

The Family of God

Pentecost, the Church, and the Covenant Family Living Now

TAKE-HOME SHEET

WHAT WE FOUND

Pentecost turned out to be two reversals at once, and we computed both. Babel run backward: one language was shattered there and the nations scattered; here the nations gather and every tongue hears one gospel, Luke's list of peoples answering Genesis 11's. And a second Sinai: on the covenant's own feast day, the Spirit writes on hearts what stone once carried, and where three thousand fell after the calf (Exodus 32:28), three thousand are added at the font (Acts 2:41). Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 were not quoted at Pentecost; they were performed. Peter preached the sworn Davidic oath (citing our verse, Psalm 132:11) kept in the risen Jesus, enthroned higher than Jerusalem, and made the covenant offer that still stands: baptism for the forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Spirit, "to you AND TO YOUR CHILDREN and to all that are far off": Jeremiah's forgiveness, Ezekiel's Spirit, Genesis 17's claimed infants, and the third promise reaching for the nations, in two verses.

The newborn family's life had four marks in one verse (Acts 2:42): the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers, recognizable in any parish tonight. The breaking of bread is Luke's name for the Eucharist, and Paul gave us its covenant mechanics: the cup and the bread are a real participation in Christ's blood and body, and "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body." The Church is the people who never stopped eating the covenant meal; the Eucharist makes the Church. And at the first council, James answered Session 8's ache with Amos 9: the fallen tent of David "I will rebuild... that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name" (Acts 15:16-17). The Church is the Davidic kingdom restored and thrown open to the world, the kingdom present now in mystery, as the Council says (Lumen Gentium 3): our chart's last row, standing in history, with an address.

We took the invisible church at full strength, honored what it guards (God alone reads hearts, and visible belonging without living faith saves no one), and answered from the whole study: every covenant came with visible signs, a visible people, and a findable table, and the family in Acts is entered by public washing, led by appointed elders, ruled by a council that binds, and disciplined by a command ("tell it to the church") that cannot be obeyed toward an invisible body. One Church, visible and invisible at once, the way a sacrament is sign and grace at once. One thing remains: the formula has not yet been spoken for the last time, and the study began at a wedding. Bring your chart and your Take-Home 1 to the final session. Everything ends where it began.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Clement of Rome *Letter to the Corinthians (c. AD 96)*

Writing from Rome to a quarreling Corinth while the apostle John likely still lived, St. Clement appealed to visible, transmitted order: Christ was sent from God, the apostles from Christ, and the apostles appointed their first converts as bishops and deacons, providing for succession after them. For Clement the covenant family had structure from the beginning, not as bureaucracy but as inheritance: the household of God has stewards because it is a household.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan *Commentary on Psalm 40*

St. Ambrose, the bishop who baptized Augustine, compressed his ecclesiology into a single famous sentence: where Peter is, there is the Church; and where the Church is, there is no death but life eternal. The visible communion gathered around the apostolic office was not, for Ambrose, a human arrangement layered over the gospel; it was where the covenant life was found and fed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Henry Newman *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (1845)*

St. John Henry Newman, studying the Fathers as an Anglican in search of the true Church, concluded famously that to be deep in history is to cease to be Protestant: the Christianity of the second, third, and fourth centuries, visible, sacramental, hierarchical, Eucharistic, was recognizably the Catholic Church, and the covenant family of Acts is its infancy, not a different organism. History, Newman found, is the Catholic argument.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Find your baptism date if you have not already (Session 3's homework), and this week thank God for it explicitly: it was the day the covenant claimed you by name.
- At Mass this week, receive Communion (properly disposed) with 1 Corinthians 10:17 in mind: "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body." Look at the people in the Communion line with you and call them, silently, what the covenant calls them: family.
- Before the final session, read Revelation 19:6 to 9, Revelation 21:1 to 7, and Revelation 22:1 to 5. Bring your Bible, your chart notes, and your Take-Home 1. Everything ends where it began.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy."

1 Peter 2:10 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session: Read Revelation 19:6 to 9, Revelation 21:1 to 7, and Revelation 22:1 to 5. Bring your Bible, your chart notes, and your Take-Home 1. Everything ends where it began.

Catechism References: CCC 751 to 752, 766, 1267, 1396