

Session 3: To the Churches, Part II

What We Found

Three diagnoses of the comfortable heart. Sardis: a living reputation and a dead reality, called to awake, strengthen, remember, keep, repent; yet even there Christ counts the faithful by name. Philadelphia: little power, kept word, and an open door no one can shut, because Christ holds the key of David (we opened Isaiah 22 and found the royal steward's key now in the Son of David's hand); to an earthquake city he promises permanence, a pillar in the temple of God. Laodicea: I need nothing meets wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked; Christ's three remedies likely echo the city's famed banking, textiles, and medicine: everything it boasted, it needed from him. And the harshest letter ends with the gentlest image: Christ outside the door of his own church, knocking, asking to come in to supper. In the later devotional image, the handle is on the inside; even the knock and the voice are his grace. Smyrna and Philadelphia, the two churches presented as weakest in worldly terms, are the two without a rebuke: Christ's arithmetic is not ours.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine · *Confessions, Book I, ch. 1*

You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you. The study's application: lukewarmness is what a restless heart looks like when it has numbed itself with lesser comforts; the cure is the return of desire to its true object.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Francis de Sales · *Introduction to the Devout Life (summary)*

St. Francis de Sales teaches, in substance, that devotion is prompt, ready love of God available to every state of life, and that the merely respectable Christian life, avoiding grave sin while loving God sluggishly, falls far short of the devotion he urges; the study adds that it is dangerous precisely because it feels safe.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH

St. Teresa of Ávila · *Lines found in her breviary*

The lines traditionally found written in her breviary say, in substance: 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.

Live It This Week

- Answer the knock once, concretely: one act of zeal chosen against your own lukewarm spot. Then share one unhurried meal this week and eat it as if Christ were the guest of Revelation 3:20: he is.
- Memorize the memory verse.

Memory Verse

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20, RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Revelation 4–5.

Catechism references from this session: CCC 827; 1428, 1430–1433; 2544–2547.