals in the image of the master waiting on his own servants.

Noah. The faith of these individuals was a shadowy preview of the fuller faith exhibited by Abraham. The first instance of Abraham's faith is his obedience when God called him out of his own land to go where God led him, though he did not know where he was going. Here, Abraham's faith is an act of trust, for he had to leave all that was known and secure. Only a profound trust could move anyone to take such a leap into the unknown. Abraham also believed the content of God's promise, which became a sort of creed not only for Abraham, but also for later generations. They believed in the

If they had been **thinking** of the land from which they had **come**, they would have had **opportunity to return**. But **now** they desire a **better homeland**, a **heavenly one**. **Therefore**, God is **not ashamed** to be called their **God**, for he has **prepared a city** for them.

By **faith** Abraham, when put to the **test**, offered up **Isaac**, and he who had **received** the **promises** was ready to **offer his only son**, of whom it was said, "Through **Isaac** descendants shall **bear your name**." He reasoned that **God** was able to **raise** even from the **dead**, and he received **Isaac back** as a **symbol**.

[Shorter: Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-12 (see brackets)]

GOSPEL Luke 12:32-48

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

[Jesus said to his disciples:]

"Do not be **afraid** any longer, little flock, for your **Father** is **pleased** to give you the **Kingdom**. **Sell** your belongings and give **alms**. Provide **money** bags for yourselves that do **not wear out**, an **inexhaustible treasure** in **heaven** that no **thief** can reach nor **moth** destroy. For where your **treasure** is, **there also** will your **heart** be. ["**Gird your loins** and **light your lamps** and be like **servants** who await their master's return from a **wedding**, **ready** to open **immediately** when he **comes** and **knocks**. **Blessed** are those **servants** whom the master finds **vigilant** on his arrival. **Amen**, I say to you, he will **gird** himself, have them **recline** at **table**, and **proceed** to **wait on them**."

promise of land, numerous descendants, and blessing on all families of the earth.

Having left his own country, Abraham continued his journey to the still distant and unknown land, trusting that God would fulfill his promise of land, descendants, and blessing. In the next example of Abraham's faith, he "received the power to generate." At this point, we hear that he thought the one who made the promise was "trustworthy," emphasizing the confident trust dimension of his faith. His confidence was not misplaced, for God began to fulfill the

promise, ultimately fulfilled in descendants as numerous as stars of the sky.

The final example of Abraham's faith is one that tested his earlier trust and belief in God's promises. Could Abraham, in faith, offer to God the child of the promise, Isaac? The interpretation of the author of Hebrews is that Abraham reasoned that "God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol." This enigmatic statement suggests that for Abraham, his son became a sign of hope for future Resurrection. Such a belief is a profound act of trust in God's power.