

To Be With Him

WHAT WE FOUND

- Mark gives the appointment of the twelve two purposes, and puts them in an order: to be with him, and to be sent out to preach. The sending is real, and it is second.
- Jesus called those he desired, after a night of prayer. The choosing was his, which is both a relief and a loss of control.
- Judas is on the list. Nearness to Christ is necessary, and it never cancels anyone's freedom.
- In John 1, no named person arrives at Jesus alone. John the Baptist points, Andrew fetches Simon, Philip fetches Nathanael. The chain is made of ordinary introductions between people who already knew each other.
- Jesus's first recorded words in the Gospel of John are a question about desire: "What do you seek?" His first invitation is "Come and see."
- Philip kept his truth claim and changed the venue. What finally answered Nathanael was not an argument. It was being known.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Chrysostom on Andrew's first instinct

St. John Chrysostom, preaching his way through the Gospel of John for his congregation, teaches in substance that Andrew's very first act after his afternoon with Jesus was to go looking for his brother, and that this is simply what a heart does when it has actually received something.

That much is his. The application this study draws from it is our own, and worth keeping anyway: the impulse to share tends to follow from having received something, rather than being an extra duty laid on top of it.

St. John Chrysostom, summarized from his Homilies on the Gospel of John. This is a faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on witnesses and teachers

Pope St. Paul VI observed that people today listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and that if they do listen to teachers, it is because those teachers are also witnesses.

He was not dismissing teaching, and this study is not either. He was saying that the teaching gets a hearing through a life. That is the whole reason Movement One is about trust before Movement Two is about proclamation.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 41 (1975), restating a line from one of his own addresses the previous year.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Benedict XVI on what Christianity actually is

Pope Benedict XVI opened his first encyclical by insisting that being Christian is not the result of "an ethical choice or a lofty idea" but of an encounter with an event and a Person, an encounter that gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.

Everything in this study follows from that sentence. If what we were handing on were an idea, a good argument would be enough. It is a Person, so an introduction is required.

Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 1 (2005).

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 1 of the ladder. This week you do nothing visible at all. That is deliberate. Movement One is trust, and trust is not built by announcements.

- Write three names on the sealed page in your take-home. People you actually see, not people you admire from a distance.
- Pray for those three by name every day this week. One minute is enough. Say the names out loud.
- Tell no one that you are doing this. Especially not them.
- Notice, without acting, one moment this week when you could have said something about Christ and did not. Do not judge it. Just notice it, and bring it back next week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach."

Mark 3:14

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Luke 24:13-35 slowly, twice, before we meet again. The second time through, read it as though you are the stranger who joins the conversation on the road.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 787.** From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings.
- **CCC 542.** Christ gathers people around himself by his word, by signs of the Kingdom, and by sending out his disciples.
- **CCC 425.** The transmission of the Christian faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ, in order to lead others to faith in him.
- **CCC 429.** From the loving knowledge of Christ springs the desire to proclaim him.
- **CCC 904-907.** The baptized share in Christ's prophetic office, and the lay faithful in particular are called to it.

MY GUESS | seal this page and do not reread it

Fold this page over and staple or tape it shut. Your leader will tell you when to open it. Do not look at it again until then.

Three names

Three people God has put in front of you. Write them here and pray for them by name every day of this study.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

One honest line

What do you think actually stops you from speaking about Jesus to these three? Guess now. You will find out later whether you were right.

He Walked With Them

WHAT WE FOUND

- The risen Christ joined two disciples on a seven mile walk and listened while they explained his own death to him incorrectly.
- Their facts were almost all right. The break was in verse 21, "we had hoped." The problem was a collapsed frame, not missing information.
- He did correct them, and sharply. But the rebuke lands in verse 25, which is after the question, after the long speech, and inside a conversation they had begun to want.
- He did not add new facts. He re-narrated the ones they already had, until the cross stopped being the thing that ruined the story and became the thing the story was about.
- He appeared to be going further. He would not come in until they asked, and they had to press him.
- They knew him in the breaking of the bread, and he vanished. The road was never meant to end with them attached to their companion. It moves them on to the table, and then to the road back to Jerusalem that same hour.
- They recognised the burning in their hearts and said so afterward; Luke does not tell us what either of them thought during the walk.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the hospitality that opened their eyes

Preaching in the Easter season, St. Augustine teaches in substance that these two did not recognize the Lord while he expounded the Scriptures to them, but recognized him when they received him as a guest. In welcoming a stranger, they welcomed the one they were mourning.

The pastoral edge he presses is that hospitality is not a preliminary to the encounter. It is where the encounter happened.

St. Augustine, summarized from his Easter season sermons on this passage. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on the art of accompaniment

Pope Francis wrote that the Church has to initiate all her members, priests, religious, and laity, into this "art of accompaniment," and that the one who accompanies must learn to remove his sandals before the sacred ground of the other person.

In the same passage he says the pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring. What this study makes of that is our own application rather than his wording: accompaniment that is impatient, or that is really about the accompanier, has stopped being accompaniment.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 169 (2013).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Gregory the Great on charity before understanding

Preaching on this Gospel, St. Gregory the Great teaches in substance that the two disciples did not yet believe, and yet they offered hospitality, and that it was in the doing of that charity that they came to know the one they had been talking about all afternoon.

His conclusion, put in his own pastoral register, is that we should not wait to understand before we love, because love is frequently the road by which understanding arrives.

St. Gregory the Great, summarized from his Forty Gospel Homilies. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 2 of the ladder. One unhurried conversation. Still nothing announced, still nothing steered.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Have one conversation this week with one of the three that you do not steer. Ask one real question about their life and then stop talking. Aim to listen for longer than is comfortable.
- Do not bring up faith. If they bring it up, follow them, and still do not steer.
- Afterward, write down one sentence: what is the frame they are holding their life inside? Bring that sentence, not the person's name, back next week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Jesus himself drew near and went with them."

Luke 24:15

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Mark 2:13-17 and Luke 15:1-2 before we meet. Both are short. Read them twice, and the second time, read them from the point of view of the people doing the complaining.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 1347.** The movement of the Eucharistic liturgy follows the movement of the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus.
- **CCC 1346.** The liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist form one single act of worship.
- **CCC 108.** Christianity is the religion of the Word of God, a Word not written and mute but incarnate and living.
- **CCC 601.** The plan of salvation through the death of the righteous servant was announced in advance in the Scriptures.
- **CCC 112.** Read the Scriptures within the unity of the whole of Scripture.

Why Does He Eat With Sinners?

WHAT WE FOUND

- The order in Mark 2 is the argument: Jesus calls Levi, then eats in his house with many tax collectors and sinners, and only then does the complaint arrive. Repentance was not the price of admission to that table.
- The objectors did not ask Jesus. They asked his disciples. The objection to Christ usually arrives at the friend.
- The physician saying concedes the diagnosis and refuses the inference. Jesus agrees they are sick, and points out that sick people are who a doctor is for. Nearness is not endorsement.
- In Luke 15 the accusation "this man receives sinners and eats with them" becomes the heading over the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. His critics summarized the Gospel better than they knew.
- In Matthew's version Jesus answers the objection by assigning reading: Hosea 6:6, an oracle rebuking Ephraim and Judah for a covenant love like a morning cloud, which Jesus turns on the Pharisees.
- The standard never moved. The same Gospel has him at Levi's table and teaching hard things about the heart and about marriage. Correction is ordinarily heard far better inside a relationship of trust, though parents, pastors and prophets legitimately correct without it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Chrysostom on who the Church is for

Preaching on St. Matthew's Gospel, St. John Chrysostom teaches in substance that Christ's answer to the objectors turns the whole charge around: a physician found among the sick is not thereby under accusation; the sick are the reason he came at all.

That much is his. The application this study draws is our own: a person who stays away because they feel unworthy has misunderstood what kind of house it is.

St. John Chrysostom, summarized from his Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on medicine and prizes

Pope Francis wrote that the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak, and that the Church is not a tollhouse.

Read this alongside what the Church also teaches, because the paragraph is often quoted with the second half cut off. The Church's discipline that a person conscious of grave sin must receive sacramental absolution before communion is unchanged (CCC 1385; and see St. Paul at 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 for the biblical warning about unworthy reception, which is a distinct point). The application of this paragraph is genuinely debated among faithful Catholics. What is not debated is the pastoral posture: no one is refused welcome, pastoral care, or the call to conversion because their life is a mess, even though sacramental discipline remains in force.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 47 (2013), read together with CCC 1385.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on a Church that holds sinners close

The Council taught that the Church, clasping sinners to her bosom, is at once holy and always in need of purification, and that she constantly follows the path of penance and renewal.

This is the sentence that keeps tonight honest in both directions. It does not say the Church tolerates sin. It says she holds sinners close, and that every one of her members has to reckon with his own need for purification.

Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium 8 (1964); see also CCC 827.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 3 of the ladder. From listening to hospitality. This week you share a meal, and you pay.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Eat with one of the three this week. A real meal or a real coffee, sitting down, an hour if you can get it.
- Go with no agenda at all. No steering, no opening, no plan for how faith might come up. If it comes up, follow it and stay honest.
- Pay. Do not make anything of it.
- Afterward, ask yourself one question: was I with them, or was I working on them? Bring the answer, not the person, back next week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 2:17

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read John 4:1-42 before we meet, all of it, in one sitting. It is long, and reading it in pieces will cost you the shape of the conversation.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 588.** Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as with themselves.
- **CCC 545.** Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom, and invites them to the conversion without which one cannot enter it.
- **CCC 1443.** Jesus receiving sinners at his table signifies both God's forgiveness and their reinstatement into the People of God.
- **CCC 1385.** Anyone conscious of grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.
- **CCC 2447.** The spiritual works of mercy, including instructing, advising, consoling, and forgiving.
- **CCC 827.** The Church, holding sinners close, is at once holy and always in need of purification (see Lumen Gentium 8).

Give Me a Drink

WHAT WE FOUND

- Jesus had to pass through Samaria, sat down tired at noon, and opened the conversation by asking her for something he had no means to draw.
- She named the barriers herself: a Jew asking a Samaritan, a man asking a woman. The narrator added a third. Jesus crossed all of them by asking a favor.
- She deflected twice and he never chased the deflection. He raised the stakes each time until she followed, and at verse 15 she asked him for the water.
- Only then, at verse 16, did he name her situation. One statement of fact, no adjective, no verdict, and he never mentioned it again.
- The text does not tell us her moral history. A woman could not ordinarily initiate a divorce herself in that world. We fill that gap in; the evangelist did not.
- When she escaped into a theological controversy, he answered it seriously, and not softly, and then moved through it rather than letting it become a hiding place.
- The first time Jesus plainly tells anyone in this Gospel that he is the Messiah, he tells her, alone, at a well.
- She evangelized with an invitation and a question, from inside what she actually knew. And the town ended up believing because of him rather than because of her, which is what a bridge is for.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on who was really thirsty

St. Augustine, preaching through the Gospel of John, teaches in substance that the one who asked for a drink was thirsting for her faith. He asked for water and he was seeking the woman.

The Catechism makes the same move at CCC 2560, where it says that Christ is the first to ask for a drink and that his thirst arises from the depths of God's desire for us. If you take only one image away from this session, take that one: the conversation opened because he wanted something, and what he wanted was her.

St. Augustine, summarized from his Tractates on the Gospel of John. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on where the word comes in

Pope Francis described person to person evangelization as beginning with personal dialogue, in which the other person speaks first and shares their joys, hopes, and worries about the people they love, and said that only afterward is it possible to bring up God's word.

That is the order in John 4, put in modern words. He also insists in the same passage that the word does eventually get brought up, which is why this study has a Movement Three.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 128 (2013).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Eastern tradition on the woman at the well

The Eastern churches have long honored this woman as an evangelist and martyr under the name Photini, "the enlightened

one," with a body of tradition holding that she preached and died for the faith. The Syriac tradition, associated with St. Ephrem, dwells on her as the one who carried the news back into the city.

Take it exactly as it stands: a venerable tradition rather than something St. John reports. The Gospel tells us that many believed in Jesus because of her testimony, and that the town then came to him themselves. The tradition tells us the Church never forgot her.

Eastern liturgical tradition, honoring her as St. Photini. Tradition, not Scripture, and offered as such.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 4 of the ladder. One question that goes a layer deeper than you normally go, and then silence.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- With one of them this week, ask one question that goes one layer past where you usually stop. Not about faith. About their life, what they are carrying, what they actually hope for.
- Then stop talking. Do not fill the pause, do not solve it, and do not attach anything to it.
- If they deflect, do not chase it. Notice where they went, and let them stay there.
- Write down afterward: what did they ask for, if anything? Bring that back next week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?"

John 4:29

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Acts 17:16-34 before we meet, in one sitting.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 2560.** Christ comes to meet every human being beside the well, and he is the first to ask for a drink.
- **CCC 2561.** Our prayer is a response to the living God who thirsts for us.
- **CCC 728.** Jesus alludes to the Holy Spirit in speaking with the Samaritan woman.
- **CCC 694.** Water as a symbol of the Spirit's action in Baptism.
- **CCC 839.** The relationship of the Church with the Jewish people, behind "salvation is from the Jews."

To an Unknown God

WHAT WE FOUND

- Paul was provoked by what he saw in Athens, and none of it showed up in what he said. He felt strongly and spoke carefully.
- He reasoned in the synagogue and spoke in the marketplace daily, and the first review he got was contempt: they called him a seed picker.
- He opened from something in their own city, an altar to an unknown god, which he had found by walking around and paying attention.
- He argued from creation, from human dependence, from the universal search, and from their own poets. He never quoted the Old Testament once.
- He quoted Aratus accurately. The other line, traditionally credited to Epimenides, is less securely attributed, and saying so is part of the discipline.
- He landed on repentance commanded of everyone, a fixed day of judgment, an appointed judge, and a bodily resurrection. The poets gave him a point of contact, not a discount.
- Three responses followed: mockery, deferral, and faith. Luke names two of the converts. A mixed result like that is common in Acts, and is not by itself a failure.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Justin Martyr on the seeds of the Word

St. Justin Martyr, writing to defend Christians before a pagan public, teaches in substance that the Word who became flesh in Christ has scattered seeds of himself throughout the human race, so that whatever has been said well by anyone at all belongs by right to Christians.

This is the theological ground under Paul quoting Aratus. Justin does not treat pagan philosophy as equivalent to the fullness of revelation. He does go further than we might expect: at First Apology 46 he says that those who lived according to the Logos, naming Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks, were in a qualified sense Christians. His claim is that truth wherever it is found has one owner.

St. Justin Martyr, summarized from his Second Apology, with the seeds-of-the-Logos material conventionally located at chapters 8, 10 and 13, and First Apology 46 for the Logos and the philosophers. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation; the Second Apology chapter divisions are editorial and vary between editions.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on what the Church does not reject

The Council taught that the Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions, and regards with sincere reverence those ways of acting and living, and those precepts and teachings, which often reflect a ray of the Truth that enlightens all people.

Read the next clause too, because it is the one that gets dropped: the Council says this while announcing without ceasing that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, in whom God has reconciled all things to himself. Paul does exactly this in one speech. He takes the altar seriously as a point of contact, and then tells them to repent.

Second Vatican Council, Nostra Aetate 2 (1965).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Paul II on the modern Areopagus

St. John Paul II took this scene as a working image for the Church's situation now, writing that the first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications, and naming others: the commitment to peace, the rights of the person, the development of peoples, culture, and scientific research.

His point is that an Areopagus is any place where a culture does its actual thinking, and that the Church has to go and stand in it rather than waiting for it to come to the parish hall. Ask where your own Areopagus is. Most of us work in one.

St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio 37 (1990).

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 5 of the ladder. Find the altar. This week you go looking for what somebody already has.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Ask one of the three what they actually believe about God, or about what happens when we die, or about what makes a life good. Ask as though you do not already know the answer, because you probably do not.
- Do not correct anything. Not one thing, not even gently.
- Afterward, write down one thing they said that is true, and that you could affirm honestly and without strategy. If you cannot find one, that is a finding too; bring it back.
- Optional, and worth it: spend twenty minutes with something they love. A show, a podcast, a book, a band. Paul knew their poetry.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"That they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us."

Acts 17:27

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read John 9 before we meet, the whole chapter in one sitting. As you read, keep a running note of every time the man says he does not know something.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 27.** The desire for God is written in the human heart.
- **CCC 32.** From the order and beauty of the world one can come to knowledge of God as origin and end.
- **CCC 36.** God can be known with certainty from created things by the natural light of human reason.
- **CCC 28.** People have expressed their quest for God throughout history, in ways that are sometimes ambiguous.
- **CCC 843.** The Church recognizes in other religions a search, among shadows and images, for the God who is unknown yet near.
- **CCC 856.** Missionary work requires respectful dialogue, and does not stop there.

One Thing I Know

WHAT WE FOUND

- The disciples looked at a blind man and saw a theological puzzle. Jesus refused both of their options and did not replace them with a tidy third.
- He made clay, and sent the man to a pool whose name St. John stops to translate: Siloam means Sent. The man's first act of obedience was to walk somewhere with mud on his face, on the word of someone he had never seen.
- His confession climbed steadily under pressure: a man called Jesus, a prophet, one who must be from God, and finally Lord.
- What he could actually report stayed thin. He did not know where Jesus was, did not know whether Jesus was a sinner, and did not know who Jesus was until after he had already been thrown out for him.
- His strength was staying inside what he actually knew. "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I know."
- He argued and he won, using only his own experience and premises he offers as shared religious knowledge. Nobody in the Old Testament ever opened the eyes of a man born blind, which is exactly his point in verse 32.
- When the argument failed, they attacked his credentials and threw him out. And Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and went and found him.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Irenaeus on the clay

St. Irenaeus teaches in substance that the same hand which formed man from the dust of the earth at the beginning is the hand that made clay and completed what was missing in this man's eyes, so that the healing shows the Creator finishing his own work rather than mending another's.

His larger argument is aimed at those who said the God of creation and the Father of Jesus Christ were two different Gods. The clay is his evidence: the one who made the eyes is the one who opened them.

St. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 5.15.2. A faithful summary of his argument, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on a confession that grows

Preaching through this Gospel, St. Augustine teaches in substance that the man's confession climbs by stages, from a man called Jesus, to a prophet, to one who must be from God, to Lord, and that the light came into his heart more slowly than it came into his eyes.

He also dwells on St. John's gloss that Siloam means Sent, and takes it as pointing to Christ himself, the one sent by the Father, in whom the man is washed.

St. Augustine, summarized from his Tractates on the Gospel of John. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on witness, and on its limits

Pope St. Paul VI taught that the Gospel must first be proclaimed by witness, by a life that raises unavoidable questions in the people who see it: why are they like this, what or who is it that inspires them.

And then he said the part that is usually left out. Even the finest witness remains insufficient by itself, because the good news

must eventually be proclaimed in words, and the name and the teaching and the life and the promises and the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth have to be announced. The man born blind is exactly this: something happened to him, and then he had to open his mouth about it.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 21 and 22 (1975).

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 6 of the ladder. Write your one sentence. This is the first rung where something of yours goes on paper.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Write one sentence: "One thing I know..." No theology, no argument, no verse. What has actually happened to you because of Jesus Christ. If it takes more than two lines, it is not finished yet.
- Practice saying it out loud, alone, until it does not sound rehearsed. This is not silly. Most people have never once said such a sentence aloud.
- Then find the honest limits of it. Write down two questions you would not be able to answer if someone pushed back on your sentence. Do not go and research them yet. Just name them.
- Bring the sentence next week. You will not be made to read it out.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"One thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see."

John 9:25

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Acts 2:1-41 before we meet. It is long, so give it one unhurried sitting. Pay attention to what Peter actually says, in what order.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 905.** Lay people fulfill their prophetic mission by proclaiming Christ in both the testimony of life and the spoken word.
- **CCC 2471.** Christ came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and the Christian is not to be ashamed of testifying to the Lord.
- **CCC 2472.** The duty to bear witness to the Gospel in words and deeds, which is a transmission of the faith.
- **CCC 1502.** Illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil, and suffering can also have a redemptive meaning.
- **CCC 309.** There is no quick answer to the question of evil.
- **CCC 597.** Responsibility for the death of Jesus cannot be laid on the Jews of Jerusalem as a whole, nor on Jews of other times and places.

Cut to the Heart

WHAT WE FOUND

- The first Christian sermon is above all a proclamation of events, read through Scripture and argued as a case. No command about how to respond arrives before verse 38.
- Verse 23 holds two things together without resolving them: God's definite plan, and real human guilt. The Catechism holds the same two, and then turns the charge toward Christians, because our sins are involved.
- Peter argued rather than asserted. He argued from David's prophetic office, a text his hearers revered, a tomb publicly known among them, and the apostles' own eyewitness testimony.
- Roughly a third of the sermon is Old Testament quotation, and every quotation is load bearing. Paul at Athens quoted no Old Testament passage, though he did quote Greek poets. Same Gospel, two toolkits, chosen by audience.
- They were cut to the heart, and then they asked, "Brethren, what shall we do?" The demand came out of the crowd before it came out of the Apostle. That is now the third time in this study we have seen that order.
- Peter's answer was concrete and sacramental: repent, be baptized every one of you, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then he kept urging them.
- The Church proposes and imposes nothing. Both halves are binding: no pressure, and an actual proposal.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Paul II on proposing without imposing

St. John Paul II wrote that the Church proposes and imposes nothing, that she respects persons and cultures, and that she honors the sanctuary of conscience.

Read the sentence in both directions before you use it. It forbids coercion, manipulation, and improper inducement, while leaving respectful persuasion entirely intact. It also assumes that a proposal is actually made. Refusing to propose anything is not reverence for another person's conscience; it leaves the conscience with nothing to work on.

St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio 39 (1990).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Cyril of Jerusalem on what happens in the water

Instructing candidates preparing for Baptism, St. Cyril of Jerusalem teaches in substance that what takes place in the font is not a symbol standing in for something absent, but a real death and a real birth, and that the water and the Spirit belong together and are not to be separated.

This is why Peter's answer in verse 38 is not a formality tacked onto a conversion that had already happened. The answer to "what shall we do" is a sacrament.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, summarized from his catechetical instructions to those preparing for Baptism. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on the content of the first announcement

Pope Francis wrote that the Church has rediscovered the central place of the first announcement, and gave its content in a single line: Jesus Christ loves you, he gave his life to save you, and he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen,

and free you.

He adds that this announcement is not one stage among others that we graduate from. It is the first in a qualitative sense, and it has to be heard again and again through every stage of catechesis. Nobody has outgrown it, however long they have been at this.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 164 (2013).

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 7 of the ladder. The hinge of the whole ladder. Six weeks of listening, and now you say one sentence out loud to another human being.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Say your "one thing I know" sentence out loud to one of the three, this week. One sentence. Not the Gospel, not an argument, not an invitation yet.
- Do not build up to it and do not explain it afterward. Say it, and then let the silence be theirs.
- If they ask a question, answer honestly, including "I do not know" where that is the honest answer.
- If the moment does not come, do not manufacture one. Bring that back next week; it is a real report and there are six sessions left.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?"

Acts 2:37

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Acts 9:1-22 before we meet. Read it twice. The second time, read it paying attention only to Ananias.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 731.** At Pentecost, Christ's Passover is fulfilled in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
- **CCC 1226.** From the day of Pentecost the Church has celebrated and administered Baptism.
- **CCC 1427.** The call to conversion is an essential part of the proclamation of the kingdom.
- **CCC 597.** No collective guilt for the death of Jesus may be laid on the Jewish people, in that generation or any other.
- **CCC 598.** The Church imputes to Christians the heaviest responsibility for the sufferings of Christ, because our sins are involved.
- **CCC 599-600.** The death of Jesus belongs to God's plan, and that plan includes each person's free response to grace.

Brother Saul

WHAT WE FOUND

- Saul was not seeking, not curious, and not at a low point. He was on a trip to arrest people. Any theory of evangelization that requires openness first has to explain this chapter.
- The voice said "why do you persecute me." Not my followers, not my Church. Christ counted an assault on his people as an assault on himself.
- The risen Christ, having appeared in person, refused to say what Saul should do next, and sent him into the city to wait for a man.
- Saul was shown Ananias coming before Ananias had agreed to go. Both ends were arranged, and the obedience of a frightened disciple was inside the arrangement rather than outside it.
- Ananias said "Here I am," then heard the name and argued. God did not tell him he would be safe and did not minimize the danger. He did explain: Saul is a chosen instrument who will carry the name before Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel, and he will suffer for it. That is explanation without reassurance.
- The first word the Church said to its persecutor was "Brother," and Christ chose to have a disciple say it rather than saying it himself.
- Ananias does not appear again in the narrative of Acts, surfacing once more only when Paul retells the story at Acts 22:12-16. His whole recorded part was to walk to a house he did not want to enter, call the man brother, lay hands on him, and baptize him.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the head and the members

St. Augustine teaches in substance that when the Lord asked Saul why he was persecuting him, no one had touched him in heaven; it was his body on earth that was being struck, and the head cried out for the members.

From this he draws the conclusion the Church has held ever since: Christ and his Church together make up the whole Christ, so that what is done to the least member is done to him. The Catechism states the same doctrine at CCC 795.

St. Augustine, summarized from his sermons and scriptural commentary. A faithful summary of a theme he returns to often, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Benedict XVI on what happened to Saul

In his catecheses on St. Paul, Pope Benedict XVI argued in substance that what took place on that road is badly described as a moral improvement. Saul was not a scoundrel who reformed; he was a serious, observant, zealous man who was overturned by a Person.

He pointed to how Paul himself describes it: not that he found Christ, but that Christ Jesus made him his own, took hold of him. Grace was not the reward for a search. It interrupted one that was headed the wrong way.

Pope Benedict XVI, summarized from his general audience catecheses on St. Paul (2008-2009); the scriptural anchor is Philippians 3:12.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Council of Trent on where any of this starts

Against the charge that Catholics believe we start the work of our own salvation, the Council of Trent taught in its decree on justification that the beginning of justification is derived from the prevenient grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from

his call, by which people are called with no existing merits of their own.

Keep this in your pocket. It is the Church's formal statement of exactly what Acts 9 dramatizes: the movement begins on God's side, every time, and a person who is running the wrong way can be called anyway.

Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, Session 6 (1547). Document-level citation; no chapter number given.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 8 of the ladder. Do the errand. Ananias's whole contribution was walking to a house.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Name the one small concrete thing you have been avoiding with one of them. The message you have not sent, the visit you have not made, the apology you owe, the invitation you keep almost extending.
- Do it this week. Not a bigger version of it. That one.
- Before you go, say the fear out loud to God, in plain words, the way Ananias did. Do not tidy it up first.
- **Bring your sealed page from Take-Home 1 next week. Still sealed.**

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel."

Acts 9:15

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Mark 10:17-27 and 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 before we meet. Both are short. And bring your sealed page from the first week, still sealed.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 795.** Christ and his Church together make up the whole Christ.
- **CCC 153.** Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.
- **CCC 1996.** Grace is the free and undeserved help God gives us to respond to his call.
- **CCC 2001.** The preparation of a person for grace is already the work of grace.
- **CCC 2002.** God's free initiative demands a free human response.

He Looked at Him and Loved Him

WHAT WE FOUND

- The man ran and knelt, asked the best question in the Gospel, and had kept the commandments from his youth. St. Mark gives us no reason to think he was insincere. St. Mark presents him sympathetically and gives us no reason to think he is lying, and he still said no.
- St. Mark tells us that Jesus looked at him and loved him, and it is the only time in this Gospel we are told he loved a particular person. The love and the demand are in the same sentence, and the love comes first.
- Jesus named one thing lacking and then asked for everything, and he did not negotiate any part of it.
- When the man left, Jesus did not call after him, soften the terms, offer a smaller version, or follow him down the road. The most important verb in the passage is the one that is missing.
- What he did instead was turn to the disciples and say that with men it is impossible, but not with God. He treated a refusal as an occasion for hope in God rather than as a closed file.
- St. Paul says in five verses that neither planter nor waterer is what gives the growth, and that they are God's fellow workers who each receive wages according to their labour. Both are true, and the second is not diminished by the first. You are not the principal cause, and you are not decoration.
- St. Augustine, quoted in the Catechism: God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us.
- Isaiah was commissioned knowing in advance that the people would hear without understanding, and the last word of that commission is that the holy seed is in the stump.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on faith that cannot be forced

The Council taught that a person's response to God in faith must be free, that nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will, and that the act of faith is by its very nature a free act.

And it grounded this not in modern sensibilities but in Christ's own conduct: he invited people to faith and conversion, and never coerced them; he bore witness to the truth and refused to impose it by force on those who spoke against it. The Catechism gathers all of this at CCC 160. Mark 10:22 is what that looks like in practice.

Second Vatican Council, Dignitatis Humanae 10 and 11 (1965), as gathered at CCC 160.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the one line that resolves tonight

God created us without us, St. Augustine said, but he did not will to save us without us.

That sentence is the answer to the question this study has been carrying since Session 1. Our existence required nothing from us. Our salvation is entirely initiated and enabled by grace, and it is not applied to us over our heads: even the free response it asks for is itself grace-assisted. The Catechism thought this important enough to quote it directly.

St. Augustine, Sermon 169, quoted at CCC 1847.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Monica, and a bishop who was tired of her

St. Augustine records in his Confessions that his mother pressed a bishop with her weeping and her requests that he argue with her son, until the bishop, a little displeased at her importunity, told her to go her way and said that it was not possible

that the son of such tears should perish.

Augustine adds that she took those words as though they had sounded from heaven. He was not converted for years afterward. Note the timeline: she prayed, and wept, and waited, and it was a very long time, and she did not know when or how it would come.

St. Augustine, Confessions III.12.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 9 of the ladder. Pray for the one who has already said no. This rung has no visible action in it at all, and that is the point of the session.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Add one more this week: someone who has already heard, already understood, and already declined. Pray for them by name every day.
- Do not contact them about it. Not this week.
- Write your new sealed line somewhere you will see it. The real fear, now that you have named it.
- Once this week, say to God in plain words: I am not the cause, and I am not optional. Then go and do the small next thing anyway.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

1 Corinthians 3:6

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Acts 2:42-47 before we meet. It is six verses. Read it three times, and read it slowly.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 306.** God makes use of his creatures' cooperation, granting them the dignity of being causes and principles for each other.
- **CCC 307.** God gives human beings the power of freely sharing in his providence.
- **CCC 1847.** God created us without us, but he did not will to save us without us.
- **CCC 160.** The act of faith is of its very nature free, and Christ never coerced anyone.
- **CCC 1730.** God created us rational, with the dignity of initiating and controlling our own actions.
- **CCC 2002.** God's free initiative demands a free human response.

They Devoted Themselves

WHAT WE FOUND

- Four things, and they are precise: the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers. Not the teaching of whoever led you to Christ. Not a coffee hour. Not prayer in general, but the appointed prayers at customary hours.
- "The breaking of the bread" is the early Christian expression the Church reads Eucharistically, used at the end of the Emmaus road and at the Sunday gathering in Acts 20. The Catechism cites this verse when it names the Eucharist.
- The sharing of possessions was real and costly, and it was voluntary. Acts 5:4 settles that. The Church holds both the universal destination of goods and the legitimacy of private property, and puts the binding claim sharply: not to let the poor share in our goods is to steal from them.
- They met in two places, daily. The temple and their homes. Not one instead of the other.
- The Lord added to their number. He works through the apostles' preaching and the community's life, and he is the one who adds.
- The favor with all the people did not last. Within a few chapters there is fear, and then persecution.
- Nehemiah 8 shows an anticipatory shape centuries earlier: the word read and explained, festive eating, portions sent to anyone for whom nothing was prepared, and great rejoicing.
- The destination of your friendship is not you. If someone says yes and there is nowhere to put them, the work is only half done.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Justin Martyr describes a Sunday, around the year 155

Writing to a pagan emperor to explain what Christians actually do, St. Justin Martyr describes the Sunday assembly: everyone in the towns and the countryside gathers in one place; the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time allows; the one presiding gives a talk urging imitation of these good things; all stand and pray; bread and wine and water are brought; the president offers prayers and thanksgiving; the people give their assent by saying Amen; the gifts are distributed, and deacons carry them to those who are absent. Then those who are prosperous give what they wish, and the collection is used for orphans, widows, the sick, prisoners, and strangers.

Read that list against Acts 2:42, and then against last Sunday. The same essential elements are still visibly present roughly a century after St. Luke wrote. Do not claim they appear in Acts 2:42's order; Justin's sequence runs readings and exhortation, prayers, Eucharist, then the collection.

St. Justin Martyr, First Apology, chapters 65 to 67 (c. AD 155).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Benedict XVI on three things that cannot be separated

Pope Benedict XVI wrote that the Church's deepest nature is expressed in a threefold responsibility: proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other, he said, and cannot be separated from one another.

That is Acts 2:42 to 45 stated as a principle. A community that preaches and does not serve, or serves and does not worship, has not chosen a specialty. It has lost something.

Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est 25 (2005).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Chrysostom on whose goods they are

Not to enable the poor to share in our goods, St. John Chrysostom said, is to steal from them and to deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.

The Catechism quotes him in exactly those words. Keep it in view before anyone gets comfortable calling verses 44 and 45 a first-century experiment that does not apply.

St. John Chrysostom, quoted at CCC 2446.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 10 of the ladder. From conversation to a room. This week you bring somebody somewhere.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Invite one of them into something with other believers in it. A meal at your house with Catholic friends, a parish event, a service project, a Sunday Mass you go to together. A room, not a conversation.
- Go with them. Do not send them, do not meet them there, and do not leave them standing alone at any point.
- Do not apologise for being Catholic or for bringing them. Notice how strong the urge is.
- Afterward, write down who spoke to them that was not you. Bring the number back next week, whatever it is.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Acts 2:42

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Galatians 4:19, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, 2 Timothy 2:2, and Acts 18:24-28 before we meet. All four are short. Read the Acts passage last, and read it twice.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 949.** The Catechism opens its subsection on communion in spiritual goods by quoting Acts 2:42.
- **CCC 953.** Communion in charity: nothing any of us does is done in isolation.
- **CCC 1329.** "The breaking of bread" among the names of the Eucharist.
- **CCC 2178.** The Sunday assembly of the faithful, traced to the earliest Christians.
- **CCC 2446.** Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them.
- **CCC 2402-2406.** The universal destination of goods together with the legitimacy of private property.

TAKE-HOME 11 | COME AND SEE

Until Christ Is Formed in You

WHAT WE FOUND

- St. Paul describes his pastoral work with the word for labor pains, and adds "again." He had already done it once with the Galatians and was doing it a second time.
- The goal he names is not agreement or membership but "until Christ be formed in you." What is produced is not a copy of the person doing the forming.
- In six verses he compares himself to a nursing mother and to a father. He shared not only the gospel but himself, and gave the reason: they had become very dear to him. And they worked night and day so as not to be a financial burden.
- 2 Timothy 2:2 is four generations deep in one sentence, and the verb is entrust, from the same family as the word for a deposit left for safekeeping. The criteria are faithfulness and the ability to hand it on. No number appears anywhere in the verse.
- Apollos was eloquent, well versed, fervent, and accurate, and his knowledge was still incomplete: he knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila took him aside privately, and St. Luke names Priscilla first. No public correction, no letter, no attempt to silence him.
- That same Apollos went on to Corinth, and is the Apollos of "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." Luke records one quiet conversation between two tentmakers and a brilliant preacher, and its fruit turns up in a letter read ever since.
- In Deuteronomy 21:17 a double portion is the firstborn son's inheritance. On that reading Elisha appears to be asking for recognition as Elijah's heir rather than simply for twice the power.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Rule of St. Benedict on adapting to the person in front of you

In its chapter on the abbot, the Rule of St. Benedict teaches in substance that one who is given charge of souls must adapt himself to many characters, coaxing one, reproving another, persuading another, and that he must accommodate himself to each according to what that person actually is.

The principle is fifteen centuries old and it is the opposite of a one-size-fits-all application of a curriculum; the Rule itself supplies a structured common programme. What forms one person will not form the next, and the person doing the forming has to change shape rather than expecting the other to.

The Rule of St. Benedict, chapter 2, on the qualities of the abbot. A faithful summary, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on the test of whether it worked

Pope St. Paul VI wrote that the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others, and he called this the test of truth and the touchstone of evangelization. It is unthinkable, he said, that someone should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming someone who bears witness to it and proclaims it in turn.

That is 2 Timothy 2:2 stated as a criterion. Formation should ordinarily dispose people to hand on what they received, while respecting their freedom and their circumstances.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 24 (1975).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the conversation he could not get

In the Confessions, St. Augustine describes wanting to pour out his troubles to St. Ambrose and repeatedly being unable to obtain the sustained private conversation he wanted. The bishop was besieged by people with needs, and in the little time he had free he was reading or resting, and Augustine could not bring himself to interrupt. The long private conversation he wanted never came about, though he did have some contact with him.

And he was formed anyway, by hearing the man preach and by watching how he handled the Scriptures. That indirect presence and observation can form a person is the inference this study draws from his account. This is worth holding onto by anyone convinced they are failing because they cannot get the ideal one to one time. Sometimes the formation is happening in the parts you are not counting.

St. Augustine, Confessions VI.3-4.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 11 of the ladder. Hand something over. This week you deliberately make yourself less central.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Introduce one of the three to another believer who is not you, and then get out of the way. A dinner, an introduction after Mass, a text that puts two people in touch.
- Then leave it alone for a week. Do not check on it, do not ask how it went, and notice what that costs you.
- Separately: name one person you could hand this study to. Someone faithful, who would be able to lead it for others. Write the name down.
- And if there is someone who formed you, tell them this week. Many never learn what their care produced.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!"

Galatians 4:19

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 10:1-20 before we meet. Read the Mark passage slowly, and pay close attention to what the healed man asks for at the very end of it.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 426.** At the heart of catechesis we find a Person, the Person of Jesus Christ.
- **CCC 427.** It is Christ alone who teaches; anyone else teaches only as his spokesman, and must let Christ teach through him.
- **CCC 5.** Catechesis aims at initiating the hearer into the fullness of Christian life.
- **CCC 900.** The laity have the obligation and the right to work so that the message of salvation is known and accepted.
- **CCC 1656-1657.** The family is the domestic church, and parents are the first heralds of the faith.
- **CCC 2226.** Parents are to teach their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.

Go Home to Your Friends

WHAT WE FOUND

- A town found a man clothed and in his right mind, and asked the healer to leave. Some of the people we pray for are inside arrangements where a real change would cost other people something.
- The healed man asked one thing: that he might be with Jesus. In St. Mark's Greek it is the same construction used in Mark 3:14, singular instead of plural, where the Twelve were appointed to be with him. He asked for exactly what they were given.
- And Jesus refused him. Not to give him something smaller, but something harder: go home to your friends and tell them what the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you.
- He was told to say what the Lord had done for him and the mercy shown him: the before and after of his own life. And he went and proclaimed it in Gentile territory, and everyone marveled.
- Jesus said "the Lord." The man said "Jesus." St. Mark records the change and says nothing about it.
- The seventy were sent ahead of Christ into places he was already coming to. You are not carrying him into a place his grace has not preceded you.
- The first command in the sending is not go. It is pray for more laborers.
- Even to a town that refuses, the last word they are told to say is still the announcement: know this, that the kingdom of God has come near. Verse 12 then follows with a warning of judgment.
- They came back rejoicing at their results, and he redirected them: rejoice instead that your names are written in heaven.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on where the laity are sent

The Council taught that the laity live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very fabric of their existence is woven, that they are called there by God, and that by exercising their own proper function, led by the spirit of the Gospel, they work for the sanctification of the world from within, like leaven.

From within. The Council is describing the distinctive secular character of the lay vocation: they are called in the ordinary circumstances where they already live. It does not thereby exclude other legitimate forms of lay apostolate. That is Mark 5:19 in conciliar language.

Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium 31 (1964).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on how much training this requires

Pope Francis wrote that every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus, and that we should no longer speak of ourselves as disciples and missionaries as though these were two stages, but as missionary disciples.

And then the line that describes the man in the tombs exactly: anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim it. The man in Mark 5 had known Jesus for perhaps an hour.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 120 (2013).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Henry Newman on a mission that is yours

God has created me, wrote St. John Henry Newman, to do him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission.

He goes on to say that he may never know what it is in this life, but that he will be told it in the next, and that he is a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. This is for anyone who has spent twelve weeks quietly suspecting that the real work belongs to somebody else.

St. John Henry Newman, Meditations and Devotions, from the meditation on hope in God the Creator. Work-level citation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 12 of the ladder. Go home. Tell somebody who knew you before.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Tell one person who knew you before what the Lord has done for you. Not doctrine, not an invitation, and not an argument. The before and the after.
- Keep it to what they can verify. They watched the first half; that is your credential.
- If they laugh, or change the subject, or bring up something you did at twenty, let it go and stay in the room. Do not defend yourself.
- **Next week is the last session.** Bring your three names, written out again from memory if you have lost the sealed page.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

Mark 5:19

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:1-11, and John 20:19-23 before we meet. All three are short. Next week is our last session, so bring your three names, written out again from memory if you have lost the sealed page.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 851.** The source of missionary zeal is God's love for all people.
- **CCC 863.** The whole Church is apostolic, and every member shares in her mission.
- **CCC 899.** Lay initiative is necessary, and the laity are on the front lines of the Church's life.
- **CCC 900.** The laity have the obligation and the right to work so that the message of salvation is known and accepted.
- **CCC 1816.** The disciple must keep the faith, live on it, profess it, bear witness to it, and spread it.

You Will Be My Witnesses

WHAT WE FOUND

- They worshiped him, and some doubted, in the same verse. The Great Commission was handed to a group that had not finished wavering.
- The commission rests on his authority, not on ours: all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him.
- There is one main finite imperative in it: make disciples. Going, baptizing, and teaching are participles describing how it happens. Sacrament and catechesis, together, and all that he commanded rather than a selection.
- Behind "all authority" stands the vision of Daniel 7:13-14, where one like a son of man is given a dominion that shall not pass away, and all peoples and nations serve him.
- And the last words: I am with you always. In Mark 3:14 the Twelve were appointed to be with him. In Mark 5:18 a healed man asked to be with him and was sent home instead. Being with him was never the alternative to being sent. It is what the sending is made of, and he supplies it.
- St. Luke calls his entire Gospel an account of what Jesus **began** to do. Among his last instructions was the command to wait, and the power named is the Holy Spirit.
- "You shall be my witnesses." An identity before an activity, and the sequence St. Luke gives is Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth.
- He showed them his wounds before he sent them, breathed on them with the verb used at Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37, and entrusted them with authority to forgive and to retain sins.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on the Church's deepest identity

Evangelizing, Pope St. Paul VI wrote, is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.

He is not describing one department of parish life. He is saying that a Church which stopped doing this would not be a quieter Church; it would be a betrayal of what she is. Read it at the end of thirteen weeks and it lands differently than it would have in week one.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 14 (1975).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on where the mission comes from

The Council taught that the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, because she draws her origin from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit according to the plan of God the Father.

John 20:21 expresses one biblical dimension of that fuller Trinitarian teaching. The Church does not have a mission the way an organization has a strategy. She is downstream of a sending that started in God.

Second Vatican Council, Ad Gentes 2 (1965).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Thérèse of Lisieux, patroness of the missions from an enclosed Carmel

In the manuscript written for her sister, St. Thérèse describes wanting every vocation at once, missionary, priest, apostle,

martyr, and finding the answer in love: in the heart of the Church, her mother, she would be love.

She entered Carmel at fifteen and died at twenty-four, having lived her missionary vocation entirely from an enclosed Carmel and never served in a mission territory. The Church named her patroness of the missions. This is for anyone who has spent thirteen weeks quietly certain that the real work belongs to someone more capable.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, Manuscript B.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 13 of the ladder. There is no rung fourteen, and that is the point. The ladder was never a course; it was a description of an ordinary Christian life.

- **Keep praying for the three by name, daily.** This is the one thing not to stop. It has no end date and no completion criterion.
- Keep saying your one sentence. You will get better at it and it will change over time.
- Go back to whichever rung you skipped or fumbled. Most people know which one it was.
- Hand this study to the person you named tonight. Give them your take-homes if that helps.
- Ask your leader about the five standalone modules. The one on the people closest to you is the one most groups want.
- And when somebody says yes, remember Session 10: take them somewhere, walk in with them, and hand them to the Church rather than to yourself.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Matthew 28:20

AFTER THIS STUDY

There is no next session and no reading. Keep praying for the three by name, daily; that practice has no end date.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 2.** The Catechism quotes the Great Commission in its second paragraph.
- **CCC 849.** The missionary mandate: the Church is sent to the nations as the universal sacrament of salvation.
- **CCC 730.** Christ breathes the Holy Spirit upon the apostles at John 20:22; for Pentecost see CCC 731-732.
- **CCC 976.** The forgiveness of sins, linked to John 20:22-23.
- **CCC 1461.** Those who receive Holy Orders are the ministers of the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- **CCC 1257.** God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, and he himself is not bound by his sacraments.

Your Story in Three Minutes

WHAT WE FOUND

- Paul's conversion is recounted three times in Acts, twice in his own words, and he reflects on it again in Galatians 1. The shape is the same every time: before, encounter, commission.
- The details move with the room. To a Jewish crowd he speaks Hebrew, names Gamaliel, and describes Ananias as a devout man according to the law. To the hearing before Festus and Agrippa he opens with deference, appeals to the prophets, and frames the case as a matter of hope.
- He identifies with his hearers before he differs from them, and the identification is true rather than tactical.
- He names his own guilt in one clause and moves on.
- Four things he never does: make his sins the centre, describe his own feelings, make himself the hero, or end on himself. God gets the active verbs, and every telling ends on the commission.
- To Agrippa he said he would to God that everyone hearing him might become such as he was, except for the chains. He wanted them to have what he had, except for his chains.
- If you were baptized as an infant and never left, one workable shape is: what I was handed, what I came to own, and what I do about it now. Your baptism was a real rescue that you do not remember.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine, whose *Confessions* is one of the most influential conversion narratives in Christian literature

The *Confessions* is a conversion story, and its most striking feature is grammatical: the whole book is addressed to God rather than to the reader. Augustine is not narrating his journey to an audience; he is telling God what God did, out loud, and letting us listen.

That is the discipline this module is teaching in miniature. When the second person of a testimony is God rather than the hearer, the story stops being about the speaker without anyone having to be told to be humble.

St. Augustine, Confessions. Work-level citation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Cyprian, on what he thought was impossible

Writing to his friend Donatus shortly after his own baptism, St. Cyprian describes in substance how he had believed that the change being asked of him was simply not achievable for a man of his habits, and how, after the water of new birth, what had seemed impossible began to be possible.

It is an early Christian first-person account of conversion, and it is short. Notice what he emphasizes: not his own effort, and not the drama of his former life, but the fact that something worked which he had been certain would not.

St. Cyprian of Carthage, summarized from To Donatus. A faithful summary, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Paul II on the first form of witness

St. John Paul II wrote that the witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission, and that the modern world listens to a life before it listens to an argument.

Note the word irreplaceable. Not sufficient, which he says elsewhere, and not optional either. Your testimony is not a substitute for content, and no amount of content substitutes for it.

St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio 42 (1990).

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

This week. A story that has never been said out loud to anyone who was not in this room is still a draft.

- Say it to one person outside this group this week. Not as an announcement; when the conversation makes room for it.
- Say it under three minutes. Time yourself beforehand if you have to.
- Do not add anything to the end. For this week, no invitation, no question, no verse. That is a training constraint and not a rule: Paul himself asks Agrippa a direct question at Acts 26:27. The constraint exists so you learn to let a silence be someone else's.
- Afterward, write down which sentence you wanted to add and did not. That sentence is usually the one that is about you.
- Rewrite it once more in a month. It will have changed, and it should.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me."

Psalm 66:16

GOING FURTHER

Read Galatians 1:11-24.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 905.** Lay people proclaim Christ by the testimony of life and by the spoken word.
- **CCC 2471.** Christ came to bear witness to the truth, and the Christian is not to be ashamed of testifying to the Lord.
- **CCC 2472.** Bearing witness in words and deeds is a transmission of the faith.
- **CCC 425.** The transmission of the faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ.

