

Take-Home Six

Once Saved, Always Saved

Abide

The Eucharist, Grace, and Staying in Christ

What We Found

We began where we should have: no one can snatch us out of his hand, and nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Those verses are ours and many Catholics have never heard them preached as ours.

Then we noticed what kind of list Paul is making in Romans 8. Death, life, angels, rulers, powers, height, depth, anything else in creation: every item on it answers his own question, who shall separate us from the love of Christ. They are powers ranged against us from outside, and his answer is that not one of them can tear us away. What he is not asking there is whether a man can walk away himself. That question gets its answer three chapters later.

And in Romans 11 Paul warns believers who are currently standing, grafted in already, and states the condition plainly: provided you continue in his kindness. The Church holds both. Perseverance is a gift to be asked for, and despair and presumption are both named as sins against hope.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Augustine

On the Gift of Perseverance (summary)

Perseverance to the end is not something the believer supplies but a gift God gives, which is precisely why it is to be prayed for rather than presumed. A gift is a reason to ask, not a reason for anxiety.

Voice of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage

On the Lapsed (summary)

Writing after a persecution in which many had denied the faith, he refuses both easy answers. He will not pretend nothing happened, and he will not say the lapsed are beyond return.

Voice of the Church

The Council of Trent

Session 6, 1547

The justified should have firm hope in God's help; and no one can know with the certainty of faith, apart from special revelation, that he is among the predestined. A real difference from the Reformed doctrine, stated plainly rather than blurred.

Ready Response

“I know I am saved.” Leave it standing. You are not trying to put a crack in anyone’s confidence, and it would be a poor use of an evening. Ask what they mean by it and listen to the whole answer, because most of what they are protecting is something you hold too. Then give your three tenses, the ones you learned to say last week, and let the two answers sit beside each other.

“If you can lose it, it was never grace.” Do not argue about the word grace. Ask them to read Romans 11:17-22 with you and to say who is being warned. Paul is writing to believers who are grafted in already and currently standing, and the condition he gives them is provided you continue in his kindness. Whatever we conclude about the word grace, that warning is addressed to people who are in the tree.

“So Catholics have no assurance.” Say no to that warmly, because it is the opposite of what this week taught you. Firm hope is not optional, and the Church names despair a sin against it just as squarely as presumption; CCC 2091-2092 are two short paragraphs you can read to your friend on the spot. Then say what it looks like in your own life: confession, the Eucharist, trying to love God, and confidence rather than terror.

A Word If Tonight Was Hard

If this session left you frightened rather than serious, that is not what the Church teaches and it is not what tonight was for. Despair is named a sin against hope for a reason. The practical answer to almost everything in this session is confession, the Eucharist, and prayer, not more worrying. If the fear does not lift, talk to a priest about it rather than carrying it alone.

Live It This Week

- Read Romans 8:31-39 out loud once a day, as a statement about yourself.
- Go to confession this week if it has been a while.
- Read Ezekiel 18:21-23 and notice what God says he takes no pleasure in.
- Keep praying for your person by name.

Memory Verse

“For I am sure that neither death, nor life... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **Romans 8:38-39**

Before Next Session

Read: John 15:1-11. Read it three times this week. It is the last session and the whole book lands there.

Catechism: CCC 1821, 2091-2092.