



# Lectionary Storybook

A Resource for Living  
the Great Cycle of  
the Seasons & the Years  
both Prayerfully  
& Imaginatively

*Stories from the Peoples of the World,  
Celebrating the Lectionary Treasuries of  
the Byzantine East & the Latin West*

#35

**A Window  
Into Paradise  
Twenty-First Sunday  
in Ordinary Time  
August 26, 2007  
Volume 12**

by Robert Béla Wilhelm, Th.D.  
Author, Lectionary Storybook  
Founder,  
School of Sacred Storytelling



## About Storyfest Ministry

The Lectionary Storybook is the life-long work of Robert Béla Wilhelm, arising out of his work in storytelling dating from the 1960s. It first began to appear on a weekly basis in 1996, and has changed and grown over the years as additional materials and processes have been added. It will continue to evolve, *God willing*.

Storyfest Press is the family-run business of Bob and Kelly Wilhelm. It is also their full-time ministry. Please respect their intellectual and artistic work which is the primary means of their financial livelihood.



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Please support our work by becoming a paid subscriber and encouraging others to do so. Subscription costs are less than two dollars a Sunday with story and commentary. And keep our ministry in your prayers, that our hearts and minds may be guided in the work that we do.

-- Bob and Kelly Wilhelm

<http://www.lectionarystorybook.com>

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# Journey through the Weekly Cycle with **A Window into Paradise**

## Monday **word phrase**

- 1•Recite the Scriptures Aloud
- 2•Take one word phrase as the "Prayer of My Heart"

## **words or sketch**

## Tuesday

- 1•Silently Read the Short Tale
- 2•Breathe in the story at each of the phrase breaks
- 3•Write or Sketch the Images on the side-bars
- 4•Write or Sketch My Most Vivid Image

## Wednesday

## **words or sketch**

- 1•Recite the Long Story
- 2•Silently Read the Long Story
- 3•Write or Sketch the Images on the side-bar
- 4•Write or Sketch My Most Vivid Image.

## **write main idea**

## Thursday

- 1•Sketch images of the Gist and/or List the Steppingstones
- 2•Read the Gists and Steppingstones
- 3•Read the Reflections
- Write My Main Idea from the Reflections

## Friday

- 1•]Go to Icon Page - Draw the Icon
- 2•Quietly Hold the Icon in your Mind's Eye, Meditating Upon the Icon

## Saturday

- 1• ] Go to Prayer/Meditation Page - Write or Draw My Prayer/Meditation
- 2•Silently Read My Prayer/Meditation
- 3•Recite My Prayer/Meditation Aloud



## Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time August 26, 2007

Lectionary Image: *Luke 13: 22-30*

Jesus taught  
in the cities and towns,  
winding his way  
towards Jerusalem.

Along the way  
Jesus was asked:  
"Are there only a few  
who will be saved?"

Jesus answered:

"Hard to squeeze through  
the narrow door,  
Slip through the locked gate.  
Many will try.  
Few will enter.

"If the Master locks the door,  
and you are outside,  
knocking,  
crying  
'Let me in',

"The Keyholder will say,  
'You?  
I don't know you.'"

-- LUKE'S GOSPEL

**Please recite the Scripture Aloud at least Twice before reading the Story**

# The Short Tale

## A Window into Paradise

Emilio was sacristan at St. Peter's Church in Rome. Everywhere there were altars, statues and paintings. Everywhere there were candles and lamps. Emilio carefully trimmed the wicks to keep the flame burning bright.

He replaced stubby candles with long new ones. He replenished the many oil lamps that burned in all the chapels and niches of the great church.

Emilio was particularly carefully to keep the many lamps at the statue of St. Peter burning bright, for this was the church of St. Peter. But the little sacristan had a tender place in his heart for Mary, the Mother of God, and watched over her lamps very carefully.

One winter's night, when Emilio was alone in the great basilica, he passed by a statue of the Madonna and Child and noticed that her lamp had almost run dry. It was late, and the storeroom was locked. There was no way for him to replenish the oil... unless he took it from someone else's lamp. Emilio scratched his head and thought: "Signor Pietro has so many lamps, sure he will not mind if I take some of his oil to honor La Madonna." And so he did.

But that night Emilio had a terrible dream. St. Peter himself strode into his room and stood

### Images & Feelings

## Images &amp; Feelings

above the sacristan's bed. His face grew red, his beard bristled. Peter threatened Emilio:

"Do you know whose church this is? Do you know who it is named for? That's right. Me. And I don't want you taking any oil from my lamps for anyone, even for her. She has plenty of churches named after her around the world. But in my city, I am number one. And if you forget that, my little sacristan, remember that it is me, and not her, who holds the Keys to the Kingdom."

