

Session 1: The Strong Man's House

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

Jesus freed a man no one else could free, and told us what it meant: “when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted” (Luke 11:22). The strong man is real, and he has already met the Stronger One. He casts out demons by “the finger of God” (Luke 11:20), the very phrase Pharaoh’s magicians used when God broke Egypt’s grip (Exodus 8:19): every deliverance is a new Exodus. And Isaiah asked our question centuries early: can captives be taken from the mighty? God’s answer: “I will contend with those who contend with you” (Isaiah 49:25).

We built our working definition from Paul’s fortress image in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (our pastoral application of it): a stronghold is a lie fortified into habit until it feels like home; the walls are made of thoughts, which is why willpower alone cannot punch through them, and why our weapons “have divine power.” And we heard Jesus’s warning about the swept house (Luke 11:24-26; Matthew’s parallel adds the word “empty,” 12:44): freedom is not vacancy. The goal of this study is a house occupied by the Stronger One.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine of Hippo

Confessions, Book VIII (ch. 5)

Looking back on the years he could not break with sin, St. Augustine describes, in substance, how his chain was forged: a will bent the wrong way produced disordered desire; desire indulged became habit; and habit unresisted hardened into something that felt like necessity: a chain, he says, of his own making.

A close summary of Confessions VIