

BEHOLD THE LAMB: TAKE-HOME 1

The Word Made Flesh

John 1:1-18

What We Found

John opens his Gospel where Genesis opens the Bible: in the beginning. We set the two passages side by side and found the same furniture in both rooms, beginning, God, light, darkness, and creation through speech. John's claim is that the speech of Genesis 1 is a Someone: the eternal Word, who was with God, who was God, and through whom all things were made.

Then the sentence no philosopher saw coming: the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The Greek verb for dwelt, *eskēnōsen*, literally means he pitched his tent. We turned to Exodus 40 and watched the glory of God fill the wilderness tabernacle, the tent at the center of Israel's camp. John says the glory has a new tent: a true human nature. What Moses begged to see on Sinai and was refused, the face of God, has now been shown to us. The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has made him known.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God* 10.29

Augustine recounts that a Platonist philosopher said the opening of John's Gospel deserved to be written in letters of gold and displayed in every church. The pagans could admire the eternal Word. What only faith could receive was the next line: the Word became flesh.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Homily 2

Chrysostom marvels that these thunderclap lines came not from a philosopher but from a Galilean fisherman, speaking, he says, as from heaven itself, with a voice clearer than thunder. Everything the sages groped after, an unlettered man declares with authority.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Athanasius of Alexandria, *On the Incarnation* 54

The Son of God became man so that we might become sharers in the divine nature by grace. He took what is ours to give us what is His. The Catechism itself quotes this line (CCC 460). Every sacrament you receive is this exchange continuing in time.

Live It This Week

- **Pray the Prologue.** Take John 1:1-18 at three verses a day, slowly, aloud if you can. Do not study it; sit in it. By Friday you will have prayed the whole overture.
- **Bow like you mean it.** This Sunday at the Creed, when we bow at the words and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man, make the bow deliberately, remembering: he pitched his tent among us.
- **One act of witness.** Do one small Baptist-sized thing this week: mention the study to one person, or share one thing you noticed tonight.

Memory Verse

John 1:14 (RSV2CE)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

My Guess (seal it!)

Our study is called Behold the Lamb. Next week you will hear someone cry out those words when he sees Jesus coming toward him. Before you hear anything more, write your honest guess below, fold this section over, and do not change it. We will open the guesses together later in the study.

Why do you think Jesus is called the Lamb of God? What might it mean, and where might the image come from?

Before Next Session

Read John 1:19-51. Session 2: Come and See.

Catechism References

CCC 241-242, 291, 456-463.

BEHOLD THE LAMB: TAKE-HOME 2

Come and See

John 1:19-51

What We Found

John the Baptist, asked three times who he is, answered first in a chain of denials: I am not the Christ. I am not. No. The one identity he claimed was borrowed from Isaiah 40:3, the voice preparing the way of the LORD, and in Isaiah the one whose way is prepared is God Himself. Then he cried the sentence our study is named for: Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. And he never explained it. Neither did we. Our guesses stay sealed.

The rest of the chapter travels person to person. Jesus' first spoken words in this Gospel are a question, what do you seek, and his first invitation is come and see. Andrew's first act after finding the Messiah was to fetch his brother, and Jesus renamed Simon on sight: you shall be called Cephas, the rock. In Scripture a divine renaming commonly marks a mission, and this one hangs over the whole Gospel like a promise waiting to be kept.

The chapter ends with Jesus stepping into someone else's dream. We turned to Genesis 28 and found Jacob's ladder, the angels ascending and descending, and Jacob's cry: this is the house of God, the gate of heaven. Jesus told Nathanael the angels would ascend and descend on the Son of Man. He is the ladder. He is the place where heaven and earth meet.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 7

On Nathanael under the fig tree, Augustine hears an echo of Eden and its fig leaves. When Jesus says, before Philip called you, I saw you, Augustine reads the shape of every conversion: Christ sees us in the shadow of our sin before we ever catch sight of him. We think the story begins with our decision to come and see. We were seen, and loved, first.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homily 19

Chrysostom lingers on one small verse: Andrew first found his brother Simon. Having found the Messiah, Andrew could not hold the treasure alone even overnight. This, he says, is true brotherly love, to share spiritual goods and not only earthly ones. From one brother fetching another came the leader of the apostles.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Henry Newman, Meditations and Devotions

God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. Each disciple in this chapter is found differently, called personally, each by name, and Newman insists the same is true of you: somehow you are necessary for His purposes, a link in a chain.

Live It This Week

- **Let him ask you.** Once this week, take ten minutes of real silence and let Jesus ask you his first question: what do you seek? Answer him honestly, even if the honest answer is confused.
- **Be an Andrew.** Andrew's evangelization method was one sentence and one introduction. Pick one person by name this week and make one small introduction: an invitation, a question, a mention of what you are finding here.
- **Listen for it at Mass.** This Sunday, just before Communion, the priest will lift the Host and say words you have now heard at their source: Behold the Lamb of God. Do not solve it. Just notice that the Church has placed the Baptist's unexplained cry at the summit of her worship, and hold your sealed guess a little tighter.

Memory Verse

John 1:29 (RSV2CE)

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

Before Next Session

Read John 2. Session 3: The First Sign. Bring your sealed guess sheet with you every week; do not peek.

Catechism References

CCC 438, 719-720, 858, 878.

The First Sign

John 2

What We Found

The new-creation pattern many readers see running through John 1 and 2 ended where the first creation week did, with a man and a woman, this time at a wedding. Mary's two sentences gave us the whole anatomy of intercession: they have no wine, presenting the need without instructions, and do whatever he tells you, her last recorded words in Scripture, aimed entirely at her Son. We weighed the hard verse honestly, O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come, and found that whatever distance it carries, the story refuses to read it as a refusal: Mary mobilizes the servants, and Jesus pours out the miracle.

