

Take-Home · Session 1

Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled · John 14:1-7, 27

WHAT WE FOUND

On Holy Thursday night, in a room full of dread, Jesus said "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." Then we went hunting and found something startling: John uses that same word, *troubled* (*tarasso*), of Jesus himself, three times: at the tomb of Lazarus (11:33), facing his hour (12:27), and announcing his betrayal (13:21). So the command cannot mean "never feel distress." The sinless One felt it. Jesus is not ordering an emotion out of existence; he is telling shaken hearts where to put their weight while shaking: on him. Fear says you are alone and the future is a void. He answers both: I am with you, and I have gone ahead of you into it (14:2-3). And honest confusion, spoken to his face, earned Thomas the words "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6). Bring him the question, not the performance.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine (Confessions I.1): "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." Beneath our particular worries is a heart built for God and not yet home; our restlessness lives inside a love story.

St. Francis de Sales (Introduction to the Devout Life IV.11) teaches that, sin alone excepted, anxiety is the greatest evil that can befall a soul, and counsels the opposite of self-condemnation: bring it gently and repeatedly to God, and do the one calm thing in front of you. He treats anxious disquiet as an affliction to be calmed, not as grounds for self-condemnation.

Julian of Norwich (Revelations of Divine Love, Long Text ch. 27; the Catechism cites her at CCC 313): "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." Not a promise that nothing hard will happen; a promise about how the story ends, and who holds it.

MY GUESS (SEALED)

Tonight you wrote and sealed your answer to the study's central question: **Is anxiety a sin?** Your envelope is safe. We open them together at Session 4. Until then, let the question stay open; watch for evidence.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Each night, one sentence.** Before sleep, pray one honest, unpolished sentence to Jesus about the day's heaviest thing.
- **Read the room where it was spoken.** Once this week, read John 13:21-14:7 in one sitting, slowly. It is Holy Thursday night.
- **Memorize:** "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14:1). Carry it into one anxious moment.

Before next session: read Matthew 6:25-34, the birds and the lilies.

Catechism this week: CCC 30 and 45; CCC 478; CCC 313.

A word to every reader: this study walks alongside professional care; it never replaces it. Therapy and medication are gifts of God through human reason, and using them is not a failure of faith.

Take-Home · Session 2

Consider the Lilies · Matthew 6:25-34

WHAT WE FOUND

The word Jesus uses six times in ten verses, *merimnao*, "be anxious," is often linked to a root meaning to divide, which gives us the picture we used: a self pulled to pieces across imagined tomorrows. He builds his command not on "the danger is small" but on the Father's character: birds fed, lilies clothed, "your heavenly Father knows that you need them all" (v. 32). We found the old curriculum behind it: manna given one day at a time, "that I may prove them" (Ex 16:4), and hoarded manna breeding worms; daily dependence was the lesson, and "give us this day our daily bread" still is. We found Martha, "anxious and troubled about many things" while serving Jesus dinner, and heard him re-center rather than scold her: "one thing is needful" (Luke 10:41-42). And verse 34 showed us Jesus is a realist: "Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day." Trouble is assumed. The invitation is to meet it one day at a time, with a Father, instead of all at once, alone.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Matthew, in substance): Christ forbids anxiety, not work. Labor continues; even the birds go out to gather what God provides. What is forbidden is the gnawing care that acts as if there were no Father.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (Story of a Soul, in substance): her "little way" is the lived form of the trust this verse names. Holiness for the little is not achieving security but surrendering into arms that already hold.

St. Alphonsus Liguori (Uniformity with God's Will, in substance): peace comes from receiving the present moment from the Father's hand: today's trouble, today's grace, and tomorrow left in the hands that hold it.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Manna rule.** Each morning, ask the Father for what today actually requires, by name; leave tomorrow's list for tomorrow.
- **Consider the lilies, literally.** Ten unhurried minutes outdoors with verse 26 or 28. Let the sermon's visual aids work.
- **Keep the nightly sentence going.**

Memory verse: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." (Matthew 6:33)

Before next session: read Psalm 42 and Psalm 43, slowly, out loud if you can.

Catechism this week: CCC 302-305; CCC 322; CCC 2830 and 2834.

