

Homily based on the readings from August 16, 2025 (Joshua 24.14-29;
Matthew 19.13-15)

For the past eight weeks at daily Mass, we have been walking in the footsteps of God's Chosen People. On June 23, if you can remember back that far, we heard God's initial call to Abram in Haran. We have subsequently been following the fortunes of Isaac and Jacob, of Jacob's twelve sons, and of their numerous descendants. We have heard how, through the mercy of God and under the leadership of Moses, the Children of Israel escaped from bondage in Egypt and safely survived their journey through the desert. Although the readings will continue next week with the Books of Judges and Ruth, today feels like the conclusion of this particular story. The Children of Israel have reached the Promised Land. Joshua, Moses's successor, is reminding them one last time about their obligation to remain faithful to the Lord.

While this narrative certainly stands on its own, we must always remember to look for the fingerprints of Christ in the events of the Old

Testament. “As an old saying put[s] it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New.” One clear example from several weeks ago is Joseph – the son of Jacob. It is no coincidence that Joseph from the Old Testament brought his family to safety in Egypt, just as Joseph from the New Testament would do more than a thousand years later. One Joseph was the forerunner, the prototype for the other.

We have a similar situation in today’s reading, but it is somewhat obscured by our modern translation of the Bible. As it happens, the name *Joshua* is actually the same name as *Jesus*. In fact, the Greek version of the sixth book of the Old Testament is entitled “The Book of Jesus.” Just as the Patriarch Joseph was the prototype for Saint Joseph, we should view Joshua as the prototype for Jesus. It is no accident that Moses’s successor in the New Testament – the new lawgiver – was named Jesus, just as his successor in the Old Testament had been. Origen of Alexandria, writing in the 2nd century, discussed this

connection in a homily he delivered to the members of his community who were preparing for Baptism:

This is *your* departure from Egypt. When you became a catechumen and began to obey the laws of the Church, you passed through the Red Sea; now at the various stops in the desert, you give time every day to hear the law of God and to see the face of Moses unveiled by the glory of God. But once you come to the baptismal font and, in the presence of the priests and deacons, are initiated into those sacred and august mysteries which only those know who should, then, through the ministry of the priests, you will cross the Jordan and enter the promised land. There Moses will hand you over to Jesus, and he himself will be your guide on your new journey.

Just like the Children of Israel, we are all travelers in the wilderness.

Our starting points are different, but every one of us crosses the *Jordan* of Baptism to enter the *Promised Land* of the Christian life. If only we

are willing to trust in *Jesus*, he will *certainly* guide us throughout the rest of our journey.