

Session 6 • Peace I Leave with You

John 14:25-27; John 20:19-21; Romans 8:31-39; 1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:7

PART 1: LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The study returns to the room where it began, and finally reads the sentence before the famous one: the peace of 14:27 is the last clause of the Paraclete promise. The group discovers that the promise of John 14:27 was kept: the risen Christ's first word to his frightened disciples behind shut doors is "Peace be with you", and that the Church has put both sentences into the Mass, where the group has been hearing them all their lives. Two "hard verses for anxious people" (1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:7) are faced at full strength and given back as gifts. The study ends in commissioning: "as the Father has sent me, even so I send you", peace received becomes peace carried.

Catholic Touchstone. Christ's peace is his presence, given now above all through the sacraments, where grace comes through matter: the body thread of this whole study finds its destination at the altar, in the confessional, and in the anointing.

What You Need to Know

One thing to repair before you teach this session. The study is named from John 14 and ends on John 14:27, and it has not yet read what stands between them: the promise of the Paraclete (14:15-26), the Spirit whom the Father will send in Jesus' name, who will be with the disciples and in them, and who will teach them everything. Tonight the opening reading is 14:25-27 as a single unit, because that is what it is: "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit... Peace I leave with you." The peace is the last clause of the Spirit's promise. That is also why the sacramental landing later tonight is not a change of subject; the Spirit given then is the Spirit at work in the sacraments now.

Begin where Session 1 ended: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (14:27). Notice it is a bequest ("I leave") and a gift ("I give"), spoken by a man making his last will hours before death; and what he wills to them is "my peace," his own, the peace he then carried through Gethsemane, trial, and cross. The world gives peace by arranging circumstances; his peace has just been demonstrated inside collapsing circumstances for five sessions. Now the group is ready to hear the verse with educated ears.

The session's central discovery is John 20:19-21, and it should be found, not announced. Easter evening: doors shut "for fear," disciples who fled and denied, and the risen Jesus standing among them saying, first word, "Peace be with you." He shows his wounds (the peace is not amnesia; the wounds are in it), says it again, and turns it into a sending: "as the Father has sent me, even so I send you." The promise of 14:27 is kept in person, to frightened disciples who had failed and abandoned him, and it immediately becomes mission. That is the arc of this final session: peace received, peace carried.

Then the Mass. In the Roman Rite, after the Our Father and its embolism (which the group prayed deliberately this past week: "safe from all distress"), the priest prays: "Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you..." That is the Missal's rendering of John 14:27; note for yourself that it differs slightly from the RSV2CE the group is reading ("Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you"), so say the Rite of Peace prays John 14:27 in the Church's liturgical wording rather than calling it verbatim. Then the priest greets the assembly with Christ's peace, and when the sign of peace is exchanged, the faithful offer it to one another before Communion. Many in your group have heard these words all their lives without noticing. Reveal by asking, not telling (see the Build); the recognition landing in real time is the point. This also completes the body thread: the pattern of grace given through creaturely means (Elijah's bread, the angel in the garden, last week's embodied practices) was heading here all along, to the sacraments, where Christ's peace comes through sensible signs: bread and wine, water, oil, and the words of absolution. Name the thread's whole arc tonight; the group has earned it.

Romans 8:31-39 is the study's summit of assurance, best read aloud and slowly: "If God is for us, who is against us?... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Paul's list (tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword) is not hypothetical, and his own resume in 2 Cor 11 (beatings, imprisonments, shipwrecks, hunger, cold, exposure) makes it credible, though it is not an item-for-item catalogue of what he had already suffered. Note too that verse 36 quotes Psalm 44:22. The logic of 8:32 is the study's deepest ground: the Father who "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all" has already given the costliest thing, and so will not withhold what he wills for our salvation and final glory. Be precise about what that does and does not promise. It is not a guarantee of health, safety, or any particular temporal good; verse 35 lists the things that will in fact come. It is a guarantee about the one thing anxiety most fears. Anxiety's ultimate whisper is separation, abandonment, aloneness; Romans 8 answers the whisper at its root: "neither death, nor life... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Finally, prepare carefully for the two hard verses; this segment is a pastoral gift disguised as apologetics. Anxious Christians are routinely wounded by 1 John 4:18 ("perfect love casts out fear... he who fears is not perfected in love": "my fear proves I lack love") and by 2 Timothy 1:7 ("God did not give us a spirit of timidity": "my anxiety is a *spirit*, maybe demonic, and real Christians would have cast it out"). Both readings collapse under the texts themselves. John's subject is *teleia agape*, love brought to completion, a trajectory ("perfected", 4:12, 17, 18); and the fear in view is fear of punishment on the day of judgment (4:17-18), the cringe before a condemning God, exactly the fear the whole letter dismantles with "God is love." John is not grading anxious temperaments; he is promising that as love matures, the terror of God-as-condemner dies. Growth, not verdict. And Paul's word to Timothy is *deilia*, cowardice, and the context is a minister urged to "rekindle the gift," not to be ashamed of the gospel, and to share in suffering for it (1:6-8). It is a word about shrinking back from witness, not a diagnosis of a nervous system, and Catholic teaching does not identify an anxiety disorder as a demonic spirit or, of itself, as a moral failure. Handled at full strength, these two verses stop being ammunition against the anxious and become promises for them.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Behind "let them not be afraid" stands the tenderest fear-not in the prophets: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you" (Is 43:1-2). Note what grounds it: not "the waters are shallow" but "you are mine" and "I will be with you", ownership and presence, the study's constant ground. And *shalom* itself: biblical peace is not the absence of disturbance but wholeness, right relation, well-being, which is why the risen Christ can give it while still wearing wounds. The priestly blessing Israel heard for centuries ends where this study ends: "the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Num 6:26).