We did the math on the six stone jars: one hundred twenty to one hundred eighty gallons, and not of just any water, but the water of the old purification rites, transformed into wine that evokes the messianic feast Isaiah 25 promised. John calls it the first of his signs, and we started our running tally. Then, at Passover, Jesus claimed the temple as my Father's house and answered the demand for credentials with a riddle: destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. John gave us the key the crowd lacked: he spoke of the temple of his body. The dwelling of God among us keeps narrowing: a tent, a ladder, and now a body.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 8

The one who made wine that day in the six jars does the same thing every year in the vines: water from the sky becomes wine by way of the vine, and no one marvels, because it happens annually. Cana is creation's ordinary wonder compressed into a moment, so that our dulled attention would finally notice who has been doing it all along.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies 3.22.4

Irenaeus, who learned from Polycarp, a hearer of John, draws the great parallel: the knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience. What the virgin Eve bound through unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through faith. At Cana that obedient faith speaks its whole rule of life in five words: do whatever he tells you.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Gospel of John, on chapter 2

Aquinas reads Cana as a portrait of Mary's intercession: she notices the need before anyone asks, brings it to her Son with total confidence, and presumes nothing about method or timing. Mercy sees that the wine has failed; faith knows exactly where to take the problem.

Live It This Week

- **Pray Cana-style.** Once a day, bring one need to Jesus in Mary's grammar: no instructions, no proposed solutions, just they have no wine, and trust. If you pray with Mary, ask her to present it with you.
- **One act of whatever.** Pick one thing you already know he is telling you to do, the one you have been deferring, and do it this week. Do whatever he tells you begins with the whatever you already know.
- **Watch the water.** At Mass this Sunday, watch the priest add a little water to the wine in the chalice, and remember the six jars. Ordinary matter, an ordinary hour, and glory arriving quietly through it: that is Cana, and it lights up the whole sacramental principle.

Memory Verse

John 2:5 (RSV2CE)

His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you.

Before Next Session

Read John 3. Session 4: Born of Water and the Spirit. Keep your sign tally going, and keep your guess sealed.

Catechism References

CCC 547-548, 586, 1613, 2618.

Born of Water and the Spirit

John 3

What We Found

A ruler of the Jews came to Jesus by night with a compliment, and Jesus answered with a demolition: unless one is born from above, of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus should have known, and we found out why: Ezekiel 36 already promised clean water sprinkled on God's people and a new spirit put within them, water and spirit together in one act of new covenant cleansing. The early Church heard Baptism in this verse from the beginning, and we tested that reading honestly against the text itself: the grammar names one birth, not two; the whole surrounding chapter is soaked in baptizing; and the Fathers overwhelmingly read it exactly so. We also held on to the Church's careful balance: God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments (CCC 1257).

Then we followed Jesus into the wilderness of Numbers 21, where the remedy for the snake-bitten was an image of the affliction itself, lifted on a pole, healing everyone who looked at it. As Moses lifted up the serpent, so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that is the sentence John 3:16 grows out of. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. And the Baptist gave us his farewell in eight words that contain the whole spiritual life: he must increase, but I must decrease. He called Jesus the bridegroom. We are still holding the question he left us: then who is the bride?

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61

Writing around the year 155, Justin describes for the Roman emperor how Christians are made: those who believe are brought where there is water and are washed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for Christ said, unless you are born again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Within living memory of the apostles, the Church already read this verse as the charter of Baptism.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Mystagogical Catechesis* 2 (On Baptism)

Instructing the newly baptized in the week after Easter, Cyril unfolds what had just happened to them in the font: the saving water was at once their grave and their mother (*Mystagogical Catechesis* 2.4). In his earlier pre-baptismal instruction on Baptism he had already insisted on both halves of the sentence: neither water alone without the Spirit, nor the Spirit alone without water. They descend as into a grave and come up born into new life.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, on chapter 3

What the womb is to the child, the water is to the believer. In the beginning the Spirit hovered over the waters and creation was born; now the Spirit moves over the font and the new creation is born. Nicodemus joked about entering the womb a second time; Chrysostom answers that God has in fact

provided a second womb.

Live It This Week

- **Find your date.** Track down the date of your baptism this week, ask a parent, find the certificate, call the parish. Write it somewhere permanent. You keep the anniversary of your first birth every year; you now have your second one.
- **Bless yourself like you mean it.** Every time you take holy water entering a church this week, slow down. That gesture recalls Ezekiel 36 and your own Baptism: clean water, and a renewed spirit. Let it be a two-second act of remembering who you are.
- **One decrease.** Choose one habit of self-promotion, steering conversations to yourself, checking who noticed, quietly keeping score, and fast from it for seven days, in honor of the friend of the bridegroom.

Memory Verse

John 3:16 (RSV2CE)

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Before Next Session

Read John 4. Session 5: Living Water. Keep your sign tally going, and keep your guess sealed.

Catechism References

CCC 458, 1215, 1225, 1257-1261.

BEHOLD THE LAMB: TAKE-HOME 5

Living Water

John 4

What We Found

Jesus had to pass through Samaria, and the necessity, John hints, was more than geography. He sat down, genuinely tired, at Jacob's well at noon, an hour that may hint she was avoiding the other women, and he asked her for a drink. Then the Old Testament pattern fired: Jacob met Rachel at a well, Rebekah and Zipporah were found at wells, and the patriarchs' well scenes begin betrothals. The man the Baptist just called the bridegroom sat down at a well, and John bent the pattern until it broke our hearts: the bride is no maiden. Five husbands, five broken cisterns, and behind her, Samaria itself, read through Hosea 2's estranged bride, whom God swore to allure back and betroth to himself forever. Last week we asked who the bride is. This week we found the first answer: the one who broke faith, and he came for her anyway.

We read Jeremiah 2:13 and learned the anatomy of thirst: forsaking the fountain of living waters to dig broken cisterns that can hold no water. Jesus named her whole story without a syllable of contempt, praised her honesty twice, and she moved toward him instead of running. We weighed the worship question honestly: spirit and truth does not abolish liturgy, because in this Gospel the Spirit is the living water and the truth is Jesus himself, and worship was not de-located into vapor but re-located into the temple of his body. And then, to an audience of one discarded woman, Jesus said it for the first time: I AM, the one speaking to you. She left her water jar, ran to the town that shamed her, and preached the only sermon she had: come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Two days later her town called him the Savior of the world. Back at Cana, an official believed a bare sentence and walked twenty miles home on it, and we logged the second sign, the last one John numbers. The tally is ours now.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 15

Augustine will not let us hurry past the tired man on the well curb. The strength of Christ created you, he preaches, and the weakness of Christ re-created you. The Word who made the seas sat thirsty beside a well he had made, because our rescue required not only omnipotence but exhaustion. And in the woman he sees the Church coming from the nations: she arrives with her bucket and her history, and leaves carrying what no jar can hold.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns on Virginity

Ephrem sings the detail everyone steps over: she left her water jar. She came to draw water and abandoned the errand, because she had become the vessel herself. She went down to the well a woman carrying a pitcher and came up a fountain carrying Christ to her city.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Teresa of Ávila, from her Life

Teresa was devoted to this scene from childhood and begged over and over, in her own rendering of the Samaritan woman's request, Lord, give me this water. RSV2CE has Sir, give me this water; the Greek carries both senses. The greatest teacher of prayer among the Church's women built her interior life on five words first spoken by a five-times-married outcast.

Live It This Week

- **Pray Teresa's prayer.** Every day this week, begin your prayer with the woman's own words: Sir, give me this water. Then be quiet for two minutes and let him answer.
- **Let him tell you all you ever did.** Jesus named her whole story and she felt loved, not condemned. Consider going to Confession this week: the sacrament where being fully known and being shown mercy happen in the same sentence.
- **One sentence to one person.** Her method is available to you: no arguments, just testimony and an invitation. Give your one-sentence testimony to one actual person this week.

Memory Verse

John 4:14 (RSV2CE)

But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Before Next Session

Read John 5. Session 6: The Son's Authority. Keep the sign tally and the new I AM tally going, and keep your guess sealed.

Catechism References

CCC 439, 728, 1179, 2560-2561.

The Son's Authority

John 5

What We Found

At a pool called Bethesda, whose five porticoes skeptics doubted until archaeologists dug them up, a man had been ill thirty eight years. We checked the number and found it in Deuteronomy 2:14: thirty eight years is the span from Israel's leaving Kadesh-barnea until they crossed the brook Zered, the years in which that whole generation of fighting men perished in the wilderness, dying within sight of promise. Augustine and many readers see in the man faithless Israel in one body, camped beside water that could not heal. Jesus asked him the question he asked this man, and asks each of us, do you want to be healed, and the man answered with a thirty eight year old answer, worn smooth instead of a yes. The healing needed no pool at all: rise, take up your pallet, and walk.

Then one sentence detonated everything: my Father is working still, and I am working. In the theology his hearers shared, God alone keeps working through the sabbath, sustaining the world, giving life, judging; and Jesus claimed that exemption as his own. John 5:21-23 then puts those very works in the hands of the Son, who gives life to whom he will and to whom all judgment has been given. His enemies decoded it instantly, he called God his own Father, making himself equal with God, and John never says they misunderstood. We held the great discourse with both hands: the Son does nothing of himself, and whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise, so that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Everything is gift, and the gift is everything. And we sat in the chapter's courtroom, where Jesus called four witnesses, the Baptist, his works, the Father, and the Scriptures, and we read the famous verse where it lives: you search the Scriptures... yet you refuse to come to me. The searching is not the destination. He is.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 17

Augustine puzzles lovingly over the number thirty eight. Forty is Scripture's number of completeness in the law, and thirty eight falls short by exactly two: the twofold command of love of God and love of neighbor. The law without charity leaves a man two short of forty, paralyzed beside religion's own pool. Only when Love himself walks up and speaks does the man finally stand.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of John, on chapter 5

On the words that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father, Cyril presses the logic: equal honor is intelligible only between equals in nature. God, who gives His glory to no other, could not command for a creature the very honor owed to Himself. Either the Son shares the Father's nature, or heaven has commanded idolatry. The Church's worship of Jesus has stood on this verse ever since.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Gospel of John, on chapter 5

That the Son does nothing of himself does not diminish him, for the Son receives from the Father the very same nature, power, and operation, whole and undivided. His receiving is his eternal begottenness, not a creature's dependence. One power, one work, two persons: everything is gift, and the gift is everything.

Live It This Week

- **Answer the question.** In prayer this week, let Jesus ask you directly, about one specific area you name: do you want to be healed? Answer him honestly, yes, no, or not yet, and tell him why. He can work with honesty; he waits out excuses.
- **Keep an hour of sabbath.** The Lord of the sabbath healed on it because the sabbath was made for restoration. Claim one deliberate hour this Sunday, no screens, no errands, for rest and worship, and let the Father who is working still do the working.
- **Search with the Church.** Take one of this week's Catechism paragraphs (589, 679, 998, or 2173), look it up, and read it next to the verses it cites. Ten minutes of Scripture read inside the Church's living witness: the searching that ends in coming to him.

Memory Verse

John 5:24 (RSV2CE)

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Before Next Session

Read John 6, the whole chapter; it is long, and it is the summit of the first half of our study. Session 7: The Bread of Life. Come rested. Keep your tallies going, and keep your guess sealed.

