

Take-Home 9: The Second Charcoal Fire

Keep your surrender prayer. It is yours and His alone.

WHAT WE FOUND

Peter went back to the boats (“I am going fishing”), and the old life answered with the old emptiness: a night of nothing. At dawn, a stranger, one instruction, and the sea repeated the miracle that started everything. We set the two boat scenes side by side and measured the distance of the whole study: in Luke 5, Jesus had to command Simon into the deep, and the catch drove him away (“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”). In John 21, nobody commanded anything: the moment he heard “It is the Lord,” Peter threw himself into the sea toward Him. Same miracle, same sinner, opposite direction. That reversal is what conversion is.

On the beach, a charcoal fire: St. John uses that word exactly twice in the whole New Testament, the fire of the denial and this one. Jesus rebuilt the scene of Peter's worst hour, prop by prop, because mercy heals the wound at its site: same fire, same count of three, new script. “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”, the address of their first meeting, asked three times, one for each denial, until the grief reached the bottom of the wound. And Peter's answer stood on new ground forever: not “I am ready” but “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” His confidence had moved from his knowledge of himself, which failed in the dark, to Christ's knowledge of him, which never did. Each confession was answered with a flock: feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep: the office God claimed as His own in Ezekiel 34, handed to a restored man. Then the cost, disclosed with total honesty, and the last two words, which were the first two words: “Follow me.” And then we opened our sealed guesses, and answered for ourselves.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine / *Tractates on John, Tractate 123*

A threefold confession answers a threefold denial, that the tongue might serve love as fully as it had served fear. And the proof of love Christ asks is care for His flock: if you love me, it is my sheep you will feed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria / *Commentary on John, Book 12*

By the three confessions the three denials are annulled, and by “Feed my sheep” the apostle is not merely pardoned but renewed in his office, so that no trace of the wound is left to accuse him. Mercy is not content to leave a forgiven man haunted.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great / *Homilies on the Gospels, Homily 24*

The risen Christ stands on the solid shore of immortality while His friends toss on the night sea, and He directs even their failed labor to abundance. And before Peter is asked a single question, he is fed: mercy sets the table first and holds the conversation after breakfast.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Keep your surrender prayer; it is yours and His alone. Pray it once a day this week, word for word, especially on the day it stops feeling true.
2. If you are Catholic, strongly consider Confession this week: the rebuilt fire, available every week. If you are exploring, tell your leader one thing this session made you want.
3. Do the one act of “feeding” you named. Do it before Sunday.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

“Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.”

John 21:17 (RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **Acts 2:1-41**. As you read, keep one question in mind: what happened to the man from the courtyard?

Catechism references from tonight: CCC 1429, 553, 1428.