

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Take-Home · Session 9 · Full Assurance · Hebrews 10

A Catholic Journey Through the Letter to the Hebrews

What We Found

Repetition confesses insufficiency. If the annual sacrifices had worked, they would have ceased: instead they were a reminder of sin year after year: the file re-read because it could never be closed.

What God wanted on the altar was a will. Psalm 40, in the Son's mouth: Hebrews quotes the Greek Old Testament, where the psalm's opened ear has become a whole self, not sacrifices, but "a body hast thou prepared for me... Lo, I have come to do thy will" (10:5-7): and by that will we have been sanctified, once for all.

The seated priest: our oldest question, answered. Every priest stands daily (there were no chairs in the tabernacle): standing is the posture of unfinished business. He offered a single sacrifice and sat down: the chair is the Gospel stated in furniture.

Both tenses, one gift. "By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (10:14). The Greek participle is present tense: those who are being sanctified. The verdict complete, the renovation ongoing: assurance without presumption, striving without fear.

The veil is a doorway, and the assembly is the charter. Confidence to enter by the new and living way through the curtain, his flesh: and the oldest bad habit in Christianity, skipping the assembly, gets the oldest prescription: encourage one another, all the more as the Day draws near (10:25).

Voices of the Church

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on Hebrews*

Standing is the sign of ministry still in progress; sitting, of completed work. The priests stood because their sacrifices accomplished nothing final; the Christ, having offered one sacrifice, sat down. No one sits down with work left undone.

St. Ignatius of Antioch *Letter to the Ephesians*

Try to gather more frequently: when you assemble frequently, the powers of Satan are destroyed and his destructiveness undone by the concord of your faith. The assembly itself is the weapon.

St. Cyprian of Carthage *On the Unity of the Church*

He cannot have God for his Father who does not have the Church for his mother.

For our study: the new and living way was opened for a people, and the people's habit of gathering is a lifeline.

Live It This Week

1. Pray 10:14 daily, both tenses, in the first person: by a single offering he has perfected me; and I am being sanctified. Then ask for the grace of perseverance, that I may remain among those he is sanctifying. Begin from the chair, not toward it.
2. Make one concrete act of stirring: invite, encourage, or accompany one drifted person toward the assembly, this week.
3. Read Hebrews 11 before next session, the whole gallery, and underline the verb that follows every “by faith.” Bring your count, and your favorite portrait.

Scripture Memory Verse

HEBREWS 10:23 (RSV2CE)

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

Before Next Session

Read Hebrews 11, underlining the verb after every “by faith.”

Catechism Connections

CCC 2010 (sanctification's grammar) · CCC 2178 (the assembly, from apostolic times) · CCC 1817 (hope, defined by 10:23) · CCC 982 (no offense the Church cannot forgive, for the one who turns from sin)