

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Take-Home · Session 11 · The Cloud of Witnesses · Hebrews 12

A Catholic Journey Through the Letter to the Hebrews

What We Found

The gallery is a stadium. We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses: the finished athletes ring the track: lay aside every weight (not all weights are sins), and run the race set before us, eyes fixed on Jesus, pioneer and perfecter.

Suffering, translated: paideia. The Lord disciplines him whom he loves: a Father's training of sons, not a judge's payback: and the sermon is honest: for the moment all discipline seems painful: later, the peaceful fruit of righteousness, for those trained by it.

You have come: perfect tense. Not Sinai's fire and dread, but Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem: innumerable angels in festal gathering, the assembly of the first-born, the spirits of just men made perfect, Jesus, and the sprinkled blood. The baptized already stand there in worship, and at every Mass the earthly liturgy really shares in that heavenly worship, above all at the Sanctus (CCC 1090).

The heroes are at the festival. Last week's "apart from us" resolved: the gallery's saints are the just made perfect, present, interceding, waiting for the family to fill in: the communion of saints as geography.

Two bloods, two words. Abel's blood cries from the ground for justice (Genesis 4:10); the sprinkled blood of Jesus speaks more graciously: innocent blood pleading pardon: Father, forgive them. The better word ends the case in mercy.

Voices of the Church

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on Hebrews*

As a great crowd rouses the athlete, so the memory of the saints rouses the runner: the cloud shields and refreshes like shade at noonday. And strip like the athletes: no one runs well carrying luggage.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux *Sermon for All Saints*

Calling the saints to mind inflames us with longing: our desire is to share their company and joy, fellow citizens of the first-born enrolled in heaven. The saints await us; we should long for them.

St. Teresa of Ávila *The Bookmark*

Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things pass; God does not change; patience obtains all things; the one who has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices.

Live It This Week

1. At Mass this week, at the Sanctus, consciously join the festal gathering: you are singing with the festal gathering of 12:22. Ask your saint's intercession by name on the way to Communion.
2. Reinterpret one current suffering as paideia: bring it to the Father once this week, out loud, as training rather than verdict, and ask what it is forming.
3. Read Hebrews 13 before the final session. Watch for one last “we have”: the strangest one yet: and count any final “better.”

Scripture Memory Verse

HEBREWS 12:1B-2A (RSV2CE)

“Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”

Before Next Session

Read Hebrews 13. Final session: the inventory is read, the board is totaled, and the study is sent.

Catechism Connections

CCC 954–957 (the three states of the one Church) · CCC 2683 (the witnesses' care for us) · CCC 1030–1031 (the final purification) · CCC 1090 (the Sanctus joins the festal city)