

Take-Home: Session 7

A Kingdom of Priests · Whose Sins You Forgive

What We Found

Easter evening, locked doors, and the risen Christ saying "Peace be with you." Then: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you," his own mission, extended through sent men. He BREATHED on them, and we found the ancestry of that gesture in Genesis 2:7: as God's breath once made dust into a living man, Christ's breath now begins the new creation, making ministers who carry the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Forgive or retain: a two-sided authority exercised case by case. Behind Peter's keys we found Isaiah 22, the steward's office in David's house: the background the Church has long heard beneath the keys, a delegated royal authority that outlives its holder. We faced the scribes' own objection, "who can forgive sins but God alone?", and found that Jesus never denied their premise; he proved "the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins," and Matthew records the crowd glorifying God "who had given such authority to MEN." And we were honest about history: the confessional box and frequent private confession developed over centuries, and the Church says so herself (CCC 1447); what Easter evening gave was the authority. The furniture came later; the gift did not.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Chrysostom

Chrysostom marvels, in substance: God has given to priests an authority he gave neither to angels nor archangels; what they carry out below, God ratifies above. He wrote *On the Priesthood* largely to explain why this office frightened him. (Faithfully summarized.)

On the Priesthood, Book 3

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Ambrose of Milan

Writing *On Penance* against those who denied the Church could absolve grave sinners, St. Ambrose argues in substance: the Church does not presume this power, she obeys it. Christ said "whose sins you forgive"; why would he grant a power he intended no one to use? (A summary of his argument.)

On Penance

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine

"When Peter baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes... even when Judas baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes." (A close paraphrase of his teaching.) In the sacraments the minister's hands move, but the power is never his. The forgiving in the confessional is Christ's, which is why no minister's unworthiness can poison the gift.

Tractates on the Gospel of John, Tractate 6

Live It This Week

- Go to confession this week if you are able, and hear the absolution as Easter evening, still happening. If it has been years, tell the priest exactly that; it is his favorite sentence to hear.
- Speak one out-loud forgiveness to someone who needs the words, not the vibe.
- Pray John 20:21 to 23 once each day, and thank Christ by name for one person through whom his forgiveness has reached you.

Memory Verse

"Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."

John 20:21 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read 1 Peter 2:4 to 10 once, with a pen in hand. Circle anything that looks familiar. Trust your memory.

Catechism References

CCC 1441 to 1442; CCC 1444 to 1445; CCC 1447; CCC 1461.