

Twenty-First Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
August 23, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I give to the people of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers shall you send a man, everyone a leader among them’. . . These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua.” (Numbers 13:1, 16)

As discussed prior, Saint Irenaeus of Lyons used his work, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching, to show how the New Testament was pre-figured through the writings of the Old Testament. Last weekend, we reflected upon Adam, Eve, Cain and Able to lay a foundation of how he sought to accomplish this task. This weekend, allow me to offer another example which can be found in his writings:

“At that time God revealed to him the name which alone has power to save him who believes in it, and Moses changed the name of Osee (Hoshea), son of Nun, one of the envoys, and named him Jesus (Joshua), and so sent him with the power of the Name, confident that he would receive them safe back, under the conduct of the Name; and so it came to pass.”
(Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, Proof of the Apostolic Preaching).

For us to understand the importance of this selection of the work of Saint Irenaeus, we must begin by understanding what the name Joshua (Jesus) implies. The name Joshua (Jesus) literally means: “Yahweh saves.” We may use the name Joshua as synonymous with the name of Jesus for they both mean the same thing. We may rightly posit that Moses, under Divine Inspiration, prophesied the name Jesus when he gave to Hoshea the name Joshua.

This can lead us into a question concerning the name of Joshua/Jesus: “Had this name been used prior to Moses?” The early Christian writer Eusebius would offer an answer: *“And the same [Moses] by divine inspiration foresaw the name Jesus very clearly and again also endowed this with special privilege. The name of Jesus, which had never been uttered among men before it was made known to Moses, Moses applied first to this one alone. He knew that Joshua, again as a type and a symbol, would receive the rule over all after Moses’ death. His successor, at any rate, had never before used the title Jesus”* (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History).

Now, we must ask ourselves a second question: “What task does Joshua perform which Saint Irenaeus and others would associate with Jesus, Son of God?” Joshua would assume the leadership of Israel upon Moses’ death and his mission would be to guide the

children into the land of Canaan. And, as we already know, the land of Canaan was known as the “Promised Land.” It is the land God described to Moses as “flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:17). Point of fact, the land did not contain rivers of milk and honey, rather this description was used to emphasize “abundance.” It is a land where all one’s needs will be taken care of in wonderful ways by God, Himself. Joshua was not only to guide the people into the land of Canaan, but he was also tasked to conquer it. He was to drive all other tribes out of this land and, once accomplished, distribute the land to the members of the various tribes of the sons of Israel. This would be the fulfillment of the ancestral inheritance foretold.

Jesus performs the same task. Saint John Chrysostom, in a homily on the New Testament book of Hebrews, would further state: “*He brought in the people into the promised land, as Jesus into heaven: not the law; since neither did Moses [enter the promised land] but remained outside.*” Just as Joshua fulfilled his mission to lead the people into the land of abundance, so Jesus leads His people into the ultimate land of abundance, into the promised land of Heaven. For both to accomplish their mission, we the people must likewise be actively involved. As the people followed Joshua, fighting for their future, so we too must follow Jesus fighting any obstacle we encounter until we rest secure in Paradise. And, as the people had to perform the task by the sweat of their brow, so we too must likewise attain Heaven through the sweat of our brows. The “Promised Land,” although promised, was not won over without resistance. My family, neither is Heaven. And the most secure fortresses encountered, similar to the walled city of Jericho, are those we must see fall. Some of these are of our own choosing. Others are a result of the choices of another. No matter how they were constructed, they must fall before the promised land, our promised land of Heaven, can be secured. Saint Irenaeus knew this and he also knew the accomplishment of this task must be guided by Jesus.