

Session 14 Take-Home: Hold Fast Your Crown

What We Found

We saw the city. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev 21:4); "He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and **he shall be my son**" (21:7): adoption become inheritance; and the center of it all: "they shall **see his face**" (22:4): the beatific vision that 1 John 3:2 promised and 1 Corinthians 13:12 longed for. Not clouds and wisps: a **new heaven and a new earth**, resurrection bodies, a river, the tree of life on both banks, Eden outgrown and its ancient exclusion, in the vision's images, ended. And the map completed: the sea was your font, the wilderness was these years, and the land is a face. The man who led Israel across the Jordan when Moses could only look from Nebo was Joshua, Hebrew *Yehoshua*/*Yeshua*; and Jesus is that same name in its Greek dress. The study has read the map, with the Church, as a map of Jesus all along.

And the study handed over its secret. The title has been hiding all season in a sentence of the risen Christ to the church of Philadelphia: **"I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown"** (**Revelation 3:11**): and the whole study is folded in its four clauses. *"What you have"*: salvation really possessed: the three tenses, grace, the font, justification, faith working through love, sonship (Sessions 1-6). *"So that no one may seize your crown"*: really at stake: the warnings, the sin that kills, the way back (Sessions 7-9). *"Hold fast"*: really keepable, by grace: today's faithfulness, the crown he crowns, the anchor behind the curtain (Sessions 10-12). *"I am coming soon"*: the horizon: nothing unclean shall enter, he completes what he begins, the city, the face (Sessions 13-14). Fourteen weeks were an exegesis of one sentence, and you performed it from memory.

You were commissioned. You spoke your three-tense answer aloud: **I have been saved; I am being saved; and I hope, with confidence, to be saved.** You named the text you will carry, and the person you will carry it to. The parking lot list ended empty: every question this study parked, it answered. That, too, was a lesson: the faith holds up under questions. Now go: the porch light is on, and you know where the door is.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Augustine of Hippo

The City of God, Book XXII, ch. 30 (426)

"There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. Behold what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we have, if not to reach the kingdom which has no end?" The last paragraph of his last great work: all of history, resolving into four verbs and a rest.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. Ignatius of Antioch

Letter to the Romans (c. 107)

Traveling under guard to the arena, the disciple of the apostles begged not to be rescued, writing in substance: it is better for me to die into Jesus Christ than to reign over the ends of the earth; suffer me to attain the pure light, for when I arrive there, I shall truly be a man. The crown, wanted more than life: not morbid, but magnetized.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH · St. John Paul II

Homily inaugurating his pontificate (October 22, 1978)

"Do not be afraid," he told the whole world at his inauguration, summoning it to open wide the doors to Christ. Said once to the whole world; said tonight to you. The study ends with doors: the door of heaven held open by grace, and every door in your week that Christ is asking you to open wide to him.

Live It From Here

Keep the kit. The runner's kit from Session 10, the daily prayer, the sacramental rhythm, the person, does not graduate. It is the rest of your life's equipment.

Go to the person you named. Within two weeks, while the commissioning is warm. You are not bringing an argument; you are bringing a porch light.

Begin again. Groups that end well begin again: the natural companion is *Abide* (the same doctrines from the apologist's chair), or whatever your group chooses. Pick the date.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown."

Revelation 3:11 (RSV2CE)

The last assignment: it was always this verse. Keep it where you kept your sealed guess and your answer: some sentences deserve to be carried for life.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 163, 1023-1024, 1028, 1042-1044