A Prophet Without Honor

WHAT WE FOUND

- At Nazareth they knew a version of him with no room for this, and they took offense. But read verse 5 to the end: even there, he healed a few sick people. Not nothing. Less.
- John 7:5 reports that his brothers did not believe in him, and at Mark 3:21 his own people went to seize him amid talk that he was beside himself.
- And in Acts 1:14 his brothers are praying with Mary and the disciples in the upper room. Keep the groups distinct: John 7:5 names his brothers, and Acts 1:14 places his brothers there; do not merge either with the Mark 3:21 group or let "relatives" sweep in our Lady. James saw the risen Christ, and Galatians 2:9 names him among the pillars of the Jerusalem church.
- The clear change comes only after the Resurrection, and Scripture records an appearance to James. The change we are praying for may require something we cannot supply, and that is not a reason to stop.
- 1 Corinthians 7 says do not divorce an unbelieving spouse who consents to stay, and that the unbelieving spouse is consecrated through the believing one. Verse 16 is genuinely ambiguous and can be read as hope or as caution.
- 1 Peter 3:1 says some may be won without a word. It also says "though they do not obey the word," which means the word had already been spoken. It is not a rule of silence; it is what may still reach someone who has heard and declined.
- No one is obliged to remain in grave danger. The Church permits separation where common life becomes practically impossible, and canon law names grave danger of soul or body as a legitimate cause for leaving.
- Jesus predicted division household by household, in advance, so that when it happened his disciples would not conclude something had gone wrong.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on his mother, and a caution about how to read it

In the Confessions, St. Augustine describes his mother's conduct toward his father, a man of considerable temper and unfaithfulness. He records that she bore with him, chose her moments, never confronted him while he was angry, and that in the end he was baptized before he died. Augustine offers her as an example to other wives.

Read that with two things held together. Her patience was real and it was not passivity, and it belongs to the same family of witness as 1 Peter 3:1. And the Church today is clear, as she should be, that nobody is obliged to endure danger, and that separation is legitimate where there is harm. Do not take a fourth century marriage as a template for a twenty-first century one that is unsafe.

St. Augustine, Confessions, Book IX. Book-level citation; no chapter number given.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on the domestic church

The Council taught that the family is, so to speak, the domestic church, and that in it parents should be the first preachers of the faith to their children by word and by example.

Note the order the Council uses, and note also what it does not say. It says parents are the first preachers. It does not say they are the last, or the only, or that the outcome rests on them.

Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium 11 (1964).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Paul II on the family that evangelizes

In his apostolic exhortation on the Christian family, St. John Paul II taught in substance that the Christian family is not only evangelized but itself evangelizes, and that its first and most immediate field of mission is its own members.

He is careful about a point that matters in this room: the family evangelizes by what it is before it evangelizes by what it says. Which does not mean it never says anything, and this module will press on that.

St. John Paul II, summarized from Familiaris Consortio (1981). Document-level citation; no paragraph number given.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

The next ninety days. Subtraction. This practice asks you to do less.

- Stop the one thing you named tonight, for ninety days. Put the end date somewhere you will see it.
- Pray for that person by name, daily, for all ninety days. This replaces the thing you stopped.
- Go to one thing they care about that you have never gone to, and do not mention faith while you are there.
- If they raise it, follow them, answer honestly, and do not take the opening as permission to resume.
- At ninety days, look again. Not at whether they changed. At whether you did.
- **If anything tonight touched on danger at home rather than difficulty, speak to your leader or your parish privately this week.** No one is obliged to remain in grave danger, and help is available.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

Acts 1:14

GOING FURTHER

Keep the ninety day date somewhere you will see it. If you want to go deeper on the brothers and sisters of Jesus, that question belongs to the apologetics course rather than to this module. And if anything tonight touched on danger at home rather than difficulty, speak to your leader or your parish privately this week.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 499-501.** The perpetual virginity of Mary, and the brothers and sisters of Jesus as close relations.
- **CCC 1655-1657.** The family as the domestic church. **CCC 1658** treats separately those who are single or without a human family.
- **CCC 1637.** Marriage with disparity of cult, citing 1 Corinthians 7:14.
- **CCC 1649.** Separation is permitted where common life becomes practically impossible, and the bond remains; canon 1153 addresses grave danger specifically.
- **CCC 2226.** Parents are to educate their children in the faith from early childhood.

When Someone in the Church Has Hurt Them

WHAT WE FOUND

- You cannot out-condemn Christ on this. Matthew 18:6 condemns causing one of his little ones to sin in terms as severe as anything you will read. Applying it to the abuse of children is an application, and a sound one; the verse's own wording is about causing his little ones to sin.
- Across the Gospels the Lord's sharpest language falls on religious leaders. He ate with tax collectors and called the scribes whitewashed tombs.
- And in the middle of that same chapter he tells the crowd to do what those men say and not what they do. A hypocrite's teaching is not thereby false, and that is his instruction rather than a later defence. Establish the sacramental principle separately, from CCC 1584, rather than treating the two as one claim.
- The Church teaches both in complementary passages: the unworthiness of the minister does not stop Christ acting in the sacraments, and that does not mean the minister is without sin. If you were baptized, married, or absolved by someone later disgraced, it counted.
- Peter was restored without pretending the denial had not happened. That is not a precedent for quietly returning anyone to ministry after they have harmed someone; his failure was cowardice about himself, not the exploitation of another person.
- There are at least three different conversations under "the Church hurt me": a wound, an institutional failure, and an objection. Most of us answer the first as though it were the third.
- The first sentence may not be a defense. For most people the true first sentence is "I am so sorry that happened to you," or "thank you for telling me." Reserve "you are right" for what you actually know.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on light passing through what is defiled

The spiritual power of a sacrament, St. Augustine wrote, is like light: those to be enlightened receive it in its purity, and if it passes through defiled beings it is not itself defiled.

The Catechism quotes him in exactly those terms when it teaches that the unworthiness of the minister does not prevent Christ from acting. This matters to anyone asking whether their own baptism or marriage or absolution still counts. The comforting part is true: a minister's unworthiness does not by itself invalidate a sacrament. Point a specific worry to a priest rather than settling it yourself, since validity turns on more than the minister.

St. Augustine, quoted at CCC 1584.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Benedict XVI, writing to a country that had been failed

In his 2010 pastoral letter to the Catholics of Ireland, Pope Benedict XVI addressed victims of abuse directly, acknowledged that they had suffered grievously, said that he was truly sorry, recognized that their trust had been betrayed and their dignity violated, and acknowledged that in many cases church authorities had failed to act as they should have.

Do not paraphrase this into something softer. A pope writing to an entire nation of Catholics said that the authorities of the Church failed. The Church, including Benedict XVI writing to Ireland, has publicly acknowledged grave abuse and serious failures by church authorities.

Pope Benedict XVI, Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland (2010). Document-level citation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Catherine of Siena, who did not leave

St. Catherine of Siena wrote to popes and cardinals in blunt and unsparing terms about corruption among churchmen, urging reform, calling the pope to act courageously rather than fearfully, and refusing to be deferential about what she thought was rotten.

And she never left. She is the model this module is aiming at: love for the Church that is fierce enough to say the true thing out loud from inside her, rather than defending what should not be defended. Her fidelity is worth commending, and it is not a judgment on people who have needed distance, boundaries or time in order to be safe.

St. Catherine of Siena, summarized from her Letters. A faithful summary of her posture and arguments, not a quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

This week. One conversation you have been avoiding, and one sentence you have never said.

- Think of one person you know who left, or pulled back, over something that was done. Not a category of person. One person.
- Ask them what happened, if you have never asked and if they are willing. Then respond with the first sentence you practised, and little else. If what you hear involves a minor, a vulnerable adult, or anyone presently at risk, that is no longer a conversation to hold on your own: contact your diocesan safeguarding office, and civil authorities where the law requires it.
- If you are not able to have that conversation, write the first sentence down anyway and keep it.
- Find out this week who handles reporting and victim assistance in your diocese, and write the contact down. Leaders should know these contacts, so they can respond responsibly and promptly.
- And pray for the person by name, without praying that they come back. Pray for them.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."

2 Corinthians 4:7

GOING FURTHER

Find out who handles reporting and victim assistance in your diocese, and write the contact down. If this module raised something from your own life, speak to someone you trust this week rather than carrying it alone.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 2284-2286.** Scandal, and its particular gravity when caused by those whose office obliges them to form others. CCC 2285 quotes Matthew 18:6.
- **CCC 1584.** The unworthiness of the minister does not prevent Christ from acting.
- **CCC 1550.** And that does not mean the minister is without sin.
- **CCC 827.** The Church is at once holy and always in need of purification.
- **CCC 1428.** The call to conversion is addressed to the whole Church.

