

Take-Home for Session 3: Honor, Humility, and the Fire That Water Quenches

If You Come Forward to Serve: An Inductive Study of Sirach

What We Found

- Honoring father and mother sits at the hinge of the Ten Commandments, and Scripture attaches astonishing weight to it: atonement, treasure, answered prayer, long life (3:3-6), and a special summons to patience with a parent whose mind fails in old age (3:12-16).
- Humility is accurate self-knowledge before God, not self-hatred: the greater you are, the more you must humble yourself, and the humble are loved (3:17-18).
- We searched Scripture's whole witness on almsgiving atones for sin (3:30), with 1 Peter 4:8, Daniel 4:27, Luke 11:41, and Matthew 25, and found the Catholic order: Christ alone objectively atones; grace forgives through repentance and the sacraments; and almsgiving born of grace applies the fruits of the Cross as charity, satisfaction, and penance, like a branch bearing the vine's fruit (John 15:5).
- The closed hand and the hard heart are one disease; honor, humility, and mercy are one cure.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Cyprian of Carthage

Writing around AD 253, Cyprian composed an entire treatise on works and almsgiving in which he directly quotes Sirach 3:30, teaching that as water extinguishes fire, so almsgiving extinguishes sin. For Cyprian, baptism washes away past sins once, and Spirit-prompted mercy keeps the baptized clean thereafter, all of it Christ's gift.

On Works and Almsgiving, 2 (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. John Chrysostom

Chrysostom told his people they could see an altar lying in the streets: the poor man himself, an altar built of the very members of Christ, on which sacrifice may be offered at every hour. He treated generosity to the poor as inseparable from worthy worship at the Church's altar.

Homily 20 on Second Corinthians (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Peter Chrysologus

Chrysologus preached that faith stands on three companions that give life to one another: prayer, fasting, and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains what it asks, and mercy receives it; whoever prays, he taught, should fast, and whoever fasts should show mercy, so that our own petitions are heard as we hear the petitions of the poor.

Sermon 43 (paraphrased)

Live It This Week

- Do the act of honor you named in the Send question. Do not let the week end without it.
- Give one real act of almsgiving this week, quietly (Matthew 6:3), scaled to actually cost you something.
- Pray the memory verse before bed each night, and each time ask: whose fire did my water touch today?

Scripture Memory Verse

"Water extinguishes a blazing fire: so almsgiving atones for sin." (**Sirach 3:30**)

Before Next Session

Read Sirach 5:9-6:1 and all of Sirach 28.

Catechism References

CCC 2214-2220; CCC 1434; CCC 2447