

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Take-Home · Session 1 · God Has Spoken by a Son · Hebrews 1:1-2:4

A Catholic Journey Through the Letter to the Hebrews

What We Found

God's final word is a Person. For centuries God spoke in fragments through the prophets; in these last days he has spoken by a Son: not another message, but himself. Revelation is complete in Christ; the Church expects no further public revelation, only ever-deeper understanding of the Word already given.

The sevenfold portrait. Heir, creator, radiance of God's glory, exact imprint of his nature, upholder of the universe, purifier of sins, seated at the right hand. As radiance is to light, the Son is to the Father: distinct, inseparable, equally eternal.

Israel's hymnal already sang it. In Psalm 45, God addresses someone as God and anoints him; in Psalm 102, the hymn to the unchanging Creator belongs, Hebrews says, to the Son. The old books preach him.

Hebrews is a homily. It calls itself a “word of exhortation,” the ancient name for a synagogue sermon: likely the earliest complete Christian homily we possess. Its human author is unknown (“God knows,” said Origen); its divine author is not.

The first danger is drift. Not rebellion: neglect. A boat slipping its moorings. “We must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away” (2:1). Attention is the anchor line.

Voices of the Church

St. Clement of Rome *Letter to the Corinthians*

Within a generation of this sermon, the bishop of Rome was already quoting its opening: Christ the radiance of God's majesty, greater than the angels. An early witness to the authority this sermon already carried in the church at Rome.

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on Hebrews*

The sermon heaps up the glories of the Son at its threshold to lift the drooping spirits of a persecuted people: souls tempted to look back are healed by being made to look up.

St. John of the Cross *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*

In giving us his Son, his only Word, God has said everything to us at once in this sole Word, and he has no more to say. The Catechism itself quotes these lines to expound Hebrews 1:1-2 (CCC 65).

Live It This Week

1. Begin each morning with one sentence: “Father, today, speak to me in your Son.” Then give him thirty silent seconds to do it.
2. Re-tie the anchor line you named tonight: restore your one neglected practice this week, and tell someone in the group so it is real.
3. Complete the My Guess box below, fold this section over, and seal it. No peeking, no revising. We open them together later in the study.

Scripture Memory Verse

HEBREWS 1:1-2 (RSV2CE)

“In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.”

Before Next Session

Read Hebrews 2:5–18, and count: how many times does the passage insist that Jesus shared our flesh, our blood, our sufferings, our death? Bring the number.

Catechism Connections

CCC 65–66 (revelation complete in the Son) · CCC 102 (one Word in all the words) · CCC 241 (radiance and imprint: consubstantial) · CCC 331–332 (the angels, in service of the heirs of salvation)

MY GUESS · SEALED UNTIL LATER IN THE STUDY

This sermon will circle for three chapters around a man named Melchizedek, who appears in exactly three verses of Genesis and one verse of a psalm: a priest-king who walks on stage two thousand years before Christ, and walks off four sentences later. Here is your prediction to make and seal: who was he, and why would he matter more to Jesus' story than Aaron and all the priests of Israel?

Write your guess, fold this corner over, and seal it. It will be opened, unrevised, when the study tells us to.

My guess: _____

Name: _____ Date: _____