Catechism References

CCC 589, 679, 998, 2173.

The Bread of Life

John 6

What We Found

At Passover, on a Galilean hillside, Jesus took five barley loaves, gave thanks, *eucharistēsas*, and fed five thousand, with twelve baskets of fragments gathered so that nothing would be lost. Elisha once fed a hundred with twenty loaves; the shadow was left far behind: fifty times the crowd on a quarter of the loaves. That night the disciples saw footprints where Scripture says only God walks, on the sea, and heard him say, It is I; do not be afraid, the *egō eimi* with the divine I AM sounding beneath it.

Then the discourse, in two movements. In the first, I am the bread of life means exactly what it says at verse 35: coming to him is the eating, believing is the drinking, and we granted that fully. But at verse 51 the discourse turns: the bread which I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world. The crowd took him literally and asked how, and here, alone among the misunderstandings we tracked, Jesus answered a literal reading not with correction but with escalation: he gave his solemn double Amen, he added blood, and the verb itself shifted to the concrete *trōgein*, to gnaw, four times. We read Leviticus 17 and understood why blood was the most offensive word possible, and why its reason, the life is in the blood, is the whole point of the gift. Many of his own disciples left over this teaching, the Gospels' great doctrinal walkout, and he did not call after them that it was a metaphor. He asked the Twelve: will you also go away? And Peter gave the answer that faith has been giving ever since, not I understand, but: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Smyrnaeans 7 (c. 107 AD)

Writing under guard on the road to martyrdom, within living memory of this Gospel's publication, Ignatius identifies the heretics of his day by one test: they abstain from the Eucharist, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins. The realist reading of John 6 is not a later invention; it is the faith of the generation that knew the apostles, held at the cost of blood.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Mystagogical Catecheses

Teaching the newly baptized in Jerusalem itself, Cyril instructs them: do not regard them as bare bread and wine, for by the Master's own declaration they are the Body and Blood of Christ. Though the senses suggest otherwise, let faith make you firm; judge not by taste, but be fully assured by faith.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Thomas Aquinas, Adoro te devote

The Church's greatest mind wrote her humblest Eucharistic hymn: sight, touch, and taste are all deceived in judging you, but hearing alone is safely believed; I believe whatever the Son of God has said, and nothing is truer than this word of Truth. The whole act of Eucharistic faith rests where

Peter rested at Capernaum: on the sheer reliability of the one speaking.

Live It This Week

- **Receive like it is true.** This Sunday, prepare on purpose: keep the Communion fast, arrive early enough to pray, and at the elevation make Aquinas's act of faith your own: I believe whatever the Son of God has said. Then walk to the altar as if John 6 were true, because it is.
- **Fifteen minutes with the answer.** Make one visit to the tabernacle or adoration this week, fifteen minutes, no agenda. Bring only Peter's sentence: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Say it once and stay.
- **Examine before you approach.** The Church asks us to examine ourselves before receiving (CCC 1385). Take ten honest minutes this week; if the examination turns up something serious, the same Lord who feeds at one altar forgives in the confessional, and the second is the road back to the first.

Memory Verse

John 6:68 (RSV2CE)

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Before Next Session

Read John 7 and 8, two chapters this time; read them in one sitting if you can, because they happen at a single feast. Session 8: Before Abraham Was, I AM. Keep every tally going, and keep your guess sealed; it is worth more every week.

Catechism References

CCC 1324, 1336, 1374, 1385, 1406.

Before Abraham Was, I AM

John 7-8

What We Found

The Feast of Tabernacles set the stage. The rites come down to us in the Mishnah's tractate Sukkah, a Jewish description written after the Temple fell but preserving what was done there: every morning, water drawn from the Pool of Siloam was poured out at the altar, a rite Jewish tradition joins to Isaiah's promise of drawing water with joy from the wells of salvation, Isaiah 12:3; every evening, four golden candelabras blazed in the Temple court and lit up Jerusalem, a light the same tradition reads against the pillar of fire. On the last and greatest day, Jesus stood up in the crowd and claimed the first ceremony: if any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. John told us plainly what the living water is, the Holy Spirit, and hung the gift on a strange hinge: not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Then, in the very courtyard of the candelabras, he claimed the second: I am the light of the world.

Twice this feast the authorities moved to seize him, and twice the same sentence stopped them: no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come. The restraint on the plot has a name, and it means the cross, when it comes, will be an appointment kept, not an ambush suffered. Between the arrests (in a passage the Church receives as canonical Scripture, whatever its winding manuscript road), a woman caught in adultery was set before him as a trap, and mercy walked out of it holding both clauses that must never be separated: neither do I condemn you, and, go, and do not sin again. And then the summit: your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day... before Abraham came to be, I AM. We opened Exodus 3 at last and heard the bush: I AM WHO I AM; say to Israel, I AM has sent me. We opened Isaiah 43:10 and heard God's courtroom refrain. Your English will read, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He; the Greek Bible Israel read carries that last clause with the same two words John puts on Jesus' lips, egō eimi. The English alone will not show you the seam. The Greek does, and the Church has long read the two together. His hearers knew their Scriptures and professional theology, and they reached for stones, the response Leviticus prescribes for blasphemy, as the scene has always been read, and John never says they misunderstood.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 33

On the woman caught in adultery, Augustine compresses the final tableau into four words the Church has never forgotten: two were left, the wretched woman and Mercy. And he will not let mercy be softened into permission: the Lord condemned the sin, not the sinner, for he did not say, go and sin, but go, and sin no more. Mercy meets us where we are and refuses to leave us there.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, Book 1

Hilary's own conversion turned on the divine name. Searching the philosophers for what God is, he opened Moses and was stopped cold by the words from the bush: I AM WHO I AM. No definition could be more worthy of God than being itself. Then he opened John and found the same eternity speaking in time: in the beginning was the Word. What the bush declared, Jesus speaks in the first

person.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homily 55

Chrysostom fastens on the verbs: Jesus did not say, before Abraham was, I was, which would merely outrank the patriarch. He said I AM, as the Father uses the name I AM, for it signifies continuous being, exempt from all time. That is why they took up stones: they heard not a claim of age but a claim of the Name.

