

You Will Be My Witnesses

WHAT WE FOUND

- They worshiped him, and some doubted, in the same verse. The Great Commission was handed to a group that had not finished wavering.
- The commission rests on his authority, not on ours: all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him.
- There is one main finite imperative in it: make disciples. Going, baptizing, and teaching are participles describing how it happens. Sacrament and catechesis, together, and all that he commanded rather than a selection.
- Behind "all authority" stands the vision of Daniel 7:13-14, where one like a son of man is given a dominion that shall not pass away, and all peoples and nations serve him.
- And the last words: I am with you always. In Mark 3:14 the Twelve were appointed to be with him. In Mark 5:18 a healed man asked to be with him and was sent home instead. Being with him was never the alternative to being sent. It is what the sending is made of, and he supplies it.
- St. Luke calls his entire Gospel an account of what Jesus **began** to do. Among his last instructions was the command to wait, and the power named is the Holy Spirit.
- "You shall be my witnesses." An identity before an activity, and the sequence St. Luke gives is Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and the end of the earth.
- He showed them his wounds before he sent them, breathed on them with the verb used at Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37, and entrusted them with authority to forgive and to retain sins.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope St. Paul VI on the Church's deepest identity

Evangelizing, Pope St. Paul VI wrote, is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize.

He is not describing one department of parish life. He is saying that a Church which stopped doing this would not be a quieter Church; it would be a betrayal of what she is. Read it at the end of thirteen weeks and it lands differently than it would have in week one.

Pope St. Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi 14 (1975).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on where the mission comes from

The Council taught that the pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, because she draws her origin from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit according to the plan of God the Father.

John 20:21 expresses one biblical dimension of that fuller Trinitarian teaching. The Church does not have a mission the way an organization has a strategy. She is downstream of a sending that started in God.

Second Vatican Council, Ad Gentes 2 (1965).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Thérèse of Lisieux, patroness of the missions from an enclosed Carmel

In the manuscript written for her sister, St. Thérèse describes wanting every vocation at once, missionary, priest, apostle,

martyr, and finding the answer in love: in the heart of the Church, her mother, she would be love.

She entered Carmel at fifteen and died at twenty-four, having lived her missionary vocation entirely from an enclosed Carmel and never served in a mission territory. The Church named her patroness of the missions. This is for anyone who has spent thirteen weeks quietly certain that the real work belongs to someone more capable.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Story of a Soul, Manuscript B.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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Rung 13 of the ladder. There is no rung fourteen, and that is the point. The ladder was never a course; it was a description of an ordinary Christian life.

- **Keep praying for the three by name, daily.** This is the one thing not to stop. It has no end date and no completion criterion.
- Keep saying your one sentence. You will get better at it and it will change over time.
- Go back to whichever rung you skipped or fumbled. Most people know which one it was.
- Hand this study to the person you named tonight. Give them your take-homes if that helps.
- Ask your leader about the five standalone modules. The one on the people closest to you is the one most groups want.
- And when somebody says yes, remember Session 10: take them somewhere, walk in with them, and hand them to the Church rather than to yourself.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Matthew 28:20

AFTER THIS STUDY

There is no next session and no reading. Keep praying for the three by name, daily; that practice has no end date.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 2.** The Catechism quotes the Great Commission in its second paragraph.
- **CCC 849.** The missionary mandate: the Church is sent to the nations as the universal sacrament of salvation.
- **CCC 730.** Christ breathes the Holy Spirit upon the apostles at John 20:22; for Pentecost see CCC 731-732.
- **CCC 976.** The forgiveness of sins, linked to John 20:22-23.
- **CCC 1461.** Those who receive Holy Orders are the ministers of the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- **CCC 1257.** God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, and he himself is not bound by his sacraments.