

Take-Home • Session One

Born Anew to a Living Hope • 1 Peter 1:1-12

What We Found

Peter spends twelve verses on who you are before asking anything of you: born anew through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, heir to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven while you are guarded by God's power. Trials, we found, are not evidence against that hope; they are the assayer's fire proving faith more precious than gold. The prophets searched and angels long to look into what has been announced to you. And the letter left us one deliberately open question, about when the new birth happens, which each of us wrote down and sealed until Session Six.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Polycarp of Smyrna (d. c. 155), Letter to the Philippians 1

Writing within living memory of the apostles, St. Polycarp, himself a disciple of St. John, echoes 1 Peter 1:8 almost word for word: though you have not seen him, you believe in him with joy inexpressible and filled with glory. The earliest generations were already reading, quoting, and echoing this letter. When your group reads 1:8 aloud, they join a chain of readers stretching to the apostolic age.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), The City of God, Book I, Chapter 8

Answering pagans who mocked Christians suffering in the sack of Rome, St. Augustine observes that one and the same fire makes gold gleam and makes chaff smoke; the same affliction that proves and purifies the good ruins the wicked. The difference is not in the fire but in the material. This is 1 Peter 1:7 turned into a principle: trials reveal what a soul is made of.

Voices of the Church

St. Bede the Venerable (673-735), Commentary on the Catholic Epistles, on 1 Peter 1

The great monastic commentator on this letter reads "born anew" as the grace of baptism: the mercy of God regenerates us as his children through the sacrament of faith, so that our hope rests not on anything we have done but on the risen Christ into whom we have been reborn. St. Bede's instinct is the Church's instinct, and it is where Peter himself will land in 3:21.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 1:3. (2) Read Wisdom 3:1-6 slowly once, and notice Peter's furnace. (3) Carry the planted question, "when are we born anew?", without looking ahead; write down your own best guess and bring it to Session Six. (4) Once this week, when you feel like the outsider, pray one sentence: "Father, I am chosen, sanctified, and sprinkled; let me act like it."

Scripture Memory

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3,

RSV2CE)

My Guess: Sealed Until Session Six

Tonight the letter raised a question it did not immediately answer: when and how does the new birth Peter describes actually happen in a person's life? Write your honest guess below, then leave it alone. Do not revise it or defend it. Bring this sheet, exactly as written, to Session Six, where Peter himself will weigh in.

Signed and sealed: _____ Date: _____

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 1:13-25 before Session Two.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 164; 1265-1266; 1817-1821; 1996-1999

Take-Home • Session Two

Be Holy: Ransomed and Reborn • 1 Peter 1:13-25

What We Found

Peter's command, be holy (1:15-16), turned out to rest on facts, not performance anxiety: God is a Father whose judgment takes his children seriously, and you were ransomed from the futile ways handed down to you at a price that reveals your worth, the precious blood of Christ. We found Exodus 12 hiding inside 1:19: Christ is the true Passover Lamb, without blemish, whose blood turns death away and springs slaves free. And the born-again question gained a second clue: the new birth comes through the living and abiding word, the imperishable thing Isaiah promised when he said all flesh is grass.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Clement of Rome (d. c. 99), Letter to the Corinthians 7

An early successor of Peter as bishop of Rome, writing within a generation of this letter, urges the Corinthians to gaze intently on the blood of Christ and to know how precious it is to God the Father, since it was poured out for our salvation and won the grace of repentance for the whole world. Clement even uses Peter's own word, precious, for that blood; within a generation, the Church was already lingering over what our salvation cost God.

Voices of the Church

St. Melito of Sardis (d. c. 180), On Pascha

In the oldest surviving Easter homily, St. Melito preaches Christ as the true Passover: the lamb slain in Egypt was a sketch, and Christ the reality; he was led like a lamb and slaughtered like a sheep, and by his blood death is despoiled. This is precisely Peter's move in 1:19, and it shows the lamb-typology was already being preached publicly, by a bishop in the liturgy, within a century of the apostles.

Voices of the Church

St. Leo the Great (d. 461), Sermon 21 on the Nativity

"Christian, recognize your dignity." St. Leo exhorts the baptized to remember whose head and body they belong to, and never by sin to return to the old baseness they were ransomed from. The Catechism places this line at the head of its whole moral section (CCC 1691), which is Peter's logic exactly: dignity first, then conduct worthy of it.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 1:18-19. (2) Read Leviticus 19:1-18 once and count how many commands concern ordinary life: money, speech, work, neighbors. (3) Choose one compartment you have kept from God and hand it over in a single sentence of prayer each morning. (4) Do one earnest, inconvenient act of love for someone in this group before we meet again.

Scripture Memory

“You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 2:1-10 before Session Three.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 602; 1691; 2013

Take-Home • Session Three

Living Stones, Royal Priesthood • 1 Peter 2:1-10

What We Found

The man Jesus renamed Rock taught us to read the stone texts: the cornerstone rejected by the builders, a reading Peter learned from Jesus' own mouth and repeated to the court that condemned him. We found the source of the Church's grandest titles sitting in Exodus 19: chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, spoken first at Sinai and handed by Peter to ex-pagan nobodies. Israel's grammar dissolved the false choice about priesthood: a whole priestly people and an ordered ministry within it coexisted for centuries without rivalry, and in the Church the common and ministerial priesthoods still stand together, differing in essence yet ordered to one another (CCC 1547). And Hosea's renamed children reminded us the whole paragraph is mercy: once not a people, now God's people.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *The City of God*, Book XX, Chapter 10

St. Augustine teaches that all Christians are called priests because they are members of the one Priest, Christ, just as all are called anointed ones because of the mystical chrism; and yet the Church still properly calls her bishops and presbyters priests in a distinct sense. Eleven centuries before the Reformation debates, the common and ministerial priesthoods stood side by side in the Church's greatest doctor without any sense of rivalry.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), *Mystagogical Catecheses* 5

Instructing the newly baptized on the Mass, St. Cyril tells them that at Communion they hear the chanter invite them with Psalm 34: taste and see that the Lord is good. The verse Peter cites at 2:3 was already the Church's Communion song in the fourth century, and the Fathers heard "you have tasted" as more than a metaphor.

Voices of the Church

St. Bede the Venerable (673-735), *Commentary on the Catholic Epistles*, on 1 Peter 2

St. Bede reads the living stones as the faithful made alive by union with the living Stone, each squared and set by trials and teaching into the one temple whose foundation is Christ. A stone outside the building, he notes in substance, serves no purpose; the dignity of the stone is its place in the structure.

Private, unattached Christianity is foreign to the letter's whole image.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 2:9. (2) Each morning, offer the day as a priest: one sentence placing your work, prayers, joys, and sufferings on the altar with Christ's sacrifice. (3) Declare one wonderful deed of God out loud to one person. (4) Read Hosea 2:14-23 and hear your own renaming.

Scripture Memory

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 2:11-25 before Session Four.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 782-786; 1268; 1546-1547

Take-Home • Session Four

Aliens on Mission: The Suffering Servant • 1 Peter 2:11-25

What We Found

The exile strategy came into focus: conduct so plainly good that slander starves, which is Jesus' own method of letting light shine. Honor has a calibration (honor all, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the emperor) and a limit that Peter himself marked when he told the Sanhedrin that we must obey God rather than men. Then the summit: we read Isaiah 53 aloud and found nearly every phrase of Peter's Passion account already written there, seven centuries early, by the prophet the eyewitness chose over his own words. The man who reviled in the courtyard tells us Christ, reviled, did not revile in return; and by his wounds you have been healed.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165), First Apology 17

Addressing the emperor himself, St. Justin explains that Christians, taught by Christ, pay taxes more readily than anyone and pray for rulers, worshiping God alone but gladly serving the empire in everything else. It is 1 Peter 2:13-17 turned into public policy: maximal cooperation, bounded worship. He sealed the argument with his blood under Marcus Aurelius.

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 107), Letter to the Romans

Traveling under guard to his execution, St. Ignatius begs the Roman Christians not to rescue him: allow me to be an imitator of the passion of my God. His words breathe the same conviction as 1 Peter 2:21: Christ's suffering is not only a payment to admire but a path to walk, and he counted following in those steps the completion of his discipleship.

Voices of the Church

St. Polycarp of Smyrna (d. c. 155), Martyrdom of Polycarp 9-10

Standing before the proconsul, St. Polycarp says Christians are taught to render honor to rulers and authorities appointed by God, so far as it does no harm to the soul, yet he will not swear by the fortune of Caesar or revile Christ. The old bishop states 1 Peter's balance in one breath: honor the emperor, fear God, and know exactly where the line runs.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 2:21. (2) Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12 straight through once, slowly, marveling that this prophecy reads as if an eyewitness of the Passion had written it. (3) Choose one relationship where you have been returning fire, and for seven days answer revilement with silence and a prayer. (This practice is for ordinary friction, not for abuse; if you face abuse, harassment, or danger, setting boundaries, speaking the truth, and seeking help are fully compatible with following Christ.) (4) Do one visibly excellent, uncomplaining piece of work for someone who has been unfair to you.

Scripture Memory

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:21, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 3:1-12 before Session Five.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 618; 1899-1900; 2242

Take-Home • Session Five

The Hidden Heart of the Household • 1 Peter 3:1-12

What We Found

Peter walked the exile strategy through the front door of the house. Peter tells wives that a husband who does not obey the word may be won without a word, which is not silence but the strongest evidence in the building, and St. Monica proved it on her husband Patricius; her years of prayers and tears won her son Augustine by another road. The imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit joined the letter's short list of things that do not perish. Verse 7 shocked its century: husbands must study their wives, honor them down the power gradient, and know that heaven screens their prayers by how they treat a joint heir of the grace of life. And Psalm 34 surfaced as the letter's own psalm: the righteous sufferer whom the Lord hears.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *Confessions*, Book IX

St. Augustine writes that his mother, St. Monica, served her hot-tempered pagan husband Patricius as her lord, and preached Christ to him by her conduct, by which God made her beautiful to her husband; toward the end of his life she won him for Christ. Augustine's account reads like a commentary on 1 Peter 3:1-2 written from inside the household that proved it. Her patience did in decades what argument had not done in years.

Voices of the Church

St. John Chrysostom (d. 407), *Homily 20 on Ephesians*

The great preacher of Christian marriage tells husbands to prize their wives' love above everything in the house, to say to her that her love outweighs all possessions, and to make the home a little church where Christ's love for the Church is painted in daily acts. His whole homily is 1 Peter 3:7 expanded: honor, knowledge, and tenderness as a husband's daily liturgy.

Voices of the Church

St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III

The Doctor of gentleness teaches that nothing is so strong as true meekness, and nothing so gentle as real strength; the devout soul corrects and endures with a calm that no provocation can rent. His counsel is the "gentle and quiet spirit" of 3:4 turned into a rule of life for laypeople in ordinary

households, which is precisely where Peter aims it.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 3:4. (2) Pray Psalm 34 once, slowly, as your own. (3) Choose the family member hardest to love and do them one hidden kindness that no one else will ever know about. (4) For those married or preparing for it: Peter tells husbands to live with their wives “according to knowledge”; take that duty up for yourself, whichever spouse you are, by asking your spouse or intended one real question and only listening.

Scripture Memory

“Let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious” (1 Peter 3:4, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 3:13-22 before Session Six, and bring your Take-Home from Session One with your sealed My Guess on it. This is the week it opens.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 1615; 1642; 1656-1657; 2334

Take-Home • Session Six

Always Be Prepared • 1 Peter 3:13-22

What We Found

The summit session. Every baptized person received the charter: always be prepared to give an answer for your hope, with gentleness and reverence, since the manner of the defense is part of its content. The Creed's strangest line found its source: Christ descended to the realm of the dead and proclaimed victory even there. And the study's oldest question closed: Noah's eight were saved through water, and baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the exact phrase of 1:3. Peter answered our Session One question himself: the new birth happens where the Resurrection is applied to a person, at the font.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165), First Apology 61

Explaining Christian initiation to the emperor, St. Justin writes that converts are brought where there is water and are regenerated, born again, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, citing Christ's word that unless you are born again you will not enter the kingdom. Within a century of Peter's letter, the Church publicly described baptism as the washing that regenerates, the same reality Peter proclaims in 3:21 when he writes that baptism now saves you.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), Catechetical Lectures 3

Preparing candidates for baptism, St. Cyril teaches that the water is no mere water: the Spirit descends upon it, and what is born of water and the Spirit enters the kingdom; the body is washed while the soul is sealed. He treats 1 Peter's ark typology as standard catechesis: as Noah was saved through water, so are you.

