

Contemporary Reading: *The Seven Sisters Songline*
by Margot Neale

All civilisations have epic sagas to explain the creation of the earth and transmit cultural values. The Seven Sisters Songline is one of Australia's most significant foundation stories.

It tells of an Ancestral Being in the form of a man, who wrongfully pursues seven sisters to possess them. To lure them to him, he shape-shifts into water, shade and various delectable foods, which the women need to survive in the desert. In this way, the story relays information that is critical for survival on this continent.

The many encounters the sisters have with their relentless pursuer result in the creation of the country, the evidence of which is recorded in the features of the landscape. They travel in an easterly direction across the continent, from a place near Roebourne in the west sometimes disappearing beneath the earth before leaping into the night sky, always leaving a tracery of sites of significance.

It is a tale of tragedy and comedy, obsession and trickery, desire and loss, solidarity and sorrow that touches on life's moral dimensions: how to live with each other on this earth in a sustainable way; how to care for each other and share resources equitably. It also instructs on gender relations, kinship, marriage rules and other codes of behaviour. These lessons are embodied in compelling tales of intrigue, drama and passion that connect people and places across time. In this way, the story has been easily remembered and willingly retold to each generation for millennia. It is a saga of mythological dimensions and meanings.

For the challenge of Indigenous knowledge

We give thanks.

Gospel: Listen for words of faith in the Gospel of John 15:9-17

As God has loved me,
so have I loved you.
Live on in my love.

And you will live on in my love
if you keep my commandments,
just as I live on in God's love
and have kept God's commandments.

I tell you all this that my joy may be yours,
and your joy may be complete.

This is my commandment:
love one another as I have loved you.

There is no greater love
than to lay down one's life for one's friends.

And you are my friends,
if you do what I command you.

I no longer speak of you as subordinates,
because a subordinate doesn't know a superior's
business.

Instead I call you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learned from God.

It was not you who chose me;
it was I who chose you
to go forth and bear fruit.
Your fruit must endure,
so that whatever you ask of God in my name
God will give you.

This command I give you:
that you love one another.

For the challenge of the Gospel
We give thanks.