

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament, published by Ignatius Press, the authors draw a clear and concise parallel between the Wisdom reading and Luke's Gospel. "The people of Israel were warned of the coming Passover; they were prepared, escaped the angel of death, and offered righteous sacrifices in peace. The Gospel (Lk 12:32-48) warns Christians to be ready for the Second Coming, like servants waiting for their master's return to the house. We should be like the Israelites, who were not taken by surprise on the night of the Passover but were saved because they had been warned." Two realities which are readily conjured by this theme include vigilance and faith. By the example faith and courage demonstrated by their forebears, the Israelites remembered the promise of the Lord and commemorated their deliverance. Their faith and gratitude in response to God's fidelity to them rouses them to celebrate a meal which unites them and binds them more inexorably to the Lord.

St. Paul continues this theme of faith when he speaks of faith as the "realization of what is hoped for but not seen." This is a beautiful sentiment especially as we picture in our minds the celebration of Passover by generations of the Jewish people who only know of God's deliverance by word of mouth. Their own steadfastness is continuing a tradition as old as the Scriptures themselves. Paul walks us down the road of salvation history by expressing the faith and hope experienced by our forebears in faith: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Paul speaks of Abraham being sent on a divine mission, not knowing where he was going. Yet, his journey was prompted by a faithfulness and living fidelity to God. It is that deeply abiding faith that renders Abraham and Sarah open to God's providential plan for them in bearing a son, Isaac. Beyond that, in response to God's love for him Abraham is willing to sacrifice his long-dreamed of son Isaac. They foretell what will happen to Zechariah and Elizabeth as well as Mary and Joseph. These faith-filled experiences remind us that nothing indeed is impossible with God. Like Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not themselves see the Incarnation but they intrinsically knew God would fulfill his covenantal bond with the people of Israel. "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...seeking a homeland."

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus prepares his disciples for the Second Coming. Jesus uses the metaphor of a servant/master relationship to describe how we as Christians must be vigilant and ready to meet Christ in his glory when he comes again. As he often told his disciples, Jesus tells them not to be afraid. He then gives instruction on how they are to proceed. He tells them to live a life of freedom and attachments...letting go of material worries and concerns and seek the "inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy." This is to live a life of grace, a preparatory time of anticipation and expectation for the coming again of Jesus Christ. When Jesus tells the disciples the parable of the servant awaiting the return of the master, Peter asks, "Lord, is this parable meant for us or for everyone?" This message is meant for all of us who encounter Jesus. Since we have a proximate experience of grace and the divine life, we are compelled to be the servant who is a faithful and good steward of God's gift to us. The Lord has entrusted us with more. This can seem challenging and demanding for us. Yet, if we remain faithful in prayer and the sacramental life of the Church, we know that God will challenge us more in bearing witness to gracious servant leadership!

--Fr. Tom