Voices of the Church

An Ancient Holy Saturday Homily (author unknown, Office of Readings for Holy Saturday)

"Something strange is happening: there is a great silence on earth today." The Church's liturgy for Holy Saturday reads an ancient homily in which the victorious Christ descends to the dead, takes Adam by the hand, and says: awake, sleeper, I did not create you to be held prisoner. It is 1 Peter 3:19 preached:

the proclamation to the spirits in prison, prayed by the whole Church every Triduum.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 3:15. (2) Find your baptism date if you do not know it (ask family or the parish office) and mark it in your calendar as an anniversary to keep. (3) Write out your two-sentence account of your hope and pray for one chance to give it gently. (4) On entering church, sign yourself with holy water deliberately, as a reminder of your baptism and a renewal of your baptismal promises.

Scripture Memory

“Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 4:1-19 before Session Seven.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 632-635; 845; 1094; 1257; 1265

Take-Home • Session Seven

The Fiery Ordeal • 1 Peter 4:1-19

What We Found

The fire planted in week one arrived in person, and Peter's counsel was to stop being surprised by it: the ordeal is the assayer's furnace on schedule, proving rather than punishing. We found the community's survival kit: unfailing love that covers a multitude of sins, ungrudging hospitality, and gifts held as stewards of God's varied grace rather than owners. Suffering for the Name is participation in Christ's own sufferings, with the Spirit of glory resting on the reproached. And Ezekiel 9 stood behind the hardest verse: there the judgment was commanded to begin at the sanctuary, with those nearest God answering first. Peter takes up that pattern, and for the household of God the present ordeal is a refining judgment, severe but merciful, before the far worse reckoning that awaits those who reject the gospel. The chapter's last word: do right, and entrust your soul to a faithful Creator.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258), Letters from the Persecution

Writing to a Church under imperial edict, St. Cyprian exhorts his people that the soldier of Christ trained in Christ's camp should not fear the battle but recognize in it his hour of glory, for the Lord watches the contest and crowns the perseverance he himself has strengthened. Bishop of a persecuted flock and finally a martyr himself, he reads suffering exactly as 1 Peter 4 does: expected, proving, and crowned.

Voices of the Church

St. Basil the Great (d. 379), Homily on the Words of Luke, "I Will Pull Down My Barns"

St. Basil preaches that what you have received beyond your need has been entrusted to you for others: the bread you store belongs to the hungry, the cloak in your closet to the naked. It is the sternest patristic statement of 1 Peter 4:10's principle: you are a steward of God's varied grace, not its owner, and gifts hoarded are gifts embezzled.

Voices of the Church

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897), Story of a Soul

The Little Flower teaches that great trials rarely come, but little ones come daily, and that love proves itself in bearing pinpricks with joy: the cold remark, the thankless task, the small humiliation offered to God become fuel for love. She is the Doctor of 4:12-13 for people whose fiery ordeal arrives not as an

arena but as a Tuesday.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 4:12-13. (2) Each morning, offer the day's smallest suffering, the cold remark, the thankless task, aloud to God, St. Thérèse's little way of 4:13. (3) Cover one offense: choose a small personal slight, forgive it fully, and tell no one. (Love covers minor offenses; forgiveness never means concealing abuse, crime, or danger, and it never replaces necessary reporting or healthy boundaries.) (4) Deploy one stored gift for someone in this group before we meet again.

Scripture Memory

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:12-13, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Peter 5:1-14 before Session Eight.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 951; 1521; 1808

Take-Home • Session Eight

Shepherd the Flock • 1 Peter 5:1-14

What We Found

Peter's most personal page. Behind tend the flock we found the beach of John 21, where the risen Jesus rebuilt his denier one question per denial; behind clothe yourselves with humility we found the towel of John 13. Authority in the Church wears an apron: real office, brotherly style, exactly as Christ designed it. Casting anxiety turned out to be filed under humility, a transfer of custody to the One who cares. The lion is real and resistible. And Babylon gave up its secret: from the earliest centuries the Church has read the Babylon of 5:13 as Rome. On that reading Peter wrote from the capital with Mark, his interpreter, beside him, and early tradition remembers Mark's Gospel as Peter's preaching in ink. It was in Rome that Peter finished his witness, and his successors sit in that city to this day.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Clement of Rome (d. c. 99), Letter to the Corinthians 5

Writing from Rome within about three decades of the events, St. Clement holds up “the good apostles”: Peter, who through unrighteous jealousy endured not one or two but many labors, and having thus borne witness went to his appointed place of glory; and Paul likewise. It is the earliest surviving reference to Peter's martyrdom outside the New Testament, written from the very city, by the man remembered as his successor, while eyewitnesses still lived.

Voices of the Church

St. Papias of Hierapolis (c. 60-130), as preserved by Eusebius, Church History III.39

Papias, who made it his business to collect the words of the apostles' disciples, records the tradition of John the Elder: Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, what he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord, taking care to omit nothing he had heard and to falsify nothing. Eusebius adds elsewhere (Church History II.15) that Peter mentions this Mark in his first letter, composed in Rome, the city he calls figuratively Babylon. On that early testimony, the “my son Mark” of 5:13 is the reason we have the Gospel of Mark: Peter's preaching in ink.

Voices of the Church

St. Gregory the Great (d. 604), Pastoral Rule, Book II

The pope who styled himself “servant of the servants of God” teaches that the ruler of souls must be first in service: pure in thought, exemplary in conduct, discreet in silence and profitable in speech, a near neighbor to everyone in compassion and exalted above all in contemplation, never preferring to rule over men rather than to serve them. Book II of the Pastoral Rule is 1 Peter 5:2-3 expanded into the West’s manual for shepherds, written by a successor of the fisherman.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 5:7. (2) Each night, name the day’s heaviest anxiety aloud and cast it with the words of Psalm 55:22; if you catch yourself retrieving it, cast it again without self-reproach. (3) Do one hidden act of apron-wearing service in your household. (4) Pray one Our Father for the pope and your bishop, under-shepherds accountable to the chief Shepherd. (5) Read 2 Peter 1 before next session: the study’s second movement begins.

Scripture Memory

“Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 2 Peter 1:1-11 before Session Nine; the study’s second movement begins. If you can, read both short letters in one sitting this week.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 880-882; 1547; 1551

Take-Home • Session Nine

Partakers of the Divine Nature • 2 Peter 1:1-11

What We Found

The second letter opened at the summit of everything: God's promises exist so that you may become a partaker of the divine nature. Salvation is bigger than acquittal; pardon is the porch and participation is the house. Athanasius, Irenaeus, and Aquinas all bore witness to this exchange in nearly the same sentence: the Son of God became man so that we might come to share in the life of God. His divine power has already granted everything needed for godliness, which retires the excuse of not having what it takes. The eight-rung ladder gave growth its order, from faith to love, and verse 9 diagnosed the stalled Christian precisely: baptismal amnesia. The command to confirm your call and election keeps assurance honest: hope, zeal, and no presumption.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373), On the Incarnation 54

The champion of Nicaea states the exchange in one immortal sentence: the Son of God became man so that we might become God, that is, sharers by grace in the divine life. The Catechism quotes him on exactly this point (CCC 460), and his logic guarded Christmas itself: only one who is truly God can give creatures a share in God.

Voices of the Church

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 202), Against Heresies, Book V, Preface

A spiritual grandson of the apostles (his teacher St. Polycarp knew St. John), St. Irenaeus writes that the Word of God, through his transcendent love, became what we are, that he might bring us to be what he himself is. The wonderful exchange was the Church's teaching little more than a century after Peter's death, and the Catechism sets his sentence beside Athanasius's under 2 Peter 1:4 (CCC 460).

Voices of the Church

St. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), Opusculum 57 on Corpus Christi

The Angelic Doctor, in his office for Corpus Christi, teaches that the only-begotten Son of God, wishing to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods. That this line stands in a Eucharistic work is no accident: the sacrament of his Body is where the partaking of

1:4 touches our lips. It is the third voice the Catechism gathers under tonight's verse (CCC 460).