Live It This Week

- **Pray the Name.** Once a day this week, pray the ancient Jesus Prayer slowly, five times: Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner. You now know what weight the Name in that sentence carries; pray it like you know.
- **Light one flame.** Light a candle once this week, at church or at home, and pray John 8:12 over one dark situation you carry: I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness. Leave the candle burning a while.
- **Drop one stone.** Name, privately, one person you have been condemning in your heart. Every day this week, pray for them by name, and end with the Lord's sentence about yourself: neither do I condemn you. Stones get heavy; set yours down.

Memory Verse

John 8:12 (RSV2CE)

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Before Next Session

Read John 9 and 10. Session 9: The Light and the Shepherd. Keep every tally going, and keep your guess sealed.

Catechism References

CCC 206-207, 211, 590, 748, 1846-1848.

The Light and the Shepherd

John 9-10

What We Found

A man born blind sat begging, and the disciples asked whose fault he was. Jesus refused the whole calculus, made clay with his own hands, the same gesture as Genesis 2:7, the Creator finishing his work, and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, which, John pauses to tell us, means Sent. Anointed, washed, seeing: the Church has read her Baptism in this chapter since her early centuries, and still proclaims it to her catechumens in Lent. Then four interrogations, and two lines crossed: the beggar grew one step per grilling, the man called Jesus, a prophet, a man from God, and finally Lord, I believe, on his knees, worship accepted. The experts who kept saying we know argued themselves blind and cast out the evidence. The only incurable blindness in this Gospel is the kind that says we see.

Then we opened Ezekiel 34 and found the engine under the Good Shepherd discourse: shepherds indicted for feeding themselves and casting out the weak, exactly what we had just watched, and a double promise no ordinary reading can hold together: I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and, my servant David shall feed them. God in person, and the son of David, one shepherding, one job description only Jesus can fill. He gave us two new I AM sayings, the door and the good shepherd, said lays down his life five times, and then handed us the key for everything still to come: no one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own accord. At Hanukkah he said I and the Father are one, and the stones came out again with the charge stated precisely: you, being a man, make yourself God. And the verse stood where it always stood: one almighty hand that no one can snatch from, distinct persons, one being.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 5.15

Irenaeus reads the clay as the Creator's signature: the same Hands that formed man from the dust in the beginning here form eyes from clay, openly supplying what was left unfinished in the womb. The man who stooped to the mud at Siloam is the God who stooped to the mud in Eden.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 44

Augustine will not let the pool's name pass as trivia: the man washed in the pool that is interpreted Sent, which is to say, he was baptized in Christ. Anointed, sent to the water, washed, and returned seeing: the blind man is every catechumen, and the Church long ago learned to call Baptism illumination.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, Homily 14

The shepherd proved his love by the only proof that cannot be counterfeited: he laid down his life for his sheep. The hireling is exposed not by his title but by what he does when the wolf comes. Gregory preached this as pope and turned it first on his own clergy; and every believer can hear it

after him: we shepherd some corner of life, a family, a friendship, a responsibility; whose example do we follow when protecting the flock begins to cost?

Live It This Week

- **Write your one thing.** The blind man's whole apologetic was one sentence: one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see. Write your own version, one sentence, what he has actually done in your life, and say it out loud once a day until it stops feeling strange.
- **Train your ear.** Sheep learn the shepherd's voice by exposure, not by studying acoustics. Ten minutes a day this week with John 10 open: read a few verses, be quiet, read them again. Voice recognition is built exactly this slowly, and exactly this surely.
- **Renew your illumination.** Next time you enter a church, stop at the font, sign yourself slowly, and pray the blind man's three words: Lord, I believe. You were enlightened once; let the water remind your eyes.

Memory Verse

John 10:11 (RSV2CE)

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Before Next Session

Read John 11 and 12. Session 10: The Resurrection and the Life. Keep every tally going, and keep your guess sealed; the Hour is getting close.

Catechism References

CCC 242, 609, 754, 1216.

The Resurrection and the Life

John 11-12

What We Found

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, so he stayed two days longer: the delay was inside the love, not against it. By the time he arrived, Lazarus was four days dead, past every hope, and both sisters met him with grief's oldest sentence: Lord, if you had been here. Martha professed the resurrection as a doctrine for the last day, and Jesus corrected her tense: I AM the resurrection and the life, our fifth great I AM, a person, not an event. Then the shortest verse in the Bible: Jesus wept, shuddering with indignation, at death itself as the Church has always heard it, even though he was about to break it, and legitimizing every Christian's grief forever. At the tomb he gave thanks before the gift, cried Lazarus, come out, and a dead man heard the voice of the Son of God, exactly as promised. Then: unbind him, and let him go, the raising that is Christ's alone, and the unbinding he hands to his Church. Our sign tally, open since Cana, closed at seven on the traditional count we have kept, and the seventh sign is life from the dead.