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Teresa of Ávila

In the rendering Catholic devotion has carried for centuries: let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; all things are passing; God never changes; patience obtains all things; whoever has God lacks nothing, God alone suffices. It is Session 2 (all things passing, the Father constant) and Session 6 (presence as sufficiency) in a few lines, and it fits on a card in a wallet.

The lines traditionally kept as hers, associated with a note or bookmark found in her prayer book (Tier 2: the attribution is traditional, and no translator is named for this English rendering).

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Paul II

"Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors for Christ." So the new pope spoke to the whole world, a man formed under two totalitarian regimes. ("Be not afraid!" is the popular refrain by which the pontificate is remembered rather than the homily's own opening words.) It became a recurring theme of his pontificate, and he grounded it exactly where this study has: not in the mildness of the times, which were not mild, but in the presence and lordship of the Redeemer. Fear closes doors; Christ, welcomed, opens them.

Homily at the inauguration of his pontificate, 22 October 1978 (Tier 1).

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Charles de Foucauld

In the familiar English form: Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will... I am ready for all, I accept all... into your hands I commend my soul. The hermit of the Sahara drew his surrender out of Christ's own final words (Luke 23:46). It is the Gethsemane pattern from Session 4 carried to its end: the "yet" of the garden, made a whole way of life, and given to the Church as a prayer the anxious can grow into for years.

The Prayer of Abandonment as commonly printed, arranged from his writings (Tier 2: a later arrangement of his meditation, not a prayer he published in this form; no translator is named).

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1832:** peace is among the fruits of the Holy Spirit, "perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory": peace as the Spirit's work in us, not our willpower.
- **CCC 1468:** the Sacrament of Penance restores those who receive it worthily to God's grace and can bring "peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation." Say it carefully: Confession reconciles those conscious of sin and may bring peace of conscience; it is not a treatment for every anxious feeling, and for a scrupulous person repeated confession of settled matters can feed the loop rather than quiet it (Session 1 panel).
- **CCC 1453:** fear of punishment is not simply an error to be dismantled. Such fear can be a beginning: imperfect contrition is a gift of God that can start a conversion, even though charity seeks the more perfect motive.
- **CCC 1520:** the Anointing of the Sick gives "strengthening, peace, and courage to overcome the difficulties" of serious illness: peace and courage, by name, through oil and prayer.

THREAD WATCH (leader only, never read aloud)

Every thread lands tonight; say them aloud at the marked moment. (1) *Tarasso*: "Let not your hearts be troubled" (14:1, Session 1) is answered by the risen "Peace be with you" (20:19); the troubled Jesus of 11:33, 12:27, and 13:21 has carried trouble through death and out the other side. (Lexically the thread runs through John alone; the Synoptic garden uses other Greek.) (2) *The Psalm 42 refrain* (42:5, 11; 43:5) and *Gethsemane*: the peace he gives is the peace he won there; "my peace" has a price tag. (3) *Merimna*: the divided self of Sessions 2 and 5 is gathered into "one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42), and the needful One is present in the sacraments. Say that line aloud in Answer 3; it is the thread's last inch. (4) *The body*: bread under a broom tree, an angel in a garden, written casting, and now the sacraments, where grace comes through sensible signs: Baptism's water, the Eucharist, Confession, Anointing's oil. The study's architecture should be visible to everyone by the end of the night.

Session Goals

1. Read John 14:25-27 as one unit, so the Paraclete promise and the gift of peace are heard together, and discover the promise kept in John 20:19-21.
2. Reveal the Mass connection (embolism and Rite of Peace) and land the body thread at the sacraments.
3. Disarm 1 John 4:18 and 2 Timothy 1:7 at full strength and hand them back as promises.
4. Commission the group: peace received becomes peace carried; each member names one person and one concrete act.

The 90 Minutes

- **0:00** Gather and opening prayer (5 min)
- **0:05** Win (10 min)
- **0:15** Build: John 14:25-27, the Spirit and the peace, and the John 20 discovery (25 min)
- **0:40** The Mass and the sacraments; the threads named (15 min)
- **0:55** The hard verses, at full strength (15 min)
- **1:10** Romans 8, read aloud; commissioning (12 min)

- **1:22** Send, Live It, memory verse (5 min)
- **1:27** Closing: the peace exchanged (3 min).
- **Non-cutable:** the John 20 discovery, the Romans 8 reading (never rushed), and the commissioning.
- **If you run long, cut in this order:** (1) the Dig Deeper on Isaiah 43, reading it aloud without discussion, (2) W2, (3) Send S1, with the cards written at home instead.

PART 2: DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.*

(Leaders: yes, those are the words the priest prays at the Rite of Peace, used here as our opening prayer. Do not point it out yet; if anyone recognizes it, smile and keep going. It is tonight's discovery.)

Win

W1. Six weeks in: what is one moment from this study, a verse, a discovery, an envelope, that has stayed with you?

W2. Where did you actually meet peace this month, even for a minute? What was it made of?

Build

Read John 14:25-27 aloud as one unit, and then re-read verse 27 by itself. The group first heard this verse in Session 1; they have since been to a kitchen, a broom tree, a garden, a prison. Ask them to listen with everything they now know.

1. Read verses 25 and 26 again. Before Jesus says one word about peace, what does he say the Father will send, and what will that One do? Now read verse 27 straight on from it. What difference does it make that the peace is the last clause of that promise, not a separate sentence?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

He promises the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in his name, who will teach them everything and bring to their remembrance all that he said. Only then: "Peace I leave with you." The peace is not a mood he wishes on them as he goes; it is the last clause of the promise that they will not be left alone. Which answers a question a group may have carried all study: if Jesus is leaving, how exactly is his peace supposed to reach anyone? By the Spirit, given and remaining, and (as tonight will show) through the sacraments the Spirit works in. Hold that; the body thread lands on it later.

2. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." After five sessions: what is "the world's" way of giving peace, and what do you now understand "my peace" to be? What has this study shown it to be made of?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The world gives peace by arranging circumstances: problems solved, threats removed, and therefore always fragile, always awaiting the next disturbance. "My peace" is different in kind: it is his own, and the study has watched him carry it through the collapse of every circumstance: troubled at a tomb, sorrowful unto death in a garden, and still praying "Abba... yet not what I will." His peace is presence held in the Father, and it has a price tag: the garden and the cross are inside it. It is a bequest ("I leave") from a man making his will, which means it was always meant to survive his death, and, as the group is about to discover, it did.

LIVE DISCOVERY

Say: "This verse is a promise, and promises get kept or broken. The next time Jesus stands in a room with these same men, listen to his first word. Find the scene: Easter evening." Point them to John 20 and let them find verses 19-21. Have them read aloud, slowly. Then ask question 2.

3. Doors shut "for fear." Disciples who fled, and one who denied him three times. And the risen Christ's first word to that room is "Peace be with you", then he shows his wounds and says it again, and then: "as the Father has sent me, even so I send you." Walk through what each element means for this study.

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

The promise of 14:27 is kept, in person, on the far side of death: "Let not your hearts be troubled" has become "Peace be with you," and the study's opening thread ties off: the Jesus who was himself troubled (11:33; 12:27; 13:21) has carried trouble through the cross and out the other side; peace gets the last word. It is given to frightened disciples who had failed and abandoned him, and to the one who had denied him three times, which means his peace is grace, not a reward for composure. He shows his wounds while saying it: this peace is not amnesia or the erasure of what happened; the wounds are inside the peace, glorified, which is what biblical peace so often means, and more than the absence of conflict: wholeness, welfare, right relation, not the erasure of history. (John writes *eirene*; the Hebrew *shalom* stands behind it.) And it immediately becomes a sending: peace received turns into peace carried, which is where this final session is taking us.