Emilio awakened with a fright and raced to the chapel of Our Lady. He asked for her protection saying that Peter was a hasty man who could not control his temper. And it seemed to him that the statue of Our Lady smiled. Emilio heard her speak:

"My good and faithful friend, do not be afraid. Yes, the door to paradise may be narrow, as my Son says. And Peter may have the keys to the door, as he says. But should you find the door locked, simply come around the back to the window. The Window of Paradise will always be opened to you, my dear Emilio."

And so Emilio was comforted and never again worried about the door to Paradise being closed to him.

# The Long Story

## A Window into Paradise

Long ago in the city of Florence, in Italy, there was a tax assessor, named Emilio, who busily tallied everyone's tax bill, from the poorest to the wealthiest. It was the practice in those days to measure a family's wealth by the size of the door to their house.

A poor person with a narrow wooden door would receive a small levy, maybe only half a florin, just a small little coin.

But a prosperous merchant who wished to attract more customers would have attractive double doors leading to his shop, and perhaps another door leading to the living quarters atop the shop.

Emilio would levy six florins for the shop doors and an additional two florins for the house door. That was a handful of coins!

Emilio was always challenged by the large gateways and doors to the palaces of the leading families of Florence. He would measure how many feet high they were, and then multiply it by the width. He would do this with each door or gate, and add all of them together. Sometimes he levied over a hun-

### Images & Feelings

**Images & Feelings**

dred florins for a fancy house. That would make a heavy sack of coins!

But Emilio was considering service to God, and decided to go to Rome to pray for guidance. Of course, he went to the Church of St. Peter. It had huge bronze doors, and he stood in front of them with amazement.

He was busy calculating the tax he would levy on the Pope for owning such a large door, when he remembered why he had come to St. Peter's Church. He went inside to pray, and decided that he would remain in Rome and work at a simple job in service of God.

By chance, Emilio discovered the great Basilica of St. Peter needed a new sacristan. He got the job, and was very happy. Now he no longer collected taxes, but spent his time visiting the many little altars through the great church. Everywhere there were altars and statues and paintings. Everywhere there were candles and lamps. And it was Emilio's job to keep them burning.

Emilio carefully trimmed the wicks to keep the flame burning bright. He replaced stubby candles with long new ones. And

most of all he replenished the many oil lamps that burned in all the chapels and niches of the great church.

Emilio was particularly careful to keep the many lamps at the statue of St. Peter burning bright, for this was the church of St. Peter. But the little sacristan had a tender place in his heart for Mary, the Mother of God, and watched over her lamps very carefully.

One winter's night, when Emilio was alone in the great basilica, he passed by a statue of the Madonna and Child and noticed that her lamp had almost run dry. It was late, and the storeroom was locked. There was no way for him to replenish the oil... unless he took it from someone else's lamp.

Emilio hesitated. He scratched his head and thought: **"Signor Pietro has so many lamps, sure he will not mind if I take some of his oil to honor La Madonna."** And so he did.

But that night Emilio had a terrible dream. St. Peter himself strode into his room and stood above the sacristan's bed. His face grew red, his beard bristled, and the he clenched his great fisherman's fists so much that the muscles on his arms bulged like overstuffed

## Images & Feelings

**Images & Feelings**

**sausages. Peter threatened Emilio:**

**“Do you know whose church this is? Do you know who it is named for? That’s right. Me.**

**“And I don’t want you taking any oil from my lamps for anyone, even for her. She has plenty of churches named after her around the world.**

**“But in my city, I am number one. And if you forget that, my little sacristan, remember that it is me and not her who holds the Keys to the Kingdom.”**

**Emilio awakened with a fright and raced to the chapel of Our Lady. He asked for her protection saying that everyone knew that Peter was a hasty man who could not control his temper. And it seemed to him that the statue of Our Lady smiled. Emilio heard her speak:**

**“My good and faithful friend, do not be afraid. Yes, the door to paradise may be narrow, as my Son says. And Peter may have the keys to the door, as he says.**

**But should you find the door locked, simply**

**come around the back to the window. The Window of Paradise will always be opened to you, my dear Emilio."**

**And so Emilio was comforted and never again worried about the door to Paradise being closed to him. Indeed, he would say to anyone who would listen:**

**"Most people only see doors. I was like that once, when I was a tax collector. Always measuring doors**

**"But what I never saw were windows. Windows are so much more beautiful than doors. Doors are heavy and dark. Windows are light.**

**"You can see the Heavens right through them -- all the way to Paradise."**

## Images & Feelings

## Reflections

Perhaps the birth canal was the original narrow door. However hard or easy our life is in its entirety, it is always a trauma at the very beginning. To be born -- or to be born "again" -- is a great test for every human.

In the story from Luke, we have images of narrow doors and gates from the Middle Eastern world. The story of Emilio plays with the same metaphors, but with a new twist: Emilio is the equivalent of the biblical tax collector.

In the European world, wealth was centered, and displayed, in the great homes, palaces, cathedrals, and basilicas.

Emilio's problem is that he is always measuring, always calculating. In the modern world, few of us work for the Internal Revenue Service, but most of us live by measuring and calculating.

We calculate our careers, our investments, even our choice of partners and friends. We are encouraged by our culture

to always calculate to the *Bottom Line*.

But Emilio experiences a conversion. No longer outside the church, he is literally inside the Church (symbolically, as a sacristan), Now, he is dealing not in taxes levied, but in gifts freely given.

In the Church, he believes, things are different than they are in the outside world. Here candles are lit and lamps are burnt for no utilitarian reason but for the joy of honoring God directly and indirectly through His saints.

The shock to Emilio is that the Church also measures and calculates. *If I honor someone more, then I honor someone else less...*

Peter is angered that he is not given the measure which he believes is due him. And poor Emilio fearfully returns to his old ways of thinking...

*If I don't measure up, I will be punished.*

But Emilio's thinking is literal

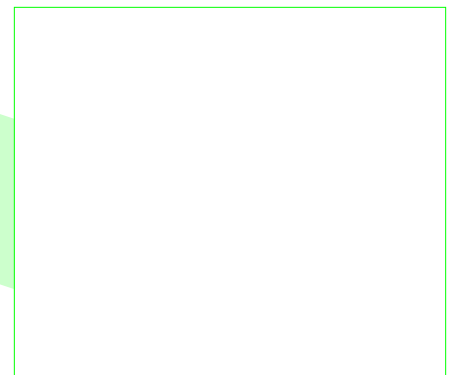
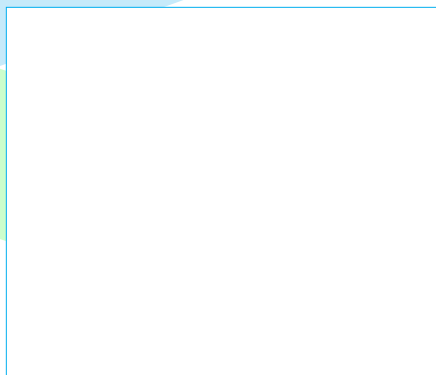
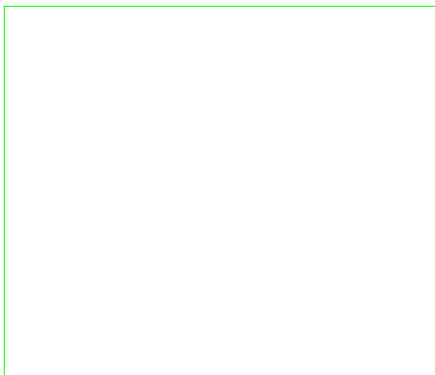
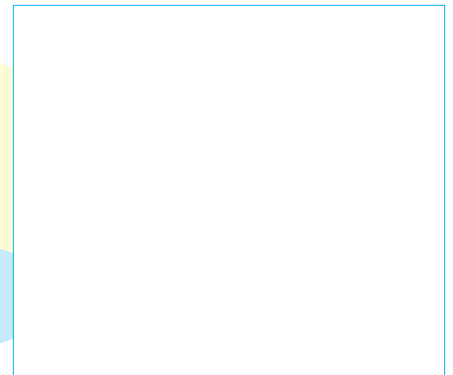
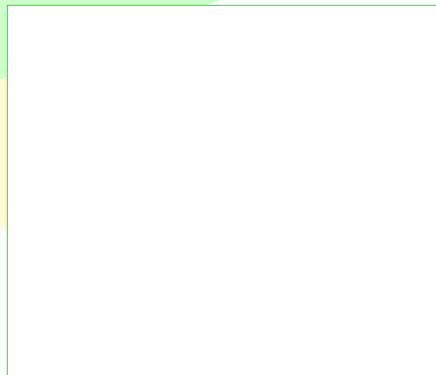
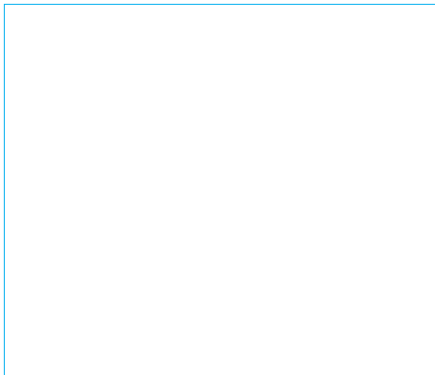
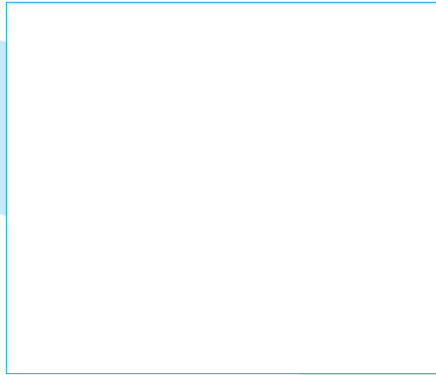
thinking. He is freed when his soul is brought into the realm of metaphor. The Virgin offers Emilio a new way of imagining his spiritual journey. She says...