And the seventh sign signed his death warrant. The Sanhedrin met, and Caiaphas the high priest, speaking pure political arithmetic, prophesied despite himself: one man should die for the people, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the scattered children of God. At Bethany, Mary poured out a year's wages of nard and the house filled with fragrance while a thief objected in the vocabulary of piety. The city waved palms at the humble king of Zechariah 9. And then Greeks, the nations themselves, came asking to see Jesus, and at that news the sentence we have tracked for ten sessions finally turned: the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself. All. We tested the hard verses about those who could not believe and found the door open in the same paragraph: many even of the authorities believed; the hardening ratifies persistent refusal, and no one at our table is disqualified by decree. The public ministry has ended. The Hour has come.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Ambrose of Milan, On the Death of His Brother Satyrus

Preaching at his own brother's funeral, Ambrose defended his tears with the Gospel's shortest verse: we incur no sin by weeping, for Jesus wept, and wept knowing he was about to raise his friend. Hope does not forbid grief; it accompanies it. Christians do not grieve less than others; we grieve with a horizon.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 49

Christ alone cries the dead man out, for only God raises the dead; but the risen man comes out still bound, and the unbinding is given to the disciples: unbind him, and let him go. So it remains: the Lord raises the soul by his own voice, and hands the raised to his Church to be loosed, the ministry

she has exercised in every absolution since.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Romans 4

On the road to his execution, Ignatius begged the Roman Christians not to rescue him: I am the wheat of God; let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of Christ. The grain of wheat was not poetry to him; it was his itinerary. He chose the falling, and the Church he fed is still eating the fruit.

Live It This Week

- **Say it to his face.** Martha and Mary both got to say if you had been here directly to Jesus, and he received it, wept, and answered. Once this week, in real prayer, say your version out loud, unedited. Lament is not unbelief; it is grief walking toward the right address.
- **One act of nard.** Do one deliberately uncalculated act of generosity this week, time, money, or attention, sized to make your inner accountant object. Let some house fill with fragrance.
- **Pray at the tombs.** Visit a cemetery this week, or simply pray for your dead by name, and say John 11:25 over them: I am the resurrection and the life. Then the Church's ancient prayer for them: eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Memory Verse

John 11:25-26 (RSV2CE)

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?

Before Next Session

Read John 13. Session 11: He Loved Them to the End. The doors close, the basin comes out, and we are inside the last night. Bring your sealed guess with you; its week has almost arrived.

Catechism References

CCC 605, 607, 994, 1037, 2604.

He Loved Them to the End

John 13

What We Found

Before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. Then the theology of the towel, written in the syntax itself: knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, that he had come from God and was going to God, he rose, laid aside his garments, and washed feet. Not humility despite the majesty, but majesty's own self-expression, and the very verbs of laying aside and taking again are the verbs of the Good Shepherd laying down his life to take it again. The foot washing is the cross in miniature, with a towel.

Peter refused to be served, which is pride in humility's coat, and heard the non-negotiable: if I do not wash you, you have no part in me. Grace is received before it is imitated. The bath, once for all, is Baptism; the feet gather the road's daily dust, washed continually in forgiveness and, in the Church's practice, in Confession. We weighed honestly whether the towel abolishes hierarchy and found the opposite: you call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am; the rank is affirmed and then redefined by the basin it carries, and in the same breath he affirmed the weight of sending itself: he who receives any one whom I send receives me. Then Psalm 41 at the table, the friend who ate my bread; the morsel offered to Judas, heard by many as love's last appeal, and refused; and the two most devastating words of our longest thread: he immediately went out, and it was night. With the betrayer gone, Jesus said now is the Son of Man glorified, and gave the commandment his beloved disciple would repeat into extreme old age: love one another, as I have loved you, the new measure, by which all men will know. And Peter boasted in the Shepherd's own borrowed words, and was given a schedule instead of a doubt: before the cock crows, three denials.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractates 56-57

The man who has bathed is clean all over, the once-for-all bath of Baptism; yet so long as he walks this earth his feet gather the dust of the road. So the Lord who bathed us once stoops daily to wash our feet, in the forgiveness we beg in the Our Father and receive in the Church. The bath is not repeated; the footwashing never stops.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Benedict of Nursia, The Rule of St. Benedict, chapters 35 and 53

Benedict did not admire the towel; he legislated it. The brothers finishing their kitchen week wash the feet of the whole community, and when guests arrive, the abbot himself washes their feet, for all guests are received as Christ. Fifteen centuries of monks have knelt on schedule: love with a rota, humility with assigned shifts.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Jerome, recounting the aged Apostle John, Commentary on

Galatians

The Apostle John, extremely old in Ephesus and carried to the assembly in his disciples' arms, would say only: little children, love one another. Asked why he always repeated it, he answered: because it is the Lord's commandment, and if it alone is kept, it is enough. The apostle remembered as the one who leaned on Jesus' breast spent his last strength on this chapter's one commandment.

Live It This Week

- **Wash one set of feet.** Choose one concrete act of service this week that is genuinely beneath you, unglamorous, unthanked, for one specific person, and do it quietly. Not service in general: one basin, one pair of feet, this week.
- **Let him wash you.** The bathed still need their feet washed. Get to Confession this week if it has been a while: kneel as a receiver, which Peter found harder than dying, and let the Lord do the part you cannot.
- **The old apostle's examen.** Each night this week, end the day with the aged John's one question: did I love them today, as he has loved me? One question, honestly answered, is a complete examen.

Memory Verse

John 13:34 (RSV2CE)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Before Next Session

Read John 14, 15, and 16, the farewell discourse, in one sitting if you can; it is one conversation on one night. Session 12: The Paraclete and the Vine. Bring your sealed guess. Its Passover has arrived.

Catechism References

CCC 520, 616, 1337, 1823.

The Paraclete and the Vine

John 14-16

What We Found

On his last free night, Jesus furnished his friends for the time after. Let not your hearts be troubled, he said, handing them the very verb he had carried himself. Thomas admitted they did not know the way and received the sixth great I AM: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. Then the four promises of the Paraclete, the Advocate, another of the same kind as Jesus himself: he will be in you; he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that Jesus said, the promise in which the Church hears the guarantee of the apostolic memory behind the Gospels; who proceeds from the Father, words our Creed takes up (the Latin Creed adding: and the Son); and he will guide you into all truth and glorify me. Both truths stand: the Spirit is given to every believer, and the guarded memory and guidance were covenanted to the apostles in that room, whose remembrance is our Gospels and whose successors keep the deposit for everyone. Where the Church is, said Irenaeus, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church.

Our oldest architectural thread made its final move: the dwelling of God, traced from tent to ladder to the temple of his body, now widens into everyone who loves him and keeps his word: we will come to him and make our home with him. Then the seventh and final predicate: I am the true vine. Israel was the vine brought out of Egypt that yielded wild grapes; Jesus is the faithful Israel in person, and we are grafted in, or we are firewood; branches genuinely his can be cast forth if they do not abide, which is why the refrain sounds ten times: abide in me, for apart from me you can do nothing. The deepest abiding was named at Capernaum: he who eats my flesh abides in me. The vine has an altar. And the discourse ended with the sentence the Church has carried through every persecution: in the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, perfect tense, the night before Golgotha.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies 3.24

Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace. The Spirit and the apostolic community are not rivals to be chosen between; they are one gift with one address. Those who separate from the Church separate from the Spirit's fountain, and dig cracked cisterns of their own.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of John, on chapter 15

As the branch shares the very nature and life of the vine, so we come to share Christ's own life, and not merely by affection: through the Eucharist we are united to his very flesh, so that his life circulates in us as sap circulates in branches. Abide in me is not a mood; it is a communion, and the Church keeps it at an altar.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Catherine of Siena, The Dialogue

Catherine saw I am the way as the Bridge: the Son stretched from heaven to earth across the flood no one can ford, his wounded feet, open side, and mouth of peace as its stairs. There is no crossing except by the Bridge, and whoever tries to swim it drowns. No one comes to the Father but by me is not narrowness; it is the only architecture that spans the gap, built at the builder's expense.

Live It This Week

- **Vine time.** Ten minutes a day of pure abiding: no requests, no list, just remain. Sit with him the way a branch sits on a vine, silent and connected. Asking can come after; this week, practice staying.
- **Pray to the Person you neglect.** Once a day: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Then name one situation and hand him the case; he is your Advocate.
- **Hear your chapter at Mass.** This Sunday, listen for the priest praying: Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, peace I leave you, my peace I give you. That is the Missal's prayer built on John 14:27, prayed over you. Receive the bequest consciously for once.

Memory Verse

John 15:5 (RSV2CE)

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Before Next Session

IMPORTANT: BRING YOUR SEALED GUESS

Read John 17, 18, and 19: the great prayer and the Passion. Session 13: Behold Your Mother. And do not forget: BRING YOUR SEALED GUESS SHEET FROM WEEK ONE. Unopened. Its Passover has come, and we will open them together.

Catechism References

CCC 76-79, 245-246, 1108, 1391, 2074.

Behold Your Mother

John 17-19

What We Found

The Hour came, and we overheard the prayer: Father, glorify thy Son... for their sake I consecrate myself, the priest consecrating the victim, and the victim was himself. In a garden, hunted by men carrying lamps to find the Light of the world, he asked the Gospel's oldest question, whom do you seek, and answered their answer with the final I AM, and a cohort of armed men fell to the ground. Nothing was taken from him tonight; everything was laid down. While he said I AM inside, Peter said I am not, twice, beside a charcoal fire, and the cock crowed exactly on schedule, and John, in mercy, recorded no tears.

Then the clock we had watched for thirteen weeks struck. The accusers would not defile themselves, for they had yet to eat the passover, and on the reading the Church has long drawn from John, the lambs were not yet slain. It was the day of Preparation, about the sixth hour, noon, with the Temple slaughter still to come, and the only other sixth hour in this Gospel, when a tired man once asked a woman at a well for a drink. Behold your King, said Pilate; we have no king but Caesar, said the priests, on the day the lambs died. From the cross he gave us his mother: Woman, behold your son... behold your mother, the Woman of Cana standing at the far end of the Hour, and the disciple, unnamed, in whose place the Church has always invited us to stand, took her into his own. He said I thirst, and the sponge came up on hyssop, the branch that painted the doorposts with lamb's blood at the first Passover. He said *tetelestai*, it is finished, the completion of he loved them to the end. And they broke no bone of him, as Exodus 12:46 commands for the Passover lamb, John himself citing the rubric, and from his opened side came blood and water, the font and the chalice, the Church born from the side of the sleeping second Adam.

And we opened our guesses. Thirteen weeks sealed, and the answer had been at every Mass of our lives: the Baptist's cry, three Passovers, a flesh that must be eaten because the Passover lamb was never merely slain but eaten (Exodus 12:8), Isaiah's lamb led to the slaughter, Abraham's answer to Isaac, God will provide himself the lamb, the sixth hour, the hyssop, the unbroken bones. And at every elevation, forever: Behold the Lamb of God... blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb. The bridegroom of Cana, the bride wooed at a well, the Church born from the opened side, and the wedding feast announced over every altar on earth. The Lamb is not merely beheld. He is eaten. And Nicodemus, who first came by night, came in daylight with a hundred pounds of royal spices, and buried his King in a garden.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Melito of Sardis, On the Pascha (2nd century)

Within a lifetime of the beloved disciple's death, Melito preached the oldest surviving Easter homily: it is he who was the Passover of our salvation; he was led like a lamb and slain like a sheep; he ransomed us from the slavery of the world as from the land of Egypt. The lamb of Exodus was the sketch; the Lord is the portrait, and when the portrait arrives the sketch has done its work.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Augustine of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 120

The first Adam slept, and from his side God formed the woman; the second Adam slept upon the cross, and from his side flowed the blood and water from which his Bride, the Church, is formed. The spear, Augustine notes, did not merely strike the side but opened it, as one opens a door, and through that opened door flow the sacraments.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Mater

The disciple took her *eis ta idia*, into his own: not merely into his house, but into everything that makes up his inner life. The entrusting from the cross is mutual: the Mother given to the disciple, the disciple to the Mother, and because he stands unnamed, every disciple whom Jesus loves is invited into the same exchange. The pope whose motto was *Totus tuus* lived this entrusting as his own, and taught us to do the same.

