

Strengthen Your Brethren

Luke 22:24-34

WHAT WE FOUND

At the Last Supper itself, with a dispute about greatness still embarrassing the room, Jesus converted rank into service without abolishing it: "let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves... I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:26-27), and then appointed the Twelve a kingdom with thrones. Order stays; the style changes forever.

Then the pronouns we counted: Satan demanded *all of them*, plural, for the sieve, and Jesus prayed for *one*, singular: "Simon, Simon... I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (22:31-32). The many are defended through the one. And the commission was issued with the denial already in view: "when you have turned again" admits the fall in advance. The office rests on Christ's prayer, never on Peter's readiness, which is why Peter's "I am ready" earned only the rooster.

The prayer's precision matters: not that Peter be spared sifting, not that he never sin, but that his *faith* not fail. Hours later his courage died and his faith wept and lived; Easter morning the risen Lord appeared "to Simon" before the rest of the apostles (Luke 24:34; cf. CCC 641), and the strengthener of the brethren was himself strengthened. Restored failures are the Church's method, not her embarrassment.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Leo the Great *Sermon 4, On the Anniversary of His Elevation to the Pontificate*

Leo preaches that the danger of the trial was common to all the apostles, yet the Lord took special care of Peter, praying for Peter's faith in particular, as though the others would stand more surely if the mind of their chief were not overcome. In Peter, Leo says, the courage of all is fortified: Christ so arranged the gift that what he granted to one, he granted through that one to the whole body.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose *Commentary on Psalm 40*

Ambrose coins the maxim the Church never stopped repeating: where Peter is, there is the Church, and where the Church is, there is life. For Ambrose this is not flattery of a man but confidence in Christ's design for his flock. Read alongside Luke 22:32, the maxim points where this study has been pointing all along: finding Peter is finding the place where the brethren are strengthened.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*

Bede observes that the Lord, who foreknew the denial, did not cancel the commission but built it around the fall: Peter is told to strengthen his brothers precisely as one who has turned again. The shepherd of the weak, Bede teaches, was permitted to know weakness in himself first, so that his strengthening of others would be mercy speaking, not superiority.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1.

Each morning this week, pray Luke 22:32 with your own name in it: "Lord, you have prayed for me, that my faith may not fail." Let the day start from his prayer, not your readiness.

2.

Identify one brother or sister currently being sifted, and do one concrete strengthening act: a call, a meal, an hour, a Mass offered. Turned-again people are for this.

3.

Keep the daily Our Father for the pope, adding this week: "Lord, you prayed that Peter's faith not fail; keep the faith of his successor firm, and through him strengthen your brethren."

MEMORY VERSE

"But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:32, RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **John 21:1-19** twice, slowly. Note where the disciples are and what they have gone back to doing. Bring your sealed sheet: a blank opens next week.

Catechism Connection: CCC 552; 641-642; 2600