

Take-Home 1: You Shall Be Called Rock

Keep this sheet. You will need it again later in the study.

WHAT WE FOUND

Before Simon spoke a single recorded word, Jesus looked at him and renamed him: “You shall be called Cephas” (which means Peter) (John 1:42). Cephas is Aramaic for rock. Future tense. Not a description of the impulsive fisherman standing there, but a promise about what grace would make of him. Then, on the lake, Jesus stepped into Simon's ordinary working life, borrowed his boat, and asked a professional to fish against his own judgment. “Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets” (Luke 5:5). Faith acted on the word of Jesus, not on the evidence.

Then came the strangest moment of the night. Overwhelming generosity did not make Simon feel lucky; it made him feel unclean: “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Together we found the same pattern in Isaiah 6: holiness comes near, sin is confessed, God reassures, and then, astonishingly, God sends. Jesus did not tell Simon his sin was no big deal, and He did not depart. He answered honest confession with a mission: “Do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men” (Luke 5:10). And on the best fishing day of his life, Simon left everything. Surrender happened at the point of greatest attachment.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan / *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book IV*

Of all the boats on the shore, the Lord chose Simon's to teach from, and it was Simon He commanded into the deep. St. Ambrose read the deep water as the depths into which Christ calls His people: deeper trust, deeper mystery, waters beyond our own skill. The Fathers cherished the picture of Christ teaching the crowds from Peter's boat.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John, Homily 19*

St. Chrysostom marvels that Andrew, having found the Messiah, could not rest until he fetched his own brother; the greatest of the apostles was brought to Christ by simple family evangelization. And when Jesus renamed Simon, He was foretelling, not describing: the One who names is the One who transforms.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Paul II | *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (2001)

At the start of the new millennium, St. John Paul II gave the whole Church the words of Luke 5:4 as her program: *Duc in altum*, put out into the deep. The command spoken once from Simon's boat is spoken to each of us now: remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, look to the future with confidence.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray with Luke 5:1-11 once this week, slowly, placing yourself bodily in the scene: feel the boat, smell the nets, hear the command. Stay there until you can honestly answer, "What is Jesus asking me to put out into?"
2. Once this week, when you feel unqualified for something good in front of you, say silently: "At your word I will let down the nets," and do the thing.
3. Come next week having noticed one place in your life where your own competence has quietly made trusting God feel unnecessary.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

Luke 5:4 (RSV2CE)

MY GUESS (WRITE IT, FOLD THIS BOX CLOSED, AND DO NOT OPEN IT UNTIL YOUR LEADER SAYS SO)

Jesus just named Simon "Rock" before he had done anything to earn it. **What do you think it will take for Simon to actually become that man?** Write your honest guess below. Then one more line, just for you: **what would be hardest for YOU to leave in the boat?**

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Matthew 14:22-33**. Bring this sheet back with your guess folded closed.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 208, 878, 2001.

Take-Home 2: Lord, Save Me

Keep your Take-Home 1 sheet safe, kept folded. We will need it.

WHAT WE FOUND

The disciples rowed into the storm because they obeyed; Jesus “made” them get into the boat (Matthew 14:22), and from the land He saw them straining at the oars against the wind (Mark 6:48). Obedience did not exempt them from the storm; it guaranteed that the One who sent them was coming. And He came in the fourth watch, walking on the very thing they feared, doing what the Scriptures say God alone does: trampling the waves of the sea. His word in the dark: “Take heart, it is I; have no fear” (Matthew 14:27).

Peter did not jump; he asked for a command first, and walked when he had one. “At your word” has become “command me.” Then verse 30: “when he saw the wind, he was afraid.” The wind had been blowing the whole time; the only thing that changed was where Peter was looking. And when he sank, three words were enough: “Lord, save me.” We traced that cry back through Psalm 69 and Jonah 2 and found the same pattern: the one in the deep does not save himself; he cries out, and God draws him out. “Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him” (Matthew 14:31), and only then, safe in His grip, came the gentle question. Rescue first, correction after; here the correction comes inside the rescue, not instead of it. And little faith that cries out to Jesus is enough for Him to save.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine | *Sermon 76 (on Matthew 14)*