Live It This Week

- **Behold, knowing everything.** This Sunday, when the priest raises the Host before Communion and says Behold the Lamb of God, behold: look at the Host with everything you now know, and make your Lord, I am not worthy the most honest sentence of your week. Then go to the supper of the Lamb.
- **Take her into your own.** Every day this week, pray the Memorare, or one decade of the Rosary, as your act of accepting the bequest of John 19:27. She was given to you from the cross; a week of daily hello is the least a son or daughter can do.
- **Ten minutes at the foot.** Once this week, sit before a crucifix and read John 19:25-37 slowly at its foot. Stop at the hyssop, stop at it is finished, stop at the opened side. You have never read it as the person you are now.

Memory Verse

MEMORIZE AGAIN: John 1:29 (RSV2CE)

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

You memorized this verse in Week Two, when it was a mystery. Say it every day this week, now that it is not. They are the same words; you are not the same reader.

Before Next Session

Read John 20 and 21. Session 14: That You May Believe, our final session. It begins before dawn, in the garden. Bring nothing but yourselves.

Catechism References

CCC 608, 766, 964, 1225, 2560, 2605.

That You May Believe

John 20-21

What We Found

While it was still dark, Mary Magdalene found the stone moved, and two men ran: love arrived first and waited; Peter entered first. The evidence was laundry, the linen cloths lying there and the face-cloth rolled up in a place by itself, and the beloved disciple saw and believed before any appearance had been granted. In the garden, the risen Lord took up again the question that has haunted this Gospel since its first chapter, where his first recorded words are what do you seek; to Mary he says, whom do you seek, and a weeping woman mistook him for the gardener, and her mistake, the Church has long smiled to see, told the truth: the new Adam, tending at dawn what Eden lost. He said one word, Mary, the Shepherd calling his sheep by name, and sent her as the apostle to the apostles.

That evening he gave the locked room his bequest, peace, showed the wounds his risen body still bears, and breathed on them, the only breathing of God since Genesis 2:7: receive the Holy Spirit; if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained. The Church has always heard here the institution of the sacrament of Penance: forgiveness and retention placed in apostolic hands, exercised one penitent at a time ever since (CCC 1461); the confessional stands on Easter evening's breath. Eight days later Thomas got his evidence and gave the Gospel its destination: my Lord and my God, closing the frame that opened with the Word was God, and the Lord blessed a beatitude over every reader since: blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. That is us, by name. The purpose statement turned out to be Martha's creed, spoken at a tomb four chapters early. And on a beach at dawn, beside the New Testament's second and last charcoal fire, three questions healed three denials, and the oldest promissory note in our study was paid: you shall be called Cephas became feed my sheep. Peter's boast was finally underwritten, he will stretch out his hands, and the Gospel's story ended with its first command made last: follow me. And in the Revelation tradition joins to John, the throne shows a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain. Standing. The Lamb we beheld is not a past tense.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Gregory the Great, Homilies on the Gospels, Homily 26

The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith than the belief of the other disciples, for as he touches and is convinced, our own minds are settled past doubting. It was not chance that he was absent, then doubted, then touched, then believed: the doubter's hand in the wounds healed the wound of our unbelief.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on the Gospel of John, on chapter 20

Mary Magdalene is the *apostolorum apostola*, the apostle of the apostles. As a woman first brought the words of death to a man in Eden, so a woman is first entrusted with the words of life at the tomb. The order of the fall is reversed in the order of the announcement, and the first human voice

ever to preach the resurrection was hers.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homily 88

Jesus asks nothing about the denial and exacts no accounting of the courtyard; he asks only, do you love me, because love is the qualification he examines. And the proof of love he appoints is the care of the flock: if you love me, tend my sheep. Peter's penance is a job, and the job is love made visible until his own stretched-out hands complete it.

Live It This Week

- **Receive Easter evening's gift.** Go to Confession this week. The sacrament was instituted with the second breathing of God in history, and it is spent one penitent at a time. Kneel where the breath still works, and hear the verse happen to you in the present tense: they are forgiven.
- **Make breakfast.** After forgiving and sending, the risen Lord laid a breakfast for tired friends. Host a meal this week, for this group as its celebration, or for someone who needs one. Come and have breakfast is also a spirituality.
- **Answer him.** Once this week, in silence, let him ask you the beach question by name: do you love me? Answer honestly, even if your honest word is Peter's smaller one. Then ask him whom you are being given to feed, and write down the first name that comes.

Memory Verse

John 20:29 (RSV2CE) · keep this one

Jesus said to him, Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

This is the Gospel's beatitude for its readers, and as of fourteen weeks ago, for this group by name. Carry it.

Where to Go from Here

The study is complete, and the following is not. Three roads. First, re-read the Gospel of John alone, one chapter a week, now that you can hear it; you will be astonished what fourteen weeks of ears can do. Second, the beloved disciple wrote letters in his old age to churches full of people who had not seen and yet believed, about light, abiding, and love one another; if this group wants a next chapter together, the Letters of St. John await in the companion study That You May Know. Third, and always: this Sunday, as the Host is raised before Communion, behold the Lamb of God, standing, as though slain, and answer the invitation to the supper with the strongest Amen of your life.

Catechism References

CCC 448, 553, 644-645, 881, 976, 1461.