The Invitation

WHAT WE FOUND

- Men carried a paralysed man to Jesus, could not get in, and let him down through the tiles; Mark 2:3-4 adds that there were four of them and that they dug out an opening. And when he saw **their** faith, he forgave the man, who had not said a word.
- They opened somebody's roof to do it. And the obstacle between them and Jesus was the crowd, which is to say the people already inside listening.
- In the banquet parable the servant is sent three times, each time further out, and the excuses given by the first group are all ordinary and none of them are hostile.
- The third sending says "compel people to come in." St. Augustine used that phrase to defend coercion against the Donatists, and on this the Church now teaches otherwise: the act of faith is by its nature free, no one may be forced to embrace it, and the use of civil coercion to compel religious adherence is rejected.
- The immediate obstacle is often practical rather than theological. It is that they cannot picture the ninety minutes and do not know what to say about Communion.
- Say the Communion thing in advance and kindly, giving the real reason: the Church understands receiving as a statement of full communion with her.
- An invitation is not one until it names a specific thing at a specific time, and it should be easy to decline.
- For most people the first invitation should be a table with Catholics at it. That is not a reason never to get to the liturgy.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine, and a mistake worth naming

St. Augustine used "compel them to come in" from this parable, in his letters concerning the Donatists, to defend the use of state coercion against schismatics. He is among the greatest of the Fathers, and this study has quoted him more than anyone else. What the Church now teaches, and what he defended, have to be stated precisely: the act of faith is by its nature free and no one may be forced to embrace it, so using civil coercion to compel religious adherence is rejected. Note the distinction he himself worked with, between forcing interior assent, which he also rejected, and applying civil pressure to the already baptised, which he defended and which the Church does not.

The Church's settled teaching is that the act of faith is of its very nature free, that nobody may be forced to embrace the faith against his will, and that Christ invited people to faith and refused to impose it by force. Hold both halves together. An account that only ever quotes saints approvingly is training people to argue badly.

St. Augustine, from his correspondence concerning the Donatists, where Letters 93 and 185 are the passages usually cited; read against Dignitatis Humanae 2, 7 and 10 and CCC 160. Document-level citation, since the letter numbering should be checked against the edition used.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on what a confessional is not

The confessional, Pope Francis wrote, must not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy which spurs us on to do our best.

Say it out loud, because some Catholics carry a bad experience in a confessional from years ago, and it can quietly shape how they approach the sacrament afterward. They will not invite anyone to something they are themselves avoiding.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 44 (2013).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Vianney, who simply stayed in the box

The Curé of Ars spent extraordinary hours hearing confessions, in later years for the better part of a day, as people travelled from across France to a village that had been notable for nothing. He was not a scholar and had struggled badly with his studies for the priesthood.

What he did was make himself available, relentlessly, in one place, for years. It is worth remembering, because the whole point of what follows is lowering the cost of somebody else's next step.

St. John Vianney, from the standard accounts of his ministry at Ars. Historical summary, not a quotation; a named biography should be supplied before publication.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

This week. You have already sent one. Now handle what comes back.

- If they said yes: confirm the time, and be outside ten minutes early. Do the two minute explanation before you walk in. Sit next to them the whole way through.
- If they said no: reply warmly, do not explain, do not ask why, and do not offer an alternative in the same message. The banquet parable has three sendings, and the delay this study suggests is prudential advice rather than something the parable teaches; the sendings there run within one continuous sequence.
- If they did not reply: leave it alone as your default. Non-response can be oversight as easily as refusal, so one gentle follow-up later is fine; chasing it is not.
- Either way, find out your parish's confession times and the OCIA contact this week, and write both down where you can find them.
- And go to Confession yourself before you invite anyone else to it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"And when he saw their faith he said, Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Luke 5:20

GOING FURTHER

Write down three things and keep them somewhere you will find them: the Mass you would bring a stranger to, your parish's confession times, and the name of whoever runs OCIA. And go to Confession yourself before you invite anyone else to it.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 1422-1424, 1458.** The sacrament of Penance, the names the Church gives it, and the recommendation of confession even when not strictly necessary.
- **CCC 1400.** Eucharistic intercommunion with the communities of the Reformation is not possible, and the reason why.
- **CCC 1401.** The narrow exceptions, judged by the diocesan bishop or episcopal conference under the stated conditions.
- **CCC 160.** The act of faith is free by its nature. **CCC 1389, 2181.** The Sunday obligation.

When Nothing Happens

WHAT WE FOUND

- In the parable commonly identified as the only one unique to St. Mark, the farmer scatters seed and then sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed grows, and the text says twice that the growth is not his doing.
- The phrase to keep is in the middle of verse 27: **he knows not how**. The hiddenness is not a failure of attention. It is the parable's point, in the Lord's own words.
- Isaiah 55:11 promises that God's word accomplishes God's purpose. It does not promise it accomplishes yours, or that it happens in your lifetime, or that you will see it. It is still enormous read exactly as it stands.
- St. Luke tells us the point of the persistent widow before he tells the story: that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. And it ends by asking whether the Son of man will find faith on earth.
- Abraham waited twenty-five years. Isaiah was sent to a people who would hear without understanding and see without perceiving. Jeremiah preached for four decades and the city fell exactly as he had said. None of them could measure by visible results, though the three differ: Abraham received Isaac, Jeremiah saw his warning come true, and only Isaiah was told in advance what to expect.
- The Church prays that no one be lost. She teaches that God predestines no one to hell. She has canonized saints and has never once declared that any particular person is in hell.
- So you may hope, seriously and with your whole heart, for any particular person. You may not claim to know. Absent a canonization, anyone who claims to know has gone past what the Church says.
- "God is working in ways you cannot see" cannot be disproved. Neither can "nothing will ever happen," and that one is a claim about another person's future that nobody has access to. Keep the distinction clean, though: what is at issue is observable change, not anybody's final salvation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Teresa of Ávila, and a prayer traditionally hers

A short prayer is traditionally known as St. Teresa of Ávila's bookmark: let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things are passing; God alone suffices; patience obtains all things.

The attribution is traditional, and the provenance details often repeated with it are not independently verified here, so present it as the prayer traditionally known as her bookmark rather than as a line from her writings. Either way, notice what it does not say. It does not say that what you are waiting for will arrive. It says that patience obtains, and that God is enough.

St. Teresa of Ávila, the prayer traditionally known as her bookmark. Traditional attribution, offered as such; the provenance details are not independently verified here.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Benedict XVI on what hope is not

Pope Benedict XVI opened his encyclical on hope with St. Paul's phrase that in hope we were saved, and argued that Christian hope is not optimism about how things will turn out, nor a calculation of probabilities, but a present reality resting on someone who is trustworthy.

That distinction is the whole module in a sentence. What you have is not a forecast about the person you are praying for. It is a relationship with the one you are praying to, and the difference is what makes it survivable over decades.

Pope Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi (2007), especially the opening paragraphs. Document-level citation; paragraph numbers should be verified before publication.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on the fatigue itself

In the closing section of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, on the spirit in which evangelization must be carried out, Pope St. Paul VI names the obstacle directly: a lack of fervour that shows itself in fatigue and disenchantment, in weariness, and in the loss of interior joy, and he treats it as a serious matter rather than a mood.

It is worth knowing that a pope wrote about this exact condition in a document about evangelization, and put it at the end rather than the beginning, where it belongs.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 80 (1975). Section-level citation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

The next two years. Keep going, and stop measuring the wrong thing.

- Keep praying for them by name, daily. Nothing in this module reduces that.
- Keep the list. Add to it when something happens, even something you would normally dismiss. Two years of small entries reads very differently from two years of memory.
- Put the review date in your calendar tonight, not tomorrow.
- Once this week, say out loud to God the honest thing, unfiltered. Habakkuk opened his book with lament and complaint and was not rebuked for it.
- And ask one honest question: is there anything I have done in this relationship that needs an apology rather than more prayer?
- **If what surfaced tonight was heavier than discouragement, tell somebody this week.** Sustained hopelessness is worth talking to a doctor or a counsellor about, and not only to a priest.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how."

Mark 4:27

GOING FURTHER

Keep the list and add to it. Put the review date in your calendar. And if what surfaced tonight was heavier than discouragement, tell somebody this week; sustained hopelessness is worth talking to a doctor or a counsellor about and not only a priest.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 1058.** The Church prays that no one should be lost.
- **CCC 1037.** God predestines no one to hell.
- **CCC 1821.** We hope for the glory of heaven promised to those who love God and do his will, and the Church prays for all to be saved.
- **CCC 2090-2092.** Hope, and the two sins against it, in the Catechism's own terms.
- **CCC 2725.** Prayer is a battle.