St. Augustine sees in Peter on the waves a figure of every Christian soul: strong when he looks to Christ, tottering the moment he presumes on himself. Peter walking is what we are by Christ's power; Peter sinking is what we are by our own; and Peter crying out is the only wisdom left to us, because the Lord who permitted the wavering is the same Lord who stretches out His hand.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom | *Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Homily 50*

St. Chrysostom sees the Lord's training method here: He permits Peter to feel the danger and learn his own measure, then immediately seizes him, and corrects him only after he is safe. Peter's love outran his strength; the Physician used the gap to teach him where strength lives.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux | Letter to Sister Marie of the Sacred Heart (LT 197, September 17, 1896) and Story of a Soul

St. Thérèse taught that it is confidence, and confidence alone, that leads us to Love: not the size of our strength but the boldness of our trust in His. Applied to tonight's scene, Peter sinking with his hand stretched toward Christ gives her teaching a single image: sanctity is not walking on water by our own balance; it is being caught.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray "Lord, save me" every single time you feel overwhelmed this week, the moment you notice. Keep a private count. Tell no one the number; just notice what changes by Sunday.
2. Pray with Matthew 14:22-33 once this week, placing yourself in the scene: leave the boat, feel the water hold, feel the moment your eyes drift to the wind. Stay there until you have let Him catch you.
3. Notice one moment this week when your attention slid from Christ to the wind. Write a single sentence about what pulled it, and bring the sentence to next session (you will not have to share it).

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Take heart, it is I; have no fear."

Matthew 14:27 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Matthew 16:13-20**. As you read, notice where the conversation happens and what Jesus asks first before He asks the question that matters.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 448, 164, 273.

Take-Home 3: Flesh and Blood Has Not Revealed

This

Keep your Take-Home 1 sheet safe, with your guess still folded inside. We will need it.

WHAT WE FOUND

Jesus marched the Twelve to Caesarea Philippi, a pagan district built around a rock cliff crowded with shrines, and asked two questions. The poll was easy: people say the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, all compliments, all wrong, because a category is not a confession. Then the question with no hiding place: “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered for the ages: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

And Jesus told him where the answer came from: “flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). Peter saw the same miracles as the crowds; what he had was given. Faith in who Jesus is arrives as a gift we receive and confess, which means gratitude for our own faith and prayer, not just argument, for those who do not yet share it. Then Jesus kept the promise from the beginning: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church,” and handed him the keys. We traced the keys back to Isaiah 22, where the key of the house of David marks a steward’s office in the kingdom, opened and shut under the king. Jesus builds on confessed faith, not finished character, and that is very good news for unfinished people.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great | *Sermon 3*

The blessing, the name, and the keys all rest on faith that came down from heaven first. Peter is great because he received greatly; what God builds, He builds on what He Himself has given.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom | *Homilies on St. Matthew, Homily 54*

Jesus took the disciples far from every crowd so they could answer freely. Thousands of eyes watched the loaves multiply; the confession belonged to the one to whom the Father revealed it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas / *Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 6, a. 1*

The assent of faith cannot rise from human reasoning alone; it is given by God, who moves us inwardly by grace. Faith is a gift before it is a decision, and a decision because it is a gift.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Every morning this week, answer His question out loud in one sentence: “Jesus, I say you are...” Let the sentence change during the week if it wants to.
2. Write your one-sentence confession somewhere you will find it again. We are not done with it.
3. Pray daily, by name, for the one person you chose: “Father, reveal your Son to them.”

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Matthew 16:16 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Matthew 16:21-28** and **Matthew 17:1-8**. Notice the very first word of 16:21 and what it connects to.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 153, 424, 552-553.

Take-Home 4: The Things of Men

Keep your Take-Home 1 sheet safe, with your written guess still folded. We will need it.