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 2 Peter 1:4 (from “he has granted” through “divine nature”). (2) Each morning, name your rung and ask for its grace in one sentence. (3) Before Communion this Sunday, pray St. Thomas's line: you assumed our nature to make us sharers in yours. (4) Write the eight rungs on a card and keep it where you will see it; we will meet the ladder's final rung again in Session Twelve.

Scripture Memory

“...he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 2 Peter 1:12-21 before Session Ten, and keep your Ladder card handy this month.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 460; 1996-1997; 2008-2010; 2016

Take-Home • Session Ten

Eyewitnesses of His Majesty • 2 Peter 1:12-21

What We Found

A dying man chose his anchors: memory and Scripture. He named his death with the Transfiguration's own word, exodus, and staked the faith on testimony rather than cleverly devised myths: we were with him on the holy mountain. Set beside Luke 9, his account quietly omits his own embarrassing cameo, the signature of an honest witness. Scripture is the lamp issued for the dark stretch between the comings, and prophecy, which never came by the impulse of man but was spoken by men moved by the Holy Spirit, is rightly read in the same Spirit, within the living Tradition of the Church (CCC 113); the Ethiopian's honest answer, how can I unless someone guides me, was met not with a book but with a guide.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Leo the Great (d. 461), Sermon 51 on the Transfiguration

Preaching on Tabor, St. Leo teaches that the Transfiguration's great purpose was to remove the scandal of the cross from the disciples' hearts: the brightness of his hidden majesty was shown in advance so that the coming humiliation would not shatter their faith, and the hope of the whole body of Christ was anchored, since the members are promised a share in the glory that blazed in their Head. The Church reads this sermon in the Office of Readings each Lent; it is Peter's 1:16-18 preached by his successor.

Voices of the Church

St. Vincent of Lérins (d. c. 445), Commonitorium 2

St. Vincent asks why, if Scripture is complete and sufficient, the Church's interpretive tradition is needed, and answers: because Scripture's very depth means all do not receive it in one and the same sense; the same texts are read one way by one man and another way by another, so the line of prophetic and apostolic interpretation must be directed according to the standard of the Church's universal understanding. He is answering, in the fifth century, exactly the situation 2 Peter 1:20 and 3:16 describe.

Voices of the Church

St. Jerome (d. 420), Commentary on Isaiah, Prologue

The Church's great translator declares that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ, a line the Catechism enshrines (CCC 133) in its plea that the faithful read the Bible frequently and prayerfully.

Hold St. Jerome beside St. Vincent and you have the full Catholic posture: maximal devotion to Scripture, read within the Church's living understanding, never one without the other.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

This week: (1) Memorize 2 Peter 1:16. (2) Read Luke 9:28-36 once more, slowly, on your own, and then tell your Transfiguration story, the anchor moment of God's reality in your life, to one person. (3) Begin, or restart, a daily lamp habit: even ten minutes of the Gospel of Mark, traditionally rooted in Peter's preaching, would carry you through both letters' world. (4) Pray for the grace to love Scripture like St. Jerome and to read it with the Church like St. Vincent.

Scripture Memory

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 2 Peter 2:1-22 before Session Eleven.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 85-87; 105-107; 113; 133; 554-556

Take-Home • Session Eleven

False Teachers and the Way of Truth • 2 Peter 2:1-22

What We Found

The warning chapter gave us an instrument panel that works in every century: check the doctrine (does it quietly deny the Master?), the appetite, the wallet, and the fruit, because error never arrives labeled; it comes craftily decked in attractive dress. Judgment and rescue proved to be one operation: the Lord knows how to deliver Noah and even hesitating Lot while holding the unrighteous to account. Balaam stood as the permanent prototype of gifts without integrity. And 2:19 handed us the sharpest freedom test in Scripture: whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved, with St. Augustine's chain of habit as the century-tested testimony, and grace as the bolt cutter.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 202), *Against Heresies*, Book I, Preface

Confronting the Gnostics, St. Irenaeus observes that error never shows itself in its naked deformity, lest being thus exposed it should be detected; it is craftily decked out in attractive dress, so as to appear to the inexperienced more true than truth itself. Writing in the second century, Irenaeus gives the definitive early gloss on “secretly bring in”: heresy’s uniform is always the current fashion of plausibility.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *Confessions*, Book VIII

Augustine describes his own bondage before conversion: he was bound not with another’s irons but by his own iron will; desire indulged became habit, and habit unresisted became necessity, link by link a chain that held him fast. It is 2 Peter 2:19 written as autobiography: whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved, and it ends, in Book VIII’s garden, with the chain broken by grace.

