

A House of Prayer for All Peoples

Isaiah 56-60

WHAT WE FOUND

The doors opened. The foreigner was forbidden to say “*The LORD will surely separate me,*” and the eunuch forbidden to call himself a dry tree: to him, “*a monument and a name better than sons and daughters... which shall not be cut off*” (56:3-5). And the study’s debt was paid: the man in the Acts 8 chariot was a eunuch, returning from worship at a Jerusalem whose assembly the old rules excluded him from, and his baptism reads like Isaiah 56 kept in person; his story has outlasted every family tree of his generation. The house was renamed, “*a house of prayer for all peoples*” (56:7), and Jesus quoted the verse as he drove out the traders (Mark 11:17; the whip of cords belongs to John 2:15), enraged *for* the nations, whose one prayer-courtyard, by the common reconstruction, had become a currency exchange. We faced the Deuteronomy 23 objection honestly: not a contradiction but a trajectory, the old boundary laws a holy preparation whose own destination the prophets announced (Matthew 5:17; CCC 1961-1964); the fence was protecting the field for a harvest it could not yet see, and the door opened from the inside.

Chapter 58 gave us the fast God chooses: loose the bonds, share your bread with the hungry, bring the homeless poor into your house, cover the naked. The Catechism cites these verses when it defines the works of mercy (CCC 2447), and Jesus made the list the Last Judgment’s announced exam (Matthew 25). St. John Chrysostom fused altar and door forever: honor Christ in the sacrament, and do not despise him naked outside it. And the promise stapled to the fast was the light itself: “*Then shall your light break forth like the dawn*” (58:8). Mercy is how the light gets out of the building.

Then came the postscript, “*he saw that there was no man... then his own arm brought him victory*” (59:16), and we know how the Church reads the arm; God dressed for the rescue in the armor Paul later issued to us all: the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation (59:17; Ephesians 6). And the light thread, planted at 2:5 thirteen sessions ago, resolved in a sunrise: “*Arise, shine; for your light has come*” (60:1), nations and kings streaming to the brightness, camels from Sheba carrying “*gold and frankincense*” (60:6), an inventory the Magi would one day unpack at Bethlehem (Matthew 2; CCC 528). The chapter ends beyond the sun itself, a promise Revelation 21 keeps: the city whose light is the glory of God.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom • *Homilies on Matthew*

Honor Christ in the sacrament, but do not despise him when he is naked outside; the same Lord who said *this is my body* also said *I was hungry and you gave me no food*. Adorn the table within, and do not neglect the brother without.

St. Peter Chrysologus • *Epiphany Sermons* (paraphrase in our words, not a verbatim quotation)

In the wise men the whole Gentile world bent its knee early, bringing the prophet’s own inventory: gold for the King, frankincense for God. What Isaiah saw as caravans on the horizon, Bethlehem

received as travelers at the door: the nations already arriving at the light of their rising. Tradition counts the wise men three from their three gifts; Matthew gives no number.

St. Teresa of Calcutta • *The Witness of Her Life*

The Christ she received in the Host each morning she served all day in what she called his distressing disguise: the hungry, the naked, the dying stranger. The fast God chooses, run (as we put it tonight) as a supply chain from the altar to the gutter and back.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Do one corporal work of mercy from Isaiah 58:6-7 this week, personally, not by proxy, and tell no one except God.
- Pray Isaiah 60:1-3 on one dark morning this week, at an actual window, at actual dawn. Let the sunrise preach it.
- Find the outsider's square footage in your world, the place where the seeker is supposed to be able to pray, ask, or belong, and clear one table from it: one invitation, one introduction, one welcome that costs you something.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you."
Isaiah 60:1 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session (the Last)

Read Isaiah 61:1-3 and 65:17-19. Bring whoever you have been meaning to bring. We finish where a certain carpenter began.

Catechism References From This Session

CCC 2447 • CCC 528 • CCC 1961-1964