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Take-Home · Session 3

When the Cares of My Heart Are Many · Psalms 42-43; 1 Kings 19

WHAT WE FOUND

God's own prayer book is roughly one-third lament: tears, fear, complaint, all addressed to God, which is itself the act of faith; you do not file grievances with someone you have abandoned. Psalm 42-43 taught us the inner conversation: three times the psalmist addresses his own soul ("Why are you cast down, O my soul... Hope in God"), neither obeying his feelings nor denying them. Then Elijah, soon after his greatest triumph, collapsed under a broom tree and prayed to die, and God began with no rebuke at all. Watch the order: he sleeps, an angel wakes him and says "Arise and eat," he eats and lies down again, the angel comes a second time and feeds him again, and only then does he travel. Before God addressed what Elijah was for, he attended to what Elijah was made of. Then a whisper at the covenant mountain, then a mission, then the end of his isolation: seven thousand who had not bowed (a remnant, correcting his belief that he was the only one left) and Elisha, an actual companion. The body shares in the dignity of the image of God (CCC 364); sometimes the most spiritual thing available is a meal and some sleep.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine (Expositions on the Psalms, in substance): the Psalms are the prayer of the whole Christ, head and members. When you pray a lament you are not alone in the dark; Christ and the Church pray it with you.

St. Teresa of Ávila (Foundations, ch. 5): "the Lord walks among the pots and pans." God is to be found while the ordinary duties are being done, not only after them. If that is true of a kitchen, it is true of a tired body.

St. Pio of Pietrelcina (a counsel long remembered as his): pray, hope, and do not worry. Prayer entrusts, hope holds the future open, and worry is the one ingredient that adds nothing.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Pray one lament, out loud.** Read Psalm 42-43 aloud once this week as your own prayer, unedited.
- **The pocket prayer.** Put "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Ps 56:3) where you will actually hit it: mirror, dashboard, lock screen.
- **One broom-tree mercy.** One concrete bodily kindness this week as an act of faith: real sleep, a real meal, a walk, asked-for help.

Memory verse: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you." (Psalm 56:3)

Before next session: read Mark 14:32-42, Gethsemane. Bring your Bible; we will need it. (And your sealed envelope comes back to you.)

Catechism this week: CCC 2582-2584; CCC 2585-2589; CCC 364.

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Take-Home · Session 4

My Soul Is Very Sorrowful · Mark 14:32-42

WHAT WE FOUND

In Gethsemane the Gospels give Jesus some of their strongest emotional language: "greatly distressed and troubled," "my soul is very sorrowful, even to death," and sweat that "became like great drops of blood." And hidden in his sentence we found last week's psalm: "very sorrowful" (*perilypos*) is the very word of the Psalm 42-43 refrain in the Greek Old Testament, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" He does not recite the refrain; he speaks its language as his own, which is more than enough. The prayer book of the anxious is the prayer book of Christ. Then we opened our envelopes. The answer, from the garden: the involuntary felt experience of anxiety is not itself sin. The sinless One was "in every respect... tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (Heb 4:15); the Church teaches that the passions in themselves are neither morally good nor evil, taking their moral quality from how reason and will engage them (CCC 1767-1768); and responsibility for an act can be diminished or even nullified by fear (CCC 1735). The feeling, as feeling, never was the sin. Freedom enters in what we do with fear, and Jesus showed us what to do with it: "Abba, Father" (intimacy), "remove this cup" (honesty), "yet not what I will, but what you will" (the anchored yes). The Father's answer was not removal but an angel with strength, help inside the trial. And Hebrews draws the conclusion for us: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace." The one on the throne knows trembling from the inside.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae III, q. 15, aa. 6-7, in substance): there was true sorrow and true fear in Christ, who assumed a complete human nature. These movements of the soul belong to real humanity and are not themselves sins.

St. John Henry Newman (discourse on the mental sufferings of our Lord, in substance): Christ refused every anesthetic of distraction or denial and let the full weight of interior anguish come, above all the weight of the world's sin.

St. Maximus the Confessor (on the two wills of Christ, in substance): in the garden a true human will, with its natural shrinking from death, freely conformed itself to the Father. Our old "no" is healed inside his costly "yes." The Church defined this teaching after him, at Constantinople in 680-681.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **The Gethsemane pattern, nightly:** Abba (intimacy), honesty (name the thing; ask for what you want), yet (hand it over).
- **Watch one hour.** A real hour or half hour of quiet with the Lord this week, ideally before the Blessed Sacrament. Bring nothing to fix.
- **Retire the shame that was never yours.** If what you wrote condemned you simply for feeling fear or for symptoms you did not choose, write beside it that the feeling itself is not a sin, and tear that condemnation up. If it names something you know you chose, keep it and bring it to confession, where mercy is waiting.

Memory verse: "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what you will." (Mark 14:36)

Before next session: read Philippians 4:4-9.

Catechism this week: CCC 612; CCC 2600 and 2606; CCC 1767-1768; CCC 1735.

This study walks alongside professional care; it never replaces it. If tonight stirred more than it settled, tell someone: your leader, a priest, a professional. That is strength, not weakness.

Take-Home · Session 5

Have No Anxiety About Anything · Philippians 4:4-9; 1 Peter 5:6-11

WHAT WE FOUND

Paul wrote "have no anxiety about anything" from prison, and Peter wrote "cast all your anxieties on him" to persecuted churches: survival equipment, not greeting cards. We found the word family we learned in week two, *merimna* and *merimnao*, in both texts: the mountain, the kitchen, the prison, and the persecuted church are one conversation, and the apostles are handing on their Master's teaching with practices attached: requests made known to God with thanksgiving; the casting (Peter is drawing on Psalm 55:22, a psalm of fear, trembling, and betrayal by a familiar friend); the garrisoned heart ("the peace of God... will keep your hearts and minds": a military word, sentries on the wall, protection of the person rather than resolution of the circumstance); and governed attention ("whatever is true... think about these things", which is not positive thinking, because it begins with *true*). Peter's grammar gave us the gentle revolution: in Greek, "casting" is a participle attached to "humble yourselves," so handing God the weight is not weakness but a concrete way the commanded humility happens. Say the other half carefully: insisting that everything finally depends on us can hide pride, but recurring anxiety after prayer is not evidence that you are proud, faithless, or unwilling to surrender. The ground under it all: "he cares about you."

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Loyola (Spiritual Exercises, First Week rules for discernment, 5, 6, and 8, in substance): in desolation make no change; hold the resolutions made in the light; increase prayer; and hold on, because consolation returns. Our shorthand: pray more, decide later.

Bl. Solanus Casey (the counsel he is remembered for): thank God ahead of time. Philippians 4:6 in five words.

The Church's Liturgy (Roman Missal, the embolism after the Our Father): "...that we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope." Distress is not quite our word anxiety, but the Church has asked to be kept safe from it at every altar for centuries.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **The evening cast:** one written worry, prayed by name with one thanksgiving, physically set aside. Peter's verb means to throw the weight onto someone who will carry it.
- **Thank God ahead of time** for one specific pending matter, daily, before the outcome.
- **In desolation, no new decisions.** If a spiral hits, postpone big choices; pray more, decide later.
- **At Mass,** pray the embolism after the Our Father deliberately: "safe from all distress."

Memory verse: "Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Before next session: read John 14:27 and sit with it for five unhurried minutes. The study is returning to the room where it began.

Catechism this week: CCC 2633; CCC 2637-2638; CCC 2734; CCC 2830 and 2834.

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Take-Home · Session 6

Peace I Leave with You · John 14:25-27; John 20:19-21; Romans 8:31-39

WHAT WE FOUND

The study ended where it began, and the verse had grown. First we read what we had never read: the peace of 14:27 is the last clause of the promise of the Paraclete (14:25-26). Jesus does not wish us peace on his way out; he promises the Spirit who will be with us and in us, and then leaves his peace. Then we found the promise kept: Easter evening, doors shut "for fear," and the risen Christ's first word to disciples who had failed and abandoned him, one of whom had denied him three times: "Peace be with you," wounds still visible, because his peace is wholeness, not amnesia; and immediately a sending: "as the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And we found that we have been hearing these words at Mass: the embolism ("safe from all distress"), then "Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you," then the peace exchanged on the way to Communion. The body thread of six weeks (bread under a broom tree, an angel in a garden, the written cast) landed at the sacraments, where grace comes through signs we can touch: the water of Baptism, the Eucharist, Confession for the burdened conscience ("peace and serenity," CCC 1468), Anointing in illness ("peace and courage," CCC 1520). The hard verses were handed back as gifts: 1 John 4:18 promises that servile terror dies as love matures (a trajectory, not a verdict, and fear of punishment can itself be a real beginning, CCC 1453), and 2 Timothy 1:7's "timidity" is about shrinking back from witness, not about a nervous system; your anxiety cannot disqualify you from being sent. And Romans 8 answered anxiety's deepest whisper at its root: no suffering, no power, and not death itself can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Teresa of Ávila (the lines traditionally kept as hers, from a note in her prayer book): let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things are passing; God never changes; patience obtains all things; whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices.

St. John Paul II (homily at the inauguration of his pontificate, 22 October 1978): "Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ." Grounded not in mild times but in the presence of the Redeemer.

St. Charles de Foucauld (the Prayer of Abandonment as commonly printed, arranged from his writings): Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will... I am ready for all, I accept all. The garden's "yet," made a way of life.

LIVE IT: FROM HERE ON

- **Keep the one practice you named.** One habit kept is worth six admired.
- **Receive the peace at Mass on purpose**, every week: the embolism and the Rite of Peace are the anxious heart's liturgy.
- **Carry the cards:** your commissioning card (one person, one act, this month) and the lines traditionally kept as St. Teresa's.
- **When the waters rise:** "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you" (Ps 56:3).

Memory verse: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." (John 14:27)

Where to go next: if grief and loss are part of what you carry, this study's companion volume, *Blessed Are Those Who Mourn*, continues the conversation.

Catechism this week: CCC 1832; CCC 1468; CCC 1453; CCC 1520.

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