

Take-Home Seven

Abide

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The Eucharist, Grace, and Staying in Christ

What We Found

A branch has almost nothing to do. It abides. It bears fruit, which happens in it rather than being manufactured by it. It receives pruning, which is done to it. Nothing in John 15 asks the branch to attach itself or to hold on by its own strength. What the chapter does ask is abiding, and abiding has a content: Jesus commands his disciples to remain in him (15:4), and he speaks of keeping his commandments as the way of remaining in his love (15:10). That is obedience from inside the union, not effort that creates it.

And then verse 16, which settles the tone of the entire course: you did not choose me, but I chose you. The initiative was never ours, and neither is the maintenance.

So the question underneath these seven weeks, what does it take to stay, has an answer that is not effort. Staying is remaining where you were put and continuing to receive what comes through the connection. Which is why the book began where it did: whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. Same verb.

Voices of the Church

Voice of the Church

St. Augustine

Confessions I.1

You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. Not an achievement being described, but a design. The restlessness is the evidence.

Voice of the Church

St. Teresa of Ávila

The bookmark found in her breviary

Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things are passing, God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing. God alone suffices. She was reminding herself.

Voice of the Church

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Act of Oblation to Merciful Love, printed with Story of a Soul (summary)

She expects to appear before God with empty hands, having no works to offer that are not his gift, and treats this not as a cause for fear but as the ground of her confidence.

Ready Response

“Catholicism is a religion of conditions.” Concede that it can look that way, and that plenty of Catholics have carried it that way. Then walk your friend back through what these seven weeks actually put on the table: the Eucharist, the sacrifice made present, adoption, grace, living faith, perseverance. Say what you noticed about that list. Not one item on it is something you produced. A religion of conditions to be met would be exhausting; what you have been handed is a set of gifts, and what is asked of you is that you not refuse them.

“So what does it take to stay?” Nothing you manufacture. Union with Christ is given, not earned, and the sacraments are how it is given rather than a score you run up. What is asked of you is real but it is a response: keep receiving, keep believing, keep loving, and do not detach yourself. A branch does not hold itself on, and it does not have to; it does have to stay where it was put.

When you are afraid. Go back to John 15:16 and say it about yourself: you did not choose me, but I chose you. You did not arrange this and you are not holding it together by paying attention to it. Then go to confession, receive the Eucharist, and stop auditing yourself. If the fear does not lift, talk to a priest rather than carrying it alone.

Live It This Week

- Memorise John 15:5.
- Go to Mass this Sunday and receive knowing what Sessions One and Two said about it. If you are conscious of grave sin, go to confession before you receive; if you cannot get to confession first, come to Mass anyway and make a spiritual communion (CCC 1385).
- Go to confession within two weeks.
- Keep praying for your person. You have done it for seven weeks. Do not stop now.

Memory Verse

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” **John 15:5**

Where to Go From Here

The modules: Five standalone sessions extend this course and can be run in any order: Mary; Saints, Statues, and the Charge of Idolatry; Purgatory and the Last Things; Baptism; and Confession.

Catechism: CCC 787-789, 1391-1392, 1821.