

Session 10 Take-Home: Run So As to Obtain

What We Found

The New Testament's master image for life after Baptism is a **race**: "let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb 12:1-2), surrounded by "so great a cloud of witnesses", whom the Church reads as the finished encircling the running; "So run that you may obtain it," training for an "imperishable" wreath (1 Cor 9:24-25). Even Paul, mid-course, refused the finish-line claim: "Not that I have already obtained this... but I press on, straining forward to what lies ahead" (Phil 3:12-13), and "straining forward" is the word St. Gregory of Nyssa built on in *The Life of Moses* (Session 1): the pressing itself is the saved life.

Our month-old homework detonated: Hebrews 3:7-14 quotes Psalm 95 at length and squeezes one word: "exhort one another every day, **as long as it is called 'today'**... For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end." Perseverance's unit is not decades; it is today, repeated, inside a community that exhorts daily. And its grammar is synergy, both halves in one letter: "**keep yourselves** in the love of God" (Jude 21) and glory "to him who **is able to keep you** from falling" (Jude 24); we "by God's power are guarded through faith" (1 Pet 1:5). Work out, because God works in: our first memory verse, fully grown.

And for mile eighteen: Elijah under the broom tree, praying to die, received no lecture: sleep, bread baked on hot stones, water, a touch, and bread again, "else the journey will be too great for you" (1 Kings 19:4-8, in substance). Forty days' strength from that food. Collapse inside the journey is not apostasy, and God's aid stations are real: prayer (the Catechism itself enshrines St. Alphonsus's maxim on prayer and salvation, CCC 2744), the sacraments, and one another.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Polycarp of Smyrna

The Martyrdom of Polycarp, ch. 9 (c. 155)

Ordered to curse Christ or die, the aged bishop, a disciple of St. John, answered: "Eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" His crown was the last step of a race his own eighty-six years imply began in his youth: a finished "today, and today, and today."

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Benedict of Nursia

Rule, Prologue (6th century)

Near the end of his Rule's Prologue, St. Benedict writes, in substance, of a race: as we progress in this way of life and in faith, we run the path of God's commandments with hearts overflowing with love, persevering in the school of the Lord's service until death. Western monasticism is a perseverance manual, and its genius is ordinariness: fixed prayer, stability, beginning again.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Teresa of Calcutta

Private letters, published as Come Be My Light (2007)

Her published letters revealed that for roughly half a century she served through nearly unbroken interior darkness, feeling little of the presence of the God she served, and she did not stop. That documented fidelity is the voice: perseverance is measured by faithfulness, not felt success or consolation.

Live It This Week

Run today only. Each morning: "Lord, faithful today." The decades arrive one today at a time.

Deploy the runner's kit you named in the session: the fixed daily prayer, the sacramental rhythm on the calendar, the first message to your person.

Feed a runner. One concrete broom-tree kindness for a weary Christian this week: a meal, a ride, a "still praying for you."

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

Hebrews 12:1b-2a (RSV2CE)

Before next session: read Matthew 6:1-21, and count how many times Jesus talks about reward.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1810, 2016, 2742-2744