Voices of the Church

St. John Henry Newman (1801-1890), *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*

Newman faced the modern form of tonight’s question: how do you tell authentic growth of doctrine from corruption of it? His essay argues that a true development preserves the original type, maintains continuity of principle, and conserves the past while a corruption contradicts and dissolves it; living ideas grow, counterfeits mutate. His tests are the modern instrument panel for Peter’s ancient warning,

and following them led him into the Catholic Church.

Live It This Week

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This week: (1) Memorize 2 Peter 2:19 (or verse 9 if you prefer its comfort). (2) Take the stopping test to prayer, and if something has overcome you, take it to Confession, where the Master who bought you is waiting to prove who actually owns you. (3) Read Numbers 22-24 in full; watch the gift and the heart come apart. (4) Pray daily this week for teachers of the faith, your pastor, catechists, this group's leader, that gift and integrity stay welded.

Scripture Memory

"They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for whatever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved" (2 Peter 2:19, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 2 Peter 3:1-18 before Session Twelve, our final session. Come ready to harvest the whole study: bring all eleven of your take-home pages.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 817; 2089; 1730-1733; 1740-1742

Take-Home • Session Twelve

The Day of the Lord • 2 Peter 3:1-18

What We Found

The scoffers' question, where is the promise of his coming, met three answers: the world has already been interrupted (creation and flood), God's clock is not ours, and the delay is mercy aimed at repentance: the Lord is patient, not wishing that any should perish. The Day will come like a thief, and the fire we have tracked all study goes cosmic there: refining unto renewal, not annihilation, because the promise is new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Peter's last page called his public corrector our beloved brother Paul, ranked his letters as Scripture, and warned they can be twisted, which is why the Book lives in the Church that received it. His final written imperative: grow.

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St. Irenaeus of Lyons (d. c. 202), *Against Heresies*, Book V, Chapter 36

Against those who expected creation's abolition, St. Irenaeus teaches that neither the substance nor the essence of creation is annihilated, for he who established it is faithful and true; rather the fashion of this world passes away, and creation, renewed, will flourish in incorruption: new heavens and a new earth in which the righteous will dwell, as Isaiah and the apostles promised. Writing in the second century, St. Irenaeus stands as an early and influential witness to this reading: renewal, not destruction.

Voices of the Church

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *The City of God*, Book XX

Treating the last things at length, St. Augustine teaches that in the conflagration of the world the qualities of the corruptible elements that suited our corruptible bodies will utterly perish by burning, while the substance itself will receive the properties that befit immortal bodies: the world, made new and better, fitted to humanity made new and better. His careful distinction, qualities burned, substance transfigured, is 2 Peter 3:10-13 read with a doctor's precision.

Voices of the Church

St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), the Bookmark Prayer

By tradition, found in her breviary after her death: let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things are passing; God never changes; patience obtains all things; whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices. It is the spirituality of 2 Peter 3 in six lines: the passing world held lightly, the

unchanging God held fast, and patience, God's own virtue in 3:9, as the way to wait.

Live It This Week

Live It This Week

Going forward: (1) Memorize 2 Peter 3:13, and recite it at every funeral, diagnosis, and headline that tempts you to despair. (2) Keep the ladder card from Session Nine where you can see it; review your rung monthly. (3) Adopt one person from your 3:9 answer for daily prayer and one concrete act of witness this month. (4) Keep the lamp lit: choose your next Scripture study before this group disbands, tonight if possible. (5) Pray St. Teresa's bookmark in every waiting room of your life: all things are passing; God never changes; patience obtains all things.

Scripture Memory

"But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13, RSV2CE)

Before next session: The study is complete, but Peter's last imperative is not: grow. Choose your next step in Scripture this week, and keep the twelve memory verses alive; they are yours now.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 673; 1037; 1042-1047; 2822