4. Here is tonight's second discovery, by way of a question: where have you heard the sentences "Peace I leave you, my peace I give you" and "Peace be with you" before, outside this study, out loud, possibly thousands of times?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

At Mass. After the Our Father and its embolism ("...free from sin and safe from all distress"), the priest prays: "Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you: look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church..." That is John 14:27 in the Church's liturgical wording, and it was tonight's opening prayer. Then he greets the assembly, "The peace of the Lord be with you always," which echoes the risen Lord's Easter greeting rather than quoting it, and when the sign of peace is exchanged the faithful offer that peace to one another before Communion. Many of you have heard these words your whole lives. The Church did not leave Christ's peace in the past tense; she put it in your mouth on the way to Communion. **Leaders: now name the body thread's whole arc aloud:** bread under Elijah's broom tree, an angel strengthening Christ in the garden, last week's written casting, and now the sacraments, where grace reaches us through sensible signs. The water of Baptism, where the Spirit promised in tonight's first reading is given. The Eucharist, Christ's own Body and Blood under the appearances of bread and wine. For the burdened conscience, Confession, whose absolution can bring "peace and serenity of conscience" (CCC 1468). In serious illness, Anointing, which gives "peace and courage" (CCC 1520). This is why the divided self of Sessions 2 and 5 finally hears "one thing is needful" (Luke 10:42): the one needful One is not an idea. He is given, in signs you can touch, because God made the body too and is saving the whole person.

Before the press, put both texts in front of them. Read 1 John 4:12-18 aloud, and ask: what kind of fear does John actually name in verse 18? Then read 2 Timothy 1:6-8, and ask: what is Timothy being urged to do, and what is he being urged not to shrink from? Let the group answer both before you say anything below.

BUILD, THEN PRESS The hard verses: "perfect love casts out fear" and "a spirit of timidity"

Build them at full strength. Two verses are regularly used, sometimes from pulpits, against the very people this study is for. First, 1 John 4:18: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear... he who fears is not perfected in love." The anxious reader hears a verdict: my fear is the measure of my failure to love. Second, 2 Timothy 1:7: "God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control." Build the serious version, not only the abusive one: since fearfulness is set in contrast to what God gives, persistent fear can look like evidence of failing to cooperate with grace. (The crude version, that anxiety is literally a demon to be cast out rather than treated, has certainly been used on people, and some in the room have been struck with it.

Answer both.)

Press, then answer from the texts. John first: his subject is *teleia agape*, love brought to completion, and "perfected" is a trajectory word running through the whole passage (4:12, 17, 18): love is being perfected in us; no one in the room is finished. And the fear John names is specific: "fear has to do with punishment," fear of condemnation on the day of judgment (4:17), the servile cringe before God-as-condemner. So the verse is not a thermometer reading your anxiety and returning a love score; it is a promise about direction: as love matures, terror of a condemning God gives way to the confidence of a child. Growth, not verdict. One Catholic precision, because it matters: fear of punishment is not simply a false picture to be demolished. The Church teaches that such fear can be a real beginning, and imperfect contrition born of it is a gift of God that can start a conversion (CCC 1453). John is not condemning the beginning; he is describing where love takes you from there. Paul next: the word is *deilia*, cowardice, and the context is a minister told to rekindle his gift, not to be ashamed of the gospel, and to share in suffering for it (1:6-8). It is a word about shrinking back from witness, not a clinical word about a nervous system, and the text does not diagnose Timothy's temperament. Catholic teaching does not identify an anxiety disorder as a demonic spirit or, of itself, as a moral failure; the Church sends her anxious children to the sacraments and, gladly, to doctors (Session 1). Whether Paul means the Holy Spirit directly or the disposition the Spirit produces is disputed, and it does not change the point: what God gives is ordered to power, love, and self-control rather than to cowardly withdrawal. Read rightly, both verses turn protective: one promises the death of servile fear as love grows; the other insists your anxiety cannot disqualify you from mission.

Now read Romans 8:31-39 aloud: one strong reader, slowly, the group following silently. Let the reading itself do the work; do not talk over it. Then a full ten seconds of silence before question 4.

5. Anxiety's deepest whisper is separation: you are alone, you will be abandoned, no one holds this. What does Paul's argument do to that whisper, and what makes his list (tribulation, distress, peril, sword) credible rather than rhetorical?

ANSWER (share after the discussion)

Paul answers the whisper at its root, not its branches. He does not promise the absence of tribulation, distress, famine, or sword; his sentence assumes they come ("in all these things," 8:37). What he removes is their power to do the one thing anxiety most fears: separate. The ground is 8:32, the study's deepest logic: the Father "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all," so he will not withhold what he wills for our salvation and final glory. Be exact rather than sweeping: this is not a promise that no good thing will ever be taken from you (verse 35 lists what will in fact come), and it is not a promise that a person cannot walk away, since grace does not abolish our freedom and grave sin remains a real possibility with repentance always open. What it promises is that no suffering, no persecutor, no power, and not death itself can force you out of the love of God in Christ. The list is credible because Paul is reading his own resume (beatings, shipwrecks, prisons; 2 Cor 11); this assurance was composed inside the catalogue, not above it. "Neither death, nor life... nor things present, nor things to come... will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord": things to come, the anxious imagination's entire territory, is on the list, disarmed.

DIG DEEPER

Is 43:1-2: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you." Have someone read it. Notice the grounds: not "the waters are shallow" but "you are mine" and "I will be with you." Ownership and presence: the same two grounds as John 14, Romans 8, and every "fear not" this study has met. Isaiah does not say the waters are shallow. He says whose you are, and who is in them with you.

Commissioning

Say: "On Easter evening, peace came with a sending attached: as the Father has sent me, even so I send you. Six weeks ago most of us walked in carrying anxiety and, many of us, shame about the anxiety. Tonight you are sent as carriers of what you have received. Not as people who have finished with fear, but as people who know where peace lives and can walk someone else there." *Then, concretely: each person writes two things on a card: (1) one person in their life who is carrying anxiety, and (2) one concrete act toward them this month: a conversation, an invitation to Mass, a shared psalm, a Gethsemane sentence taught. Cards go home in wallets. If the group wishes to continue meeting, name the next study tonight before you dismiss.*

Send

S1. Who is on your card, and (as much as you care to share) what is your one concrete act?

S2. Which single practice from these six weeks (the nightly sentence, the manna rule, the lament aloud, the broom-tree mercy, the Gethsemane pattern, the evening cast) will you keep? Name it out loud; the room is your witness.

Live It: From Here On

- **Keep one practice permanently.** The one you just named. One habit kept is worth six admired.
- **Receive the peace at Mass on purpose.** From now on, the embolism and the Rite of Peace are yours: pray them deliberately, every week, as the anxious heart's liturgy.
- **Carry the card.** The lines traditionally kept as St. Teresa's, in your wallet beside your commissioning card: let nothing disturb you... God alone suffices.
- **When the waters rise,** the pocket prayer still fits: "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you." (Ps 56:3)

Memory verse: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." (John 14:27)

Closing: The Peace

Lord Jesus Christ, who said to your Apostles: Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.

Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church, and graciously grant her peace and unity in accordance with your will.

Send your Spirit, the Counselor you promised, upon each of us, and let no heart here leave troubled or afraid. Amen.

Then say simply: "Let us offer one another the peace of Christ." (The greeting "The peace of the Lord be with you always," with its response, belongs to the priest at Mass; do not take it here.) Unhurried, let everyone offer one another Christ's peace, by name: "N., peace be with you." Let this, and nothing else, be how the study ends.

PART 3: LEADER REFERENCE CARD

PASSAGE	WHERE IT IS USED
John 14:25-27	Opening read: the Paraclete promise ending in the gift of peace
John 14:27	Main text and memory verse: the bequest of peace
John 20:19-21	Live Discovery: the promise kept; wounds inside the peace; the sending
John 11:33; 12:27; 13:21	Thread payoff: the troubled Jesus (Session 1)
Rom 8:31-39	Read aloud: nothing can separate; 8:32 the deepest ground
2 Cor 11:23-27	Answer 4: Paul's list is his resume
1 John 4:12, 17-18	Hard verse one: <i>teleia agape</i> , love brought to completion; fear of punishment; trajectory not verdict
2 Tim 1:6-8	Hard verse two: <i>deilia</i> , mission cowardice; rekindle the gift
Ps 44:22	Quoted at Rom 8:36, though the session does not stop on it
Mark 14:36	Answer 2: "Abba... yet not what I will," recalled from Session 4
Luke 10:42	Answer 3: "one thing is needful," the <i>merimna</i> thread closing
Ps 42:5, 11; 43:5	Thread Watch: the refrain from Session 3
Ps 56:3	Live It: the pocket prayer carried out of Session 3
Is 43:1-2	Dig Deeper: you are mine; I will be with you
Num 6:26	OT Roots: the priestly blessing ends in peace
Luke 23:46	Voice background: the source of de Foucauld's abandonment
CCC 1832; 1468; 1453; 1520	Catechism Connection: fruit of the Spirit; Confession; imperfect contrition; Anointing