

Homily based on the readings from July 12, 2025 (Genesis 49.29-32, 50.15-26a; Matthew 10.24-33)

There is a remarkable theme that runs throughout today's first reading – the importance of where a person is *buried*. The reading begins with Jacob giving *exceptionally* specific instructions to his sons – that he be interred in a particular cave; in a particular field; hundreds of miles away, in the land of Canaan. The passage ends with Joseph on his deathbed, making a similar request. In fact, the Book of Genesis – which *began* with God creating the heavens and the earth – *ends* with the pledge that Joseph's remains will *one day* be carried back to the Promised Land.

As it happens, that pledge is mentioned two more times in Holy Scripture. The first occurs at the very end of the Book of Joshua, which details the Israelites' reentry into the Promised Land. That narrative concludes by telling us that the “bones of Joseph, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt” were buried in a particular “plot of ground”

in Shechem. In other words, all the events surrounding the Israelites' *escape* from Egypt, their *wandering* in the desert, their *crossing* the River Jordan, their *battles* against countless enemy nations – all of these monumental achievements *culminate* with Joseph's remains being brought back where they belong.

The second reference to Joseph's resting place actually appears in the Letter to the Hebrews. The eleventh chapter of that book presents a *litany* of faith-filled individuals from the Old Testament – such figures as Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Included in that list is Joseph, who “near the end of his life, spoke of the Exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his bones.” The point here is that Joseph was not simply expressing a preference about the disposition of his mortal remains, but that he was *testifying* to his unshakeable faith in the Lord's goodness and mercy.

Despite all this talk of burial and bones, these passages – at their core – do not *really* relate to *physical* tombs at all. Their *purpose* is to direct

our attention toward our *eternal* resting place, to the promised land that awaits us in the Kingdom of Heaven. The faith that Joseph demonstrated in God – to return his body to Canaan nearly 500 years after his death – is a model for the faith that each of *us* must have in Jesus Christ; that, in his *own* good time, he will lead us out of this valley of tears and into the undying radiance of his heavenly homeland.

Above all else, we must remember that the Lord takes care of everyone who trusts in him. Just as he protected Jacob and Joseph, and even Joseph's disreputable brothers; just as he led the Children of Israel out of exile and into the Promised Land; just as he defended the patriarchs, prophets, and judges of the Old Testament; so Christ embraces *all* his beloved children – keeping us safe from all distress and delivering us from every evil – as we look forward in faith to that *glorious* day, when we too will be called to abide with him in everlasting joy.