

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 14

Be Sealed

What We Found

The pages opened, and then the Rite did, and nothing in it was arbitrary. The candidates are presented and renew, in their own voices, the baptismal promises that first marked their Christian life. The bishop, successor of the apostles, extends his hands, the gesture of Moses over Joshua and Peter and John over Samaria, and prays for the sevenfold gift the Church names from Isaiah 11, the list we memorized and prayed over our houses. The sponsor's hand rests on the candidate's shoulder. Then sacred chrism, perfumed oil consecrated at the Chrism Mass, evoking Exodus 30's sacred oil and Samuel's horn, traces a cross, traditionally seen in Ezekiel's forehead-mark, on the forehead, with the words the East and West now share: "N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit." At the anointing itself, the candidate's answer is the Bible's word for yes: Amen. And the bishop's closing words, "Peace be with you," are the first words of the risen Christ in the locked room, spoken just before he breathed the Spirit on his Church. The study began with the breath of God over the waters. It ends with you, standing in that room. The next scene is in a church, with a bishop, on a date already on the calendar.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Mystagogical Catecheses, Lecture 3*)

As Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the Jordan, so you, coming up from the sacred waters, were given the anointing, the figure of that very Spirit, and became christs, anointed ones, sharers in the Anointed One himself.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Paul VI (*Divinae Consortium Naturae, 1971*)

Revising the Rite for the whole Latin Church, Paul VI gave it the formula "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit," which, he explained, aptly expresses the sacrament's effect and corresponds in meaning to the ancient formula of the Byzantine Rite: one seal, confessed by East and West together.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Theophilus of Antioch (*To Autolycus, around AD 180*)

When pagans mocked the very name "Christian," Theophilus owned the word's root: we are called Christians because we are anointed with the oil of God. You are about to receive, on your own skin, the thing your name has meant all along.

From Here to the Day

Three assignments, and the study is complete. First: your household chose ONE practice from these fourteen weeks to keep permanently; keep it. Second: from now until the day, pray daily for the candidate's Confirmation and for the bishop by name; the Come Holy Spirit prayer from Session 7 is built for this. Third: candidates, before the day, write a letter to yourself to be opened in five years, holding the one thing you knew tonight that you never want to forget. Seal it. You have practice.

Memory Verse

"But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

Table Talk

One last question for the drive home: Of everything we found in fourteen weeks, which one discovery do you most hope you are still telling people about in ten years?

A Final Word

The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him. It was true on the first Pentecost afternoon (Acts 2:39), it was true every week at this table, and it will be true on the day the chrism touches skin. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Amen.