

Take-Home 11: The Olive Tree

Romans 10-11 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

Salvation is near: "if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9), for "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (10:13), a promise Paul quotes from Joel 2:32, where the name is God's own: the divinity of Jesus, resting quietly inside a quotation. And the promise travels by a chain: calling, believing, hearing, preaching, sending (10:14-15); "faith comes from what is heard" (10:17), and someone was sent so that you could hear.

God has not rejected his people (11:1): when Elijah counted one faithful Israelite, God counted seven thousand (1 Kgs 19:18), and the remnant is "chosen by grace" (11:5). The olive tree holds the whole gospel: natural branches broken "because of their unbelief," wild shoots grafted in who "stand fast only through faith": "do not become proud, but stand in awe... God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off" (11:20-22), and the broken "will be grafted in" if they do not persist in unbelief (11:23). Confidence and vigilance, one tree. "The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (11:29), and the argument ends in the letter's largest sentence: "that he may have mercy upon all" (11:32).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN PAUL II

At the Great Synagogue of Rome in 1986, St. John Paul II told the Jewish community: "You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers." Romans 11 spoken aloud: the root carries the branches (11:18), and the gifts and call of God are irrevocable (11:29).

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

When twelfth-century crusade fervor turned murderous toward Jewish communities, St. Bernard wrote and rode against it, insisting in his letters that the Jews are not to be persecuted or killed: their preservation belongs to God's plan. He stood in the road where Romans 11 points.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

From India in 1544, in the letter the Church reads on his feast, St. Francis Xavier wrote that multitudes fail to become Christians only because there is no one to make them Christians, and confessed the urge to go through Europe's universities crying out like a madman for laborers. Romans 10:14-15, on fire: how are they to hear without a preacher?

Live It This Week

- Thank, in person or in writing, one living link in your chain of hearing: the person who handed the faith to you.

- Pray daily for the Jewish people, the natural branches, with Paul's own words: that they may be saved (10:1).
- Take one deliberate step of continuing in his kindness (11:22) this week: return to Confession, restart a dropped prayer habit, or reconcile with someone.

Memory Verse

"Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Romans 10:9 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 12 once, slowly; the letter turns from what God has done to how we live. Catechism references for this session: CCC 839, 674, 162.