



out of the land of Egypt"; then look at how God and Moses respond, in chapter 32. The next book of the Torah is Leviticus; and sometimes people are a bit put off by it, since at a first glance it seems too much like a rule book; but look at the "Holiness Code" (chapters 17-26), which carefully relates the holiness of God to the way we are to behave; this book tells us how Israel learnt to understand itself, and especially how its people should treat the weakest members of society. Then there is the book of Numbers (probably so-called because there are two censuses counting the "numbers" of the people), which continues the story of the wandering in the desert. Finally, there is Deuteronomy, which means

"second Law-giving", set on the edge of the Promised Land, and telling the people how they are to live and behave once they reach the destination to which God has been guiding them all this time. In particular, they are to look after that vital category of "widows and orphans and immigrants"; this book is often thought of as a rereading of the laws of Exodus, bringing them up to date with the new demands of life in the Holy Land.

PRAYERFUL READING

Does this help? My suggestion is that you read prayerfully and slowly through all five books of this "Torah", possibly for the moment concentrating on the narrative bits, since they tend to be more interesting; and look out for the many ways in which it expresses the love affair between God and the people of God. That is where you will find the truth of the Bible.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Look to your covenant, O Lord, and forget not the life of your poor ones for ever. Arise, O God, and defend your cause, and forget not the cries of those who seek you.

FIRST READING 1 Kings 19:9. 11-13

PSALM Psalm 84

RESPONSE Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help.

1. I will hear what the Lord God has to say, a voice that speaks of peace. His help is near for those who fear him and his glory will dwell in our land. **R.**
2. Mercy and faithfulness have met; justice and peace have embraced. Faithfulness shall spring from the earth and justice look down from heaven. **R.**
3. The Lord will make us prosper and our earth shall yield its fruit. Justice shall march before him and peace shall follow his steps. **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 9:1-5

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia!
My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on his word.
Alleluia!**

GOSPEL Matthew 14:22-33

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**O Jerusalem, glorify the Lord,
who gives you your fill of finest wheat.**

Next Sunday's Readings:

Apocalypse 11:19; 12:1-6. 10
1 Corinthians 15:20-26
Luke 1:39-56

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SUNDAY BULLETIN

HOW TO READ THE PENTATEUCH – AND IS IT “TRUE”?

The "Pentateuch" is simply the Greek for "five books", namely those with which the Bible begins, for both Jews and Christians; in Greek they are called "Genesis", "Exodus", "Leviticus", "Numbers" and "Deuteronomy".

One of the things that you will notice immediately is that they are written in narrative form; and for some people that immediately raises the question, "But is it true?" In one sense the answer is "no"; it is not "true" in the same sense in which a newspaper report of last night's football match might be said to be true. So, for example, if you look at the first two chapters of the Bible you will see that there are two accounts of the creation, which cannot easily be reconciled. Look a bit more closely, however, and you will see that both stories are saying, in powerful language, that God is responsible for the world in which we live, which God has created as an act of generosity. So instead of asking whether it is "true", why not ask if you find in the text the life that God longs to share with us?

If you look at it from that point of view, then Genesis is the story of God and of the people of God, from the very beginning until Israel ended up happily in Egypt; Exodus narrates how they were delivered from oppression in Egypt, but also how they had to learn the implications of being God's people: not just any behaviour would do, and so, for example, they are given what we are now invited to call the "Ten Commandments", which start by focusing on God (at some length: what God has done and how we should respond) and then (rather more briefly) how we are to deal with other human beings (not killing them and not committing adultery, for example). Exodus is often thought of as "liberation theology", and many groups living under oppression have found their story written there. The heart of the matter is the "covenant" relationship between God and the people of God, which is especially narrated between chapters 19 and 40. You might find it helpful to read the account of the Golden Calf and the absurd cry of "Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up

How to read the Bible



Fr Nicholas King SJ looks at how we can approach the first five books of the Bible.



9 AUGUST 2020

19TH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR A

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK III