

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 10

Sealed

What We Found

In a world without photo ID, a seal did four jobs: ownership (whose is this?), authentication (the king's own image pressed in wax), protection (under the owner's guard), and permanence. Paul says: "you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee (*arrabon*) of our inheritance," and those four ancient jobs are what "sealed" carried to his first readers. An *arrabon* is earnest money, a first installment pledging the whole; modern Greek still uses a form of the word for engagement and betrothal. The Spirit in a Christian is not an IOU about heaven; He is heaven's first installment, already paid in. We found the seal's ancestor in Ezekiel: a mark set on the foreheads of everyone who grieved over the city's evil, protecting them absolutely; St. Jerome, reading Ezekiel, noted that the old Hebrew letter *tav* was written in a cross-like shape, and saw a foreshadowing. And we paid this study's oldest debt: nine weeks ago an objection said you cannot seal the wind. Saul's endowment could lift away; the baptized carry a mark that never comes off, even while the life of grace must still be guarded, and can be restored.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*against the Donatists, on the sacramental character*)

A soldier of Rome carried the military mark, and if he deserted, the mark deserted with him; when he returned, no one branded him again, for the mark had never left. So with the seal of Christ: the character remains even in one who abandons the ranks, and it is why the Church receives the returning without ever repeating the seal.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Ephesians*)

God has not merely promised us our inheritance; He has given a part of it in advance, and the part pledges the whole. The certainty of Christian hope rests on a deposit already given, and the deposit is the Spirit Himself.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae III, q. 72*)

Confirmation imprints a character, an indelible spiritual mark: a spiritual power deputing the Christian to profess the faith of Christ publicly, as it were by office (III, q. 72, a. 5).

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together. Once a day, make the sign of the cross SLOWLY, all four points deliberate, and as you make it, think one sentence: "I am sealed: owned, real, guarded, and it does not come off." Make it together once a day, even in the driveway.

Memory Verse

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."
(Ephesians 4:30)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Owned, authenticated, protected, permanent: which of the seal's four meanings does each of us most need to be true right now?

Before Next Session

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1295, 1296, 1304.