

TAKE-HOME 11 | COME AND SEE

Until Christ Is Formed in You

WHAT WE FOUND

- St. Paul describes his pastoral work with the word for labor pains, and adds "again." He had already done it once with the Galatians and was doing it a second time.
- The goal he names is not agreement or membership but "until Christ be formed in you." What is produced is not a copy of the person doing the forming.
- In six verses he compares himself to a nursing mother and to a father. He shared not only the gospel but himself, and gave the reason: they had become very dear to him. And they worked night and day so as not to be a financial burden.
- 2 Timothy 2:2 is four generations deep in one sentence, and the verb is entrust, from the same family as the word for a deposit left for safekeeping. The criteria are faithfulness and the ability to hand it on. No number appears anywhere in the verse.
- Apollos was eloquent, well versed, fervent, and accurate, and his knowledge was still incomplete: he knew only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila took him aside privately, and St. Luke names Priscilla first. No public correction, no letter, no attempt to silence him.
- That same Apollos went on to Corinth, and is the Apollos of "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth." Luke records one quiet conversation between two tentmakers and a brilliant preacher, and its fruit turns up in a letter read ever since.
- In Deuteronomy 21:17 a double portion is the firstborn son's inheritance. On that reading Elisha appears to be asking for recognition as Elijah's heir rather than simply for twice the power.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Rule of St. Benedict on adapting to the person in front of you

In its chapter on the abbot, the Rule of St. Benedict teaches in substance that one who is given charge of souls must adapt himself to many characters, coaxing one, reproving another, persuading another, and that he must accommodate himself to each according to what that person actually is.

The principle is fifteen centuries old and it is the opposite of a one-size-fits-all application of a curriculum; the Rule itself supplies a structured common programme. What forms one person will not form the next, and the person doing the forming has to change shape rather than expecting the other to.

The Rule of St. Benedict, chapter 2, on the qualities of the abbot. A faithful summary, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on the test of whether it worked

Pope St. Paul VI wrote that the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others, and he called this the test of truth and the touchstone of evangelization. It is unthinkable, he said, that someone should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming someone who bears witness to it and proclaims it in turn.

That is 2 Timothy 2:2 stated as a criterion. Formation should ordinarily dispose people to hand on what they received, while respecting their freedom and their circumstances.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 24 (1975).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine on the conversation he could not get

In the Confessions, St. Augustine describes wanting to pour out his troubles to St. Ambrose and repeatedly being unable to obtain the sustained private conversation he wanted. The bishop was besieged by people with needs, and in the little time he had free he was reading or resting, and Augustine could not bring himself to interrupt. The long private conversation he wanted never came about, though he did have some contact with him.

And he was formed anyway, by hearing the man preach and by watching how he handled the Scriptures. That indirect presence and observation can form a person is the inference this study draws from his account. This is worth holding onto by anyone convinced they are failing because they cannot get the ideal one to one time. Sometimes the formation is happening in the parts you are not counting.

St. Augustine, Confessions VI.3-4.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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Rung 11 of the ladder. Hand something over. This week you deliberately make yourself less central.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Introduce one of the three to another believer who is not you, and then get out of the way. A dinner, an introduction after Mass, a text that puts two people in touch.
- Then leave it alone for a week. Do not check on it, do not ask how it went, and notice what that costs you.
- Separately: name one person you could hand this study to. Someone faithful, who would be able to lead it for others. Write the name down.
- And if there is someone who formed you, tell them this week. Many never learn what their care produced.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!"

Galatians 4:19

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 10:1-20 before we meet. Read the Mark passage slowly, and pay close attention to what the healed man asks for at the very end of it.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 426.** At the heart of catechesis we find a Person, the Person of Jesus Christ.
- **CCC 427.** It is Christ alone who teaches; anyone else teaches only as his spokesman, and must let Christ teach through him.
- **CCC 5.** Catechesis aims at initiating the hearer into the fullness of Christian life.
- **CCC 900.** The laity have the obligation and the right to work so that the message of salvation is known and accepted.
- **CCC 1656-1657.** The family is the domestic church, and parents are the first heralds of the faith.
- **CCC 2226.** Parents are to teach their children to pray and to discover their vocation as children of God.