

Take-Home 7: The First Charcoal Fire

Keep your Take-Home 1 sheet safe, still folded. We will need it soon.

WHAT WE FOUND

The fall came by degrees, and the degrees were the lesson. It began in the garden, where Peter slept through the armory: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” He had rehearsed the wrong test; he was ready to die by the sword, and the test that came was cold, tired, anonymous hours. He “followed at a distance”: braver than the ten who fled, and close enough to watch while far enough to hide, which is where most of us live our own denials. Then the fire in the cold courtyard, where Peter warmed himself among the enemies of his Lord, and the ambush: not a soldier but a servant girl. Three denials, each cheaper than the last, from reflex to oath to a curse called down on himself. Sin compounds.

But the fall had been foretold inside a promise. We read the oracle Jesus quoted on the way to the garden, and found what the same oracle promises just after “strike the shepherd,” a surviving third brought through fire: “I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver... They will call on my name, and I will answer them” (Zechariah 13:8-9). The fire is a refiner's fire, and Jesus attached an appointment to the prophecy before anyone fell: “After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” Then the cock crowed, “and the Lord turned and looked at Peter” (Luke 22:61). The Catechism calls it the look of infinite mercy that drew tears of repentance (CCC 1429): the look that breaks a heart open, not apart. Peter went out and wept bitterly. And we left one question deliberately unanswered, because next session is entirely about it: two men betrayed Him that night, and both were filled with grief. Is all weeping the same?

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Ambrose of Milan / *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book X*

Ambrose finds no recorded words of Peter's repentance: only tears, and he treats them as sufficient. What words could not dare to confess, weeping confessed, and the tears washed the fault the voice could not name. Grief that flows toward the wounded Lord is itself received as prayer.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom / *Homilies on St. Matthew, Homily 85*

The boast leaned on self, sleep disarmed prayer, and the fear of a servant girl accomplished what armed men could not, so that we might learn the measure of human weakness left to itself. Yet the fall of the chief of the apostles was permitted so that no sinner after him need ever despair of the

remedy.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Francis de Sales / *Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, Chapter 9 (paraphrase)*

When we have fallen, we must not fall again into bitter rage against ourselves; that second fall is wounded pride disguised as contrition. Rise quickly, quietly, without amazement that weakness proved weak; grieve with a grief that is calm and full of hope, and set to work again.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Guard the garden: pray ten minutes every day BEFORE the day's tests, asking specifically, "Lord, show me the test I am not rehearsing for."
2. Once this week, close the distance on purpose: one act that identifies you with Christ in a room where you usually stay anonymous. Small is fine; invisible is not.
3. Pray with Psalm 51 once, slowly. If your own courtyard memory surfaces, hold it before God with this week's promise: the fire in the prophecy is a refiner's fire. And come back next week; the story is not over.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou

wilt not despise."

Psalm 51:17 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Matthew 27:3-5** and **Mark 16:1-8**. In the Mark passage, read verse 7 twice, and notice two small words the angel adds.

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 1429, 1851, 1451.