**Emilio, stop thinking doors. Your life is frustrated by always thinking about doors and measuring them. Think about an alternative to doors...**

**Something more transparent, something that permits light into your heart and mind...**

**Emilio, remember buildings don't only have doors...**

**There is more than one way to leave or enter...**



## Gisting the Story

## Your **Steppingstones** through the Story

Key events of the story “step by step” -- between 5 and 9 steps

1

2

3

4

5

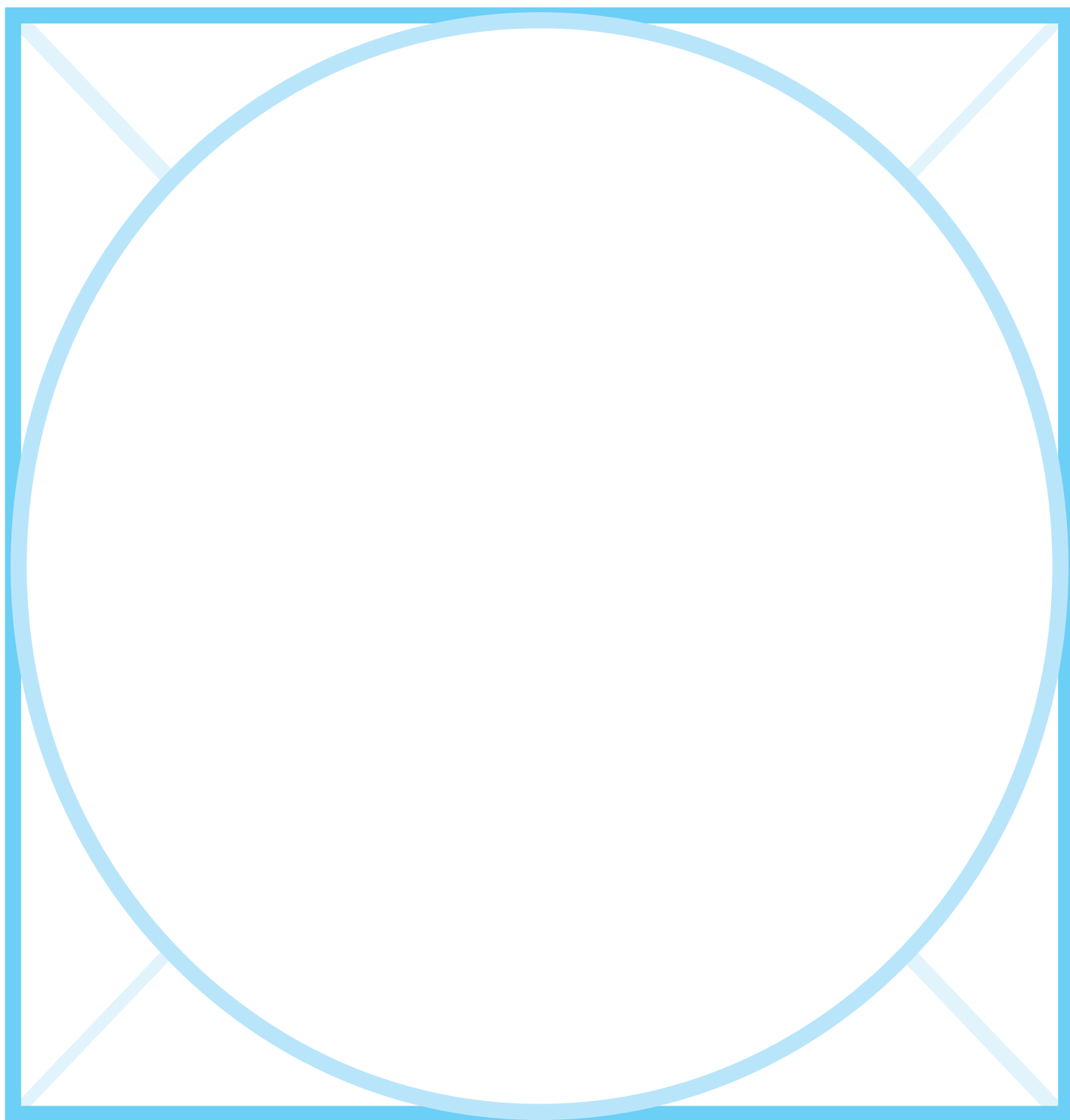
6

7

8

9

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## A Window into Paradise

## **My Prayer / Meditation**

