

THE DAWN FROM ON HIGH

Take-Home 4: The Shoot from Jesse's Stump (Isaiah 11:1-10; 61:1-4)

WHAT WE FOUND

The Davidic tree was cut down to a stump, and Isaiah promised a green shoot from Jesse's root, bearing the Spirit of the LORD. We counted six qualities in verse 2; the Church's familiar seventh, piety, comes through the ancient Greek and Latin versions, giving the list of gifts every confirmand learns (CCC 1831). Isaiah 61 gave the Shoot his mission: anointed (the verb behind *mashiach*, Messiah, and Greek *christos*) to bring good news to the afflicted and liberty to captives, in a commission that also names the day of vengeance. Then we heard Gabriel deliver the whole study's promises to one address in Nazareth, "the throne of his father David... of his kingdom there will be no end," and heard Mary's free yes on which everything turned. And in the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus read Isaiah 61 about himself, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," and rolled up the scroll before the day of vengeance. Christians have long read that silence, together with everything the New Testament says about his return, as a timetable: the year of favor now, final judgment when he comes again. The kingdom is already here in mystery, not yet complete (CCC 671-672).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Bernard imagines the moment after Gabriel finishes: heaven, earth, and every exile on their knees before the girl of Nazareth, begging, in substance: Answer, Lady; the word on which our comfort hangs is yours. God chose to let his promise wait on a free human yes.

Fourth Homily in Praise of the Virgin Mother (Liturgy of the Hours, December 20)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: The Church at Prayer: the O Antiphons

Seven evenings, seven Old Testament titles sung to Christ. This week, pray them with the whole Church (see the schedule below). Their Latin titles form a reverse acrostic, read from the last evening back to the first: *ero cras*, "Tomorrow I will come."

Liturgy of the Hours, December 17-23

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Hildegard of Bingen

Hildegard's word is *viriditas*, greenness: the living freshness God pours into creation, the sap that makes dry wood put out leaves. A stump is not merely a ruin; it is wood with life still in the root. She heard in the Incarnation the greening of a world gone dry.

Doctor of the Church; her antiphon O viridissima virga

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: St. Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas teaches, in substance, that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are stable dispositions, given by God, which make a soul readily moved by the Spirit's promptings. They belong in their fullness to Christ; the life of grace given in Baptism carries them (CCC 1266), and Confirmation increases them (CCC 1303).

Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 68, aa. 1-3

THE O ANTIPHONS, EVENING BY EVENING

PRAY ONE EACH EVENING AT THE CANDLES

December 17: O Wisdom (O Sapientia). December 18: O Adonai, Lord of Sinai. December 19: O Root of Jesse (O Radix Jesse). December 20: O Key of David (O Clavis David). December 21: O Radiant Dawn (O Oriens). December 22: O King of the Nations (O Rex Gentium). December 23: O Emmanuel. Each one ends the same way the Church has prayed all month: Come, Lord Jesus.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1. Pray the O Antiphons, one each evening through December 23, using the schedule above.
2. Imitate the fiat: give God your yes, out loud, in prayer, before Christmas Eve. Small and real beats grand and imaginary.
3. Do one act of Isaiah 61 (good news, binding up, liberty, comfort) for the person you named tonight, in person if you can.

MEMORY VERSE

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." **(Luke 1:38)**

BEFORE OUR FINAL SESSION

Merry Christmas! We meet once more, after Christmas Day, for the capstone. Read Luke 2:1-20 (ideally aloud, at home, on Christmas). Bring your Bible and your opened guess from Session 3.

Catechism references from this session: CCC 494, 671-672, 714, 1831.