WHAT WE FOUND

“From that time”: the moment the confession was made, Jesus began teaching what the Christ came to do, and Matthew’s word is iron: he **MUST** go to Jerusalem and suffer. The cross is the plan, not the accident. And that solved last week’s cliffhanger: the title had to be completed by the cross before it could be preached. Peter, loving Jesus with the wrong dictionary, took Him aside: “God forbid, Lord!” and received the hardest words Jesus ever spoke to a friend: “Get behind me, Satan! ... you are not on the side of God, but of men” (Matthew 16:23). Five verses from rock to stumbling stone, and the difference was one move: confessing the right Christ, then trying to define Him ourselves. Yet “behind me” is not expulsion; behind Jesus is where a disciple walks. He ordered Peter out of the road and back into line.

We found the true definition where it had been waiting for seven centuries: Isaiah 53, the servant wounded for our transgressions, whose stripes heal us. The cross Peter forbade is the very thing that saves Peter. Then Jesus turned to all of us: deny yourself (dethrone yourself, not despise yourself) and take up your cross, and He was honest about the word’s weight. Six days later, the mountain: His face like the sun, Moses and Elijah, the cloud, and the Father’s voice answering Peter’s “God forbid” from the week before: “This is my beloved Son... listen to him.” Peter wanted to build booths and stay; the road still went down the mountain and on to Jerusalem. Glory is fuel for the road, not a substitute for it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great / *Sermon 51 (on the Transfiguration)*

The great purpose of the Transfiguration was to remove the scandal of the cross from the disciples’ hearts: glory shown to three witnesses so that on the worst Friday in history they would carry a memory stronger than what their eyes were seeing.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Homilies on St. Matthew, Homily 54*

The blessing and the “Satan” came from the same Lord to the same man within moments: the confession was from the Father, the correction from the flesh. Affection for Christ, when it argues against His cross, stops being on God’s side without ever feeling like betrayal.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) / *The Science of the Cross*

The cross is not an obstacle on the way to God but the way itself; we hand ourselves over to it not because suffering is good but because Love is hanging there. She learned that science personally and signed it in blood at Auschwitz.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray with Isaiah 53:3-6 once, slowly, replacing the pronouns: wounded for MY transgressions. Stay until it stops being information.
2. Choose one real act of self-denial this week, something with a cost, and offer it silently with the words "Behind you, Lord."
3. When something good and consoling happens this week, thank God, then ask: "What is this fuel FOR?"

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Matthew 16:24 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **John 6:51-71**. Watch what the crowd does at verse 66, and what Jesus does not do about it.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 554-556, 618, 540.

Take-Home 5: To Whom Shall We Go?

Keep your Take-Home 1 sheet safe, with your guess still folded inside. We will need it.

WHAT WE FOUND

In the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus finished the Bread of Life discourse, and when the crowd balked at “the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh,” He did not soften; He intensified: “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). We traced the bread back to Exodus 16: a murmuring people, and a God who has always answered grumbling with bread from heaven. The manna was a rehearsal; the true Bread had come down.

Then the saddest verse: “After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him” (John 6:66), the only recorded desertion of disciples over a teaching in all the Gospels. He chased no one, softened nothing, and turned to the Twelve with the freest question love ever asked: “Will you also go away?” Peter’s answer is the treasure we carried out: he did not claim to understand the teaching; he claimed there was nowhere better to go: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Belief first, understanding following: faith that clings to the Person when the words are over our heads. The Church has been answering hard sayings with Peter’s sentence ever since.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Ignatius of Antioch | *Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 7 (c. 107 AD)

Within living memory of the apostles, Ignatius warned against teachers who abstain from the Eucharist because they do not confess it to be the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ. The hard saying was still dividing rooms seventy years on, and the apostolic churches stood with it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine | *Tractates on John*, Tractates 27 and 29

The deserters demanded to understand before they would believe, and left; Peter believed in order that he might know, and stayed (Tractate 27, on John 6:69). Augustine distills the principle elsewhere in the same commentary: crede ut intelligas, believe that you may understand (Tractate 29). Only staying gets you inside the words.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria | *Commentary on John*, Book 4

The flesh of Christ is life-giving because it is the flesh of the Word who is Life; by it He plants His own life in us as fire spreads warmth into iron. The hearers' scandal came from imagining cannibalism rather than sacrament: they mistook the mode, not the reality.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Once this week, bring your hardest saying into prayer and say Peter's sentence over it, word for word: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Then five minutes of silence.
2. If you are Catholic and able, go to one Mass this week on purpose and listen to the words of institution as the answer to John 6. If you are still exploring, reread John 6:51-58 slowly and write down your honest questions; bring one back to the group.
3. Notice when you are tempted to walk away from something good because it got difficult, and ask whether the difficulty is a wall or a door.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **John 13:1-17 and 13:36-38**. Watch what Jesus does with a towel, and what Peter says he will do with his life.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 1336, 1374, 162.

Take-Home 6: Unless I Wash You

Keep your Take-Home 1 sheet safe, guesses still folded. We will need it.

WHAT WE FOUND

On the night He was betrayed, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, Jesus rose from supper, tied on a slave's towel, and washed His disciples' feet: omnipotence, free for one evening to express itself, chose the lowest task at the table. Peter refused: "You shall never wash my feet." It sounded humble; but as the Fathers heard it, it was pride in humility's costume, still deciding what the Master may do, still preferring to serve rather than be served. And Jesus' answer was a non-negotiable: "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me" (John 13:8). The Gospel's order cannot be reversed: washed first, then sent. We traced the water back to Exodus 29 and 40, where washing was the first act of priestly ordination, and heard the Church's cherished reading: on the night of the Eucharist, He washed the men He was consecrating.

Then, at the same table, one sentence carrying a whole future: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). Satan asked for all of them; Jesus prayed for Simon by name. The sentence holds a fall ("when you have turned again"), a guaranteed return (when, not if), and a mission on the far side. Peter answered with a boast, "I will lay down my life for you," and learned about the cock. Sincerity measures tonight's feelings; strength is what remains at three in the morning. And one strange promise to keep in your pocket: "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward" (John 13:36).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine / *Tractates on John, Tractate 56*

Peter's protest preferred his own sense of propriety to his Master's declared will; the washing was no courtesy but a matter of having part in Him. We must be cleansed by Christ before we can belong to Christ, and refusing the gift, however reverent it sounds, is the one thing that separates.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Homilies on John, Homily 70*

Knowing that all things were in His hands, He washed feet: the full consciousness of His dignity did not compete with the towel; it produced it. Our excuses for withholding lowly service all appeal to dignity, and the Lord of all has taken that appeal away forever.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bernard of Clairvaux / *On the Steps of Humility and Pride*

Pride does not always strut; it can bow, refuse gifts, and insist on its own unworthiness, because what it cannot surrender is control of the exchange. The soul that will not be served by God is not humble; it is still negotiating.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Once this week, deliberately receive: let someone do something for you without deflecting, repaying, or minimizing it. If you are Catholic and it has been a while, consider letting Him wash you in Confession, where His cleansing in this scene reaches you sacramentally, again and again.
2. Do one act of genuinely menial service, the kind with no audience and no credit, as apprenticeship to the towel.
3. Memorize the substance of Luke 22:32: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." Carry it into next week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"If I do not wash you, you have no part in me."

John 13:8 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Luke 22:54-62, slowly. Next session matters; please be there.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 1337, 1823, 2011.

Take-Home 7: The First Charcoal Fire

Keep your Take-Home 1 sheet safe, still folded. We will need it soon.

WHAT WE FOUND

The fall came by degrees, and the degrees were the lesson. It began in the garden, where Peter slept through the armory: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” He had rehearsed the wrong test; he was ready to die by the sword, and the test that came was cold, tired, anonymous hours. He “followed at a distance”: braver than the ten who fled, and close enough to watch while far enough to hide, which is where most of us live our own denials. Then the fire in the cold courtyard, where Peter warmed himself among the enemies of his Lord, and the ambush: not a soldier but a servant girl. Three denials, each cheaper than the last, from reflex to oath to a curse called down on himself. Sin compounds.

But the fall had been foretold inside a promise. We read the oracle Jesus quoted on the way to the garden, and found what the same oracle promises just after “strike the shepherd,” a surviving third brought through fire: “I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver... They will call on my name, and I will answer them” (Zechariah 13:8-9). The fire is a refiner's fire, and Jesus attached an appointment to the prophecy before anyone fell: “After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Then the cock crowed, “and the Lord turned and looked at Peter” (Luke 22:61). The Catechism calls it the look of infinite mercy that drew tears of repentance (CCC 1429): the look that breaks a heart open, not apart. Peter went out and wept bitterly. And we left one question deliberately unanswered, because next session is entirely about it: two men betrayed Him that night, and both were filled with grief. Is all weeping the same?

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan / *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book X*

Ambrose finds no recorded words of Peter's repentance: only tears, and he treats them as sufficient. What words could not dare to confess, weeping confessed, and the tears washed the fault the voice could not name. Grief that flows toward the wounded Lord is itself received as prayer.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Homilies on St. Matthew, Homily 85*

The boast leaned on self, sleep disarmed prayer, and the fear of a servant girl accomplished what armed men could not, so that we might learn the measure of human weakness left to itself. Yet the fall of the chief of the apostles was permitted so that no sinner after him need ever despair of the

remedy.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Francis de Sales / *Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 9 (paraphrase)*

When we have fallen, we must not fall again into bitter rage against ourselves; that second fall is wounded pride disguised as contrition. Rise quickly, quietly, without amazement that weakness proved weak; grieve with a grief that is calm and full of hope, and set to work again.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Guard the garden: pray ten minutes every day BEFORE the day's tests, asking specifically, "Lord, show me the test I am not rehearsing for."
2. Once this week, close the distance on purpose: one act that identifies you with Christ in a room where you usually stay anonymous. Small is fine; invisible is not.
3. Pray with Psalm 51 once, slowly. If your own courtyard memory surfaces, hold it before God with this week's promise: the fire in the prophecy is a refiner's fire. And come back next week; the story is not over.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou

wilt not despise."

Psalm 51:17 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Matthew 27:3-5** and **Mark 16:1-8**. In the Mark passage, read verse 7 twice, and notice two small words the angel adds.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 1429, 1851, 1451.

Take-Home 8: And Peter

IMPORTANT: bring your Take-Home 1 sheet next session, guess still sealed.

WHAT WE FOUND

Two men betrayed Jesus in one night, and both were seized with grief. Judas “repented,” returned the silver, and confessed aloud, and then took his confession to his accomplices instead of to the One betrayed, appointed himself judge, and carried out a sentence God had not passed. St. Paul gave us the diagnostic: “godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation... but worldly grief produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10). Worldly grief faces the mirror: my ruin, my shame. Godly grief faces the same facts but stays turned toward the Person wounded, and stays where mercy can find it, which is all Peter did: he wept, and he waited in the wreckage. And the Church's teaching is precise: no offense is too great for forgiveness (CCC 982); the only fatal condition is refusing mercy to the end (CCC 1864); and no one's damnation, including Judas', is ours to declare (cf. CCC 1037).

Then Easter morning, and the two most tender words in the Gospels: “Go, tell his disciples AND PETER that he is going before you to Galilee” (Mark 16:7). Shame had already resigned on Peter's behalf; mercy named him so the message could not miss. The appointment Jesus made before the fall was still standing. We found the same heart in Hosea 11: “How can I give you up?... for I am God and not man.” And we found a meeting Scripture confirms twice and never narrates: the risen Lord appeared to Simon (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5): private mercy before public restoration, and what passed between them Scripture never records. Mercy does not wait for the apology to be drafted. It knocks.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine / *The City of God, Book I*

In destroying himself, Judas did not atone for the betrayal but compounded it: despairing of God's mercy, he left himself no room for the saving repentance still possible. The final wound was not the betrayal but the verdict he passed on himself in God's place. Mercy was not exhausted; it was pre-empted.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Exhortation to Theodore After His Fall*

Sin wounds, but despair kills, because it persuades a man to stop fighting before God has stopped forgiving. The enemy makes us careless before the fall and hopeless after it, and both lies serve the same end. No wound is incurable to the Physician who wills to heal.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

Our Lord to St. Faustina | Diary, 1182

The greater the misery, the greater its claim on His mercy, so the Lord told St. Faustina: souls are not to measure forgiveness by the size of their sin but by the depths of His goodness. Mercy is not merely available to the worst moment of your life; it is especially addressed there.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray Psalm 130 once, slowly. If there is a courtyard in your past you have been seeing to yourself, bring it to the Lord instead, and if you are Catholic, consider Confession, where the private meeting still happens and the priest is bound by the sacramental seal, never permitted to reveal what you confess (CCC 1467).
2. Deliver one “and Peter”: reach out, by name, to one person who has drifted, with zero agenda except that they hear the door is open.
3. BRING YOUR TAKE-HOME 1 SHEET NEXT WEEK, guess still sealed and folded. Put it with your keys tonight.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him,

as he told you.”

Mark 16:7 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **John 21:1-19**, slowly. And again: **bring your Take-Home 1 sheet, sealed**. If you have lost it, come five minutes early and tell your leader.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 982, 1864, 1847, 1037, 1467.

Take-Home 9: The Second Charcoal Fire

Keep your surrender prayer. It is yours and His alone.

WHAT WE FOUND

Peter went back to the boats (“I am going fishing”), and the old life answered with the old emptiness: a night of nothing. At dawn, a stranger, one instruction, and the sea repeated the miracle that started everything. We set the two boat scenes side by side and measured the distance of the whole study: in Luke 5, Jesus had to command Simon into the deep, and the catch drove him away (“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”). In John 21, nobody commanded anything: the moment he heard “It is the Lord,” Peter threw himself into the sea toward Him. Same miracle, same sinner, opposite direction. That reversal is what conversion is.

On the beach, a charcoal fire: St. John uses that word exactly twice in the whole New Testament, the fire of the denial and this one. Jesus rebuilt the scene of Peter's worst hour, prop by prop, because mercy heals the wound at its site: same fire, same count of three, new script. “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”, the address of their first meeting, asked three times, one for each denial, until the grief reached the bottom of the wound. And Peter's answer stood on new ground forever: not “I am ready” but “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” His confidence had moved from his knowledge of himself, which failed in the dark, to Christ's knowledge of him, which never did. Each confession was answered with a flock: feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep: the office God claimed as His own in Ezekiel 34, handed to a restored man. Then the cost, disclosed with total honesty, and the last two words, which were the first two words: “Follow me.” And then we opened our sealed guesses, and answered for ourselves.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine / *Tractates on John, Tractate 123*

A threefold confession answers a threefold denial, that the tongue might serve love as fully as it had served fear. And the proof of love Christ asks is care for His flock: if you love me, it is my sheep you will feed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria / *Commentary on John, Book 12*

By the three confessions the three denials are annulled, and by “Feed my sheep” the apostle is not merely pardoned but renewed in his office, so that no trace of the wound is left to accuse him. Mercy is not content to leave a forgiven man haunted.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great / *Homilies on the Gospels, Homily 24*

The risen Christ stands on the solid shore of immortality while His friends toss on the night sea, and He directs even their failed labor to abundance. And before Peter is asked a single question, he is fed: mercy sets the table first and holds the conversation after breakfast.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Keep your surrender prayer; it is yours and His alone. Pray it once a day this week, word for word, especially on the day it stops feeling true.
2. If you are Catholic, strongly consider Confession this week: the rebuilt fire, available every week. If you are exploring, tell your leader one thing this session made you want.
3. Do the one act of “feeding” you named. Do it before Sunday.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

John 21:17 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Acts 2:1-41**. As you read, keep one question in mind: what happened to the man from the courtyard?

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 1429, 553, 1428.

Take-Home 10: Repent and Be Baptized

Keep praying your surrender prayer from the shore.

WHAT WE FOUND

Do the arithmetic: fifty days. Seven weeks after crumbling before a servant girl, in the same city, among the same authorities, “Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice” to thousands. Time did not do that; resolve did not do that (resolve is what failed at the fire); the Holy Spirit did that, descending in tongues as of fire at nine in the morning. Grace did not replace Peter with someone else; it made Peter finally himself, the rock the name had promised. He opened Joel’s oracle: the Spirit poured out on all flesh, and its final line stopped us cold: “And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). We had watched a sinking man do exactly that, in three words, eight sessions ago. The man preaching the promise is the man who lived it: the Church’s first preacher at Pentecost is the Gospel’s proof of concept.

The sermon’s spine was the kerygma itself: this Jesus you crucified; God raised him up; God has made him both Lord and Christ. The truth cut the crowd to the heart, and they asked history’s question: “Brethren, what shall we do?” And the man who had lived every word gave the answer: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Repentance he learned weeping; the washing he was once too proud to accept when Jesus knelt with the basin; the Spirit that had filled him that morning. Three thousand were baptized, and salvation landed them where it lands everyone: devoted “to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42): the Church, with the Eucharist at its heart, from day one. And the beach explained the morning: surrender precedes sending. What God pours through surrendered people is proportioned not to their strength but to their availability.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem | *Catechetical Lectures*, 17

The one who had denied before a little maid now, clothed with power from on high, catches three thousand souls in a single cast of the net. No natural cause turns that man into this man in fifty days; the Spirit is known by what He made of the fisherman.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

In the spirit of St. Irenaeus of Lyons | cf. *Against Heresies*, Book III (editorial synthesis)

Irenaeus insisted that what the Church hands on is no secret doctrine but the public apostolic preaching: the crucified and risen Jesus, Lord and Christ, proclaimed openly by Spirit-filled eyewitnesses.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan / *On the Mysteries*

What you saw with your eyes was water; what was accomplished in you was the power of God: sin truly forgiven, the old man buried, the Spirit given, just as Peter promised the crowds.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray daily and explicitly to the Holy Spirit: “Come, Holy Spirit; do in me what you did in Peter.” If it scares you a little, pray it anyway.
2. Take one concrete step on the phrase of Acts 2:38 that has your name on it: baptism, Confirmation, real repentance, Confession, or intentional Communion within the 2:42 community this Sunday.
3. Tell one person one true sentence about what Jesus has done for you in these ten weeks. One sentence, your own words, during business hours.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of

your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:38 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Acts 4:1-22 and Acts 10:9-35.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 1226, 731-732, 1076.

Take-Home 11: No Other Name

One session remains. Bring your Bible and your surrender prayer.

WHAT WE FOUND

We followed the apostle across two decades. Before the same court that condemned Jesus, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” he preached Psalm 118 to its face: the stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner, the Rock preaching the rejected Stone to the builders. Then the claim on which everything stands: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The Church holds that exclusive claim together with her hope for those who, through no fault of their own, never heard the name, yet sincerely seek God and strive, moved by grace, to do his will as conscience makes it known (CCC 847-848): if they are saved, it is Christ who saves them; there is no second staircase. And the court supplied the credential that outranks credentials: “they had been with Jesus.” The boldness was not temperament (we know this man); it was the Spirit, given to people who pray for it.

At Cornelius' house, God was still converting the converted: the sheet, the threshold, the Spirit falling on Gentiles mid-sermon, and Peter's discovery: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality.” Then Antioch, where this study owed you honesty: under the gaze of “the circumcision party,” Peter drew back from the Gentile tables, and we recognized the pattern ourselves: the courtyard, decades later: fear of men does not retire. His failure was conduct, not teaching, and its glory was that he took Paul's public correction without pulling rank: the rock stayed correctable. And at the council, the man who lived it all defined salvation for the record: “We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will” (Acts 15:11): a sentence with no self in it, and the hidden thesis of this whole study.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage | *Epistle to Quintus*

Peter, whom the Lord chose first, did not insolently claim anything for himself when Paul disputed with him; he received the counsel of truth and readily agreed: a pattern of concord and patience, that we should not stubbornly love our own opinions but make truth's counsel our own.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable | *Commentary on Acts*

What God has cleansed in the waters of baptism, no man may call common; the Spirit falling on the Gentiles showed that God's election runs ahead of human gatekeeping. The door of faith swung open to the nations through the hands of the fisherman, exactly as the keys had promised.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Homilies on Acts*

Unlettered men silenced the supreme court of their nation, and the court itself explained it: they had been with Jesus. Boldness of this kind is not temperament; it is the Spirit's gift, given to the praying, who when threatened did not ask for safety but for more boldness still.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray for boldness by name, once a day: "Lord, grant your servant to speak your word with all boldness" (adapted from Acts 4:29). Watch for the occasion He supplies.
2. Take the first concrete step toward your Cornelius: an invitation, a conversation, a table shared.
3. Ask one trusted person to be your Paul: explicit permission to call out your signature pattern when they see it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

*"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among
men by which we must be saved."*

Acts 4:12 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION (THE FINALE)

Read **1 Peter 1:3-9** and **1 Peter 5:1-11**: the voice of the man we have walked with, near the end of the road. Bring your Bible and your surrender prayer. Every thread lands next week.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 432, 847-848, 1428.

Take-Home 12: Stretch Out Your Hands

The final session. Thank you for walking the whole road.

WHAT WE FOUND

We opened the old man's letter and found his whole life hiding inside his advice. "Clothe yourselves with humility": a verb that means to tie on like a servant's apron, from the man who watched God tie on a towel. "Your adversary the devil prowls like a roaring lion": from the man who was sifted like wheat. The living Stone and Psalm 118, from the Rock who never stopped turning that psalm over. "Without having seen him you love him": wonder, from the man who was asked "do you love me?" across a breakfast fire. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree": the cross preached by the man who once said "God forbid." "Let him not be ashamed": from the man once ashamed before a servant girl. And the letter's crown: "The God of all grace... will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you" (1 Peter 5:10): Luke 22:32 kept, in his own letter: he turned again, and his last words strengthen the brethren.

Then the road's end, in two honest registers. History: Peter was martyred in Rome, his death attested within living memory (1 Clement 5, c. 96 AD) and confirmed by the converging early tradition: St. Ignatius, St. Irenaeus, and the second-century monument on Vatican hill beneath the basilica's altar. The tradition, going back to Tertullian and Dionysius of Corinth, places the martyrdom under Nero. And the venerable Quo Vadis tradition, from outside Scripture but true to the man: fleeing Rome, he met Christ walking in and asked, "Lord, where are you going?": and we heard the echo ourselves: he had asked it once before, at the table, and been promised: "you shall follow afterward" (John 13:36). Afterward arrived, and he turned around. We counted the three fires: courtyard, shore, Pentecost: an echo of Zechariah's refining fire (Zechariah 13:9) traced through his story: and we built the whole way of salvation out of his own letter: born anew by mercy, through the cross, by grace, through clinging faith, in baptism, within the Church, vigilant and hoped-for to the end. Then the two words came to us: Follow me.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Clement of Rome | 1 Clement 5 (c. 96 AD)

Peter endured not one or two but many labors, and having thus borne his witness, went to the glorious place which was his due: the earliest record of the martyrdom, written from Rome within living memory.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons / *Against Heresies, Book III*

Peter and Paul preached at Rome and laid the foundations of the Church there: stated as common knowledge by a man two handshakes from the apostles.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great / *Sermon 82*

Rome's true glory is not its empire but its martyrs: through the see of blessed Peter, a city once mistress of error became a disciple of the truth: Leo's boast for the apostles; one might say the fisherman's last catch was the capital of the world.

WHERE THE ROAD CONTINUES

1. Read 1 Peter whole, in one sitting, this week; hear the voice you now know. Read it again in a month.
2. Act on your “into the deep” sentence within seven days, before the resolve cools, and tell one person what it is.
3. Keep the twelve memory verses: one each week for the next twelve weeks, and let the arc replay in you.
4. Stay at the fire: Sunday Mass, and (if Catholic) regular Confession: the charcoal fire rebuilt for you as often as you need it. And when the group gathers for Mass together, be there: the breaking of the bread is where this study was always headed.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his

eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you.”

1 Peter 5:10 (RSV2CE)

A LAST WORD

Twelve weeks ago you wrote a guess about what it would take to turn Simon into the rock. Keep that sheet, with your surrender prayer on it, somewhere you will find it in a few years. The answer it records is the one the Church has staked everything on: not the rock becoming harder, but the rock becoming His. *Duc in altum*. Put out into the deep.