

Take-Home Sheet | Session 3

Five Controversies (Mark 2:1-3:6)

A Ransom for Many: A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Mark

What We Found

Five arguments in a row, deliberately arranged: they escalate from silent objections "in their hearts" (2:6) to an open alliance of enemies, Pharisees and Herodians, plotting "how to destroy him" (3:6). The shadow of the cross falls across this Gospel by chapter three, and it falls because of who Jesus claimed to be.

At the center: four friends, a torn-open roof, and a sentence that started everything, "My son, your sins are forgiven." The scribes' theology was correct: sin is finally against God (Psalm 51:4), so only God can forgive it. Jesus never corrected their premise; he demonstrated that he holds the prerogative, "that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," and we found the title's home address in Daniel 7:13-14: the one who receives everlasting dominion from the Ancient of Days. We traced that authority "on earth" forward: the crowds glorified God "who had given such authority to men" (Matthew 9:8), and the risen Lord breathed on his apostles: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven" (John 20:21-23). This is why the confessional exists: not a middleman, but mercy delivered out loud, so you never have to wonder.

We also met the Physician who eats with the sick (2:17), the Bridegroom, the LORD's own covenant role (Hosea 2:19-20), who will be "taken away," often heard as the first whisper of the Passion and the root of Christian fasting, and the Lord of the Sabbath, who cited David receiving the holy bread (1 Samuel 21) and restored God's day to its purpose: doing good, saving life.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Ambrose of Milan (On Penance)

Against those who admitted God forgives but denied the Church could absolve, St. Ambrose answers: deny the Church's power to forgive sins and you must deny Baptism itself, for there too sins are remitted through human ministers. It is one and the same Christ who forgives in both fonts of mercy.

Voices of the Church: St. John Chrysostom (On the Priesthood, Book 3)

God has given to priests a power he gave neither to angels nor archangels: what they perform on earth, God ratifies above. Chrysostom's point is not clerical pride but trembling humility, that God should work heaven's business through earthen vessels.

Voices of the Church: St. Ignatius of Antioch (Letter to the Magnesians)

Within living memory of the apostles, St. Ignatius describes believers who no longer keep the Sabbath but order their lives by the Lord's day, the day on which, he says, our life also rose again through Christ and through his death (Letter to the Magnesians 9, paraphrased). Sunday is not the Sabbath's betrayal but its flowering.

Live It This Week

- Go to Confession before this study ends, this week if you can. Hear the words out loud. If it has been years, say exactly that to the priest; it is his joy, not your shame.
- Reclaim one Friday practice as bridal longing for the taken Bridegroom: a real fast, a meatless day done with intention, or an act of penance offered for one person.
- Do one deliberate act of "Sabbath good" this Sunday: rest that restores, worship that costs, or mercy that inconveniences you.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Mark 3:7-4:34. Watch for a mountain, a list of twelve names, and four kinds of dirt.

Catechism References

CCC 574, 796, 1441-1445, 1503, 2173