

Take-Home • Session Eight

Shepherd the Flock • 1 Peter 5:1-14

What We Found

Peter's most personal page. Behind tend the flock we found the beach of John 21, where the risen Jesus rebuilt his denier one question per denial; behind clothe yourselves with humility we found the towel of John 13. Authority in the Church wears an apron: real office, brotherly style, exactly as Christ designed it. Casting anxiety turned out to be filed under humility, a transfer of custody to the One who cares. The lion is real and resistible. And Babylon gave up its secret: from the earliest centuries the Church has read the Babylon of 5:13 as Rome. On that reading Peter wrote from the capital with Mark, his interpreter, beside him, and early tradition remembers Mark's Gospel as Peter's preaching in ink. It was in Rome that Peter finished his witness, and his successors sit in that city to this day.

Voices of the Church

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St. Clement of Rome (d. c. 99), Letter to the Corinthians 5

Writing from Rome within about three decades of the events, St. Clement holds up “the good apostles”: Peter, who through unrighteous jealousy endured not one or two but many labors, and having thus borne witness went to his appointed place of glory; and Paul likewise. It is the earliest surviving reference to Peter's martyrdom outside the New Testament, written from the very city, by the man remembered as his successor, while eyewitnesses still lived.

Voices of the Church

St. Papias of Hierapolis (c. 60-130), as preserved by Eusebius, Church History III.39

Papias, who made it his business to collect the words of the apostles' disciples, records the tradition of John the Elder: Mark, having become Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, what he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord, taking care to omit nothing he had heard and to falsify nothing. Eusebius adds elsewhere (Church History II.15) that Peter mentions this Mark in his first letter, composed in Rome, the city he calls figuratively Babylon. On that early testimony, the “my son Mark” of 5:13 is the reason we have the Gospel of Mark: Peter's preaching in ink.

Voices of the Church

St. Gregory the Great (d. 604), Pastoral Rule, Book II

The pope who styled himself “servant of the servants of God” teaches that the ruler of souls must be first in service: pure in thought, exemplary in conduct, discreet in silence and profitable in speech, a near neighbor to everyone in compassion and exalted above all in contemplation, never preferring to rule over men rather than to serve them. Book II of the Pastoral Rule is 1 Peter 5:2-3 expanded into the West’s manual for shepherds, written by a successor of the fisherman.

Live It This Week

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This week: (1) Memorize 1 Peter 5:7. (2) Each night, name the day’s heaviest anxiety aloud and cast it with the words of Psalm 55:22; if you catch yourself retrieving it, cast it again without self-reproach. (3) Do one hidden act of apron-wearing service in your household. (4) Pray one Our Father for the pope and your bishop, under-shepherds accountable to the chief Shepherd. (5) Read 2 Peter 1 before next session: the study’s second movement begins.

Scripture Memory

“Cast all your anxieties on him, for he cares about you” (1 Peter 5:7, RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 2 Peter 1:1-11 before Session Nine; the study’s second movement begins. If you can, read both short letters in one sitting this week.

Go deeper in the Catechism: CCC 880-882; 1547; 1551