

In Their Midst

Session 3. Let My People Go

When obedience meets resistance, God's people learn to bring him their discouragement and anchor hope in his faithful character.

What We Found

Moses' obedience did not produce immediate relief. Pharaoh responded with greater cruelty, and Israel's early worship gave way to exhaustion and blame. The passage does not minimize that suffering or treat discouraged people with contempt.

Moses brought his anguish back to the Lord. God answered by revealing what he would do and by recalling his covenant. Israel's hope rested not in visible progress or human strength, but in the Lord who had bound himself to his people.

Difficulty is not by itself proof that an act of obedience was mistaken. Faithful discernment takes suffering seriously while continuing to test our choices by God's revelation, moral truth, wise counsel, and the full course of providence.

Voices of the Church

St. Irenaeus of Lyons, c. 130-c. 202

Summary of his teaching: God did not form humanity because he needed our service. Human beings need communion with God, and God gives his gifts so that they may share his goodness.

Against Heresies 4.14.1.

How this is cited. This is a close summary of St. Irenaeus's argument in the cited section, not a direct quotation.

For the group. God's promise to take Israel as his people is a gift of communion, not the recruitment of labor that God lacks.

St. Francis de Sales, 1567-1622

Summary of his teaching: when a person begins to pursue a devout life seriously, opposition and ridicule may increase. Such resistance is not itself proof that the person has chosen wrongly.

Introduction to the Devout Life, Part IV, chapter 1.

How this is cited. This faithfully summarizes the chapter's warning about worldly opposition to those beginning a devout life.

For the group. A harder week after an act of obedience does not automatically mean that God was absent from the decision.

St. Cyprian of Carthage, d. 258

Summary of his teaching: writing to his people during a plague, St. Cyprian says it is no wonder that the evils of this life fall on Christians and pagans alike, that Job and Tobias show the need of patience without murmuring, and that unless the struggle came first the victory could not follow.

On the Mortality.

How this is cited. Summary of the treatise's argument, not a quotation, and no section number is given because the divisions vary between editions.

For the group. Help the group name pain honestly. Shared suffering is not evidence that God has withdrawn, and endurance is not the same as pretending.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Pray one honest lament. Name before God what has become harder, what you fear, and what you do not understand. End by naming one truth about who God is.
2. Read Exodus 6:2-8 on three different days. Each time, underline or write down the actions God promises to take.
3. Encourage one discouraged person without offering a quick fix. Listen first, acknowledge the burden, and remind the person of one concrete truth from Scripture.
4. If you are discerning a difficult act of obedience, seek counsel from a mature Catholic, priest, or spiritual director. Do not treat either immediate comfort or immediate resistance as the only test.

Scripture Memory

Exodus 6:7

"I will take you for my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

Exodus 6:7

Go Further in the Catechism

- CCC 207, 211. God reveals himself as the one always present to save, and his name expresses a faithfulness kept in spite of human sin.
- CCC 227. Trust God in every circumstance, including adversity.
- CCC 2575. Moses learns prayer and intercession in relationship with God.
- CCC 1094. Typology recognizes the unity of God's saving plan.

Before next session. Read Exodus 7:1-10:29 before we meet again.