

Take-Home for Session 11: Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

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

What We Found

- Ben Sira faces oblivion honestly: even among the great, some have perished as though they had not lived (44:9): the world's memory is a sieve, and our culture's terror of being forgotten is ancient.
- The turn: but these were men of mercy, whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten... their name lives to all generations, because the covenant assembly proclaims their praise (44:10, 14-15), and behind it stands the God who does not forget (Isaiah 49:15): mercy, not marble, is how a name survives.
- The roll's twin: Hebrews 11 rehearses the same names by faith, and Hebrews 12:1 promotes the remembered dead to a great cloud of witnesses surrounding the living; and Jesus adds that God is not God of the dead, but of the living (Mark 12:27).
- The communion of saints in three steps: death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:38-39), and so cannot dissolve the communion of his one Body (CCC 955-959); heavenly worship presents the prayers of the saints before God (Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4), and the Church confesses the saints' unceasing intercession (CCC 956); so the Church honors, imitates, and asks the prayers of the saints, worshiping God alone, through the one mediator (CCC 956-957).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Preaching on All Saints, Bernard asked why we honor the saints, since they need nothing from us: our praise adds nothing to them. His answer: the memory of the saints stirs in us a longing to be with them and to be like them, so that honoring them is really a mercy shown to us: their remembered lives kindle ours.

Sermon 2 for the Feast of All Saints (paraphrased, as read in the Liturgy of the Hours)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: The early Church at Smyrna

After St. Polycarp was martyred around AD 155, his church wrote an account explaining that they gathered his bones, more precious than jewels, and would celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom each year: worshiping Christ alone, they said, while loving the martyrs as disciples and imitators of the Lord. It is the communion of saints in its infancy, within living memory of the apostolic age.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp, 17-18 (paraphrased)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Near death, Thérèse promised that her heaven would be spent doing good on earth, letting fall a shower of roses. The Church later canonized her, and devotion to her intercession spans the world: her promise is the communion of saints spoken in the first person.

Her Last Conversations (paraphrased)

Live It This Week

- Choose your witness for the year: one saint whose life you will read and whose intercession you will ask weekly. Write the name on your take-home sheet tonight.
- Do one act of family memory this week: call the oldest living member of your family and ask for one story about a faithful ancestor you never met. Write it down.
- Pray Hebrews 12:1-2 each morning before your feet hit the floor: surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses... looking to Jesus.

Scripture Memory Verse

"Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers in their generations." (**Sirach 44:1**)

Before Next Session

Read Sirach 50:1-24 and 51:1-12. Last session next week: bring your Bible, your take-home sheets, and every question you have saved up about why this book is in your Bible.

Catechism References

CCC 946-948; CCC 956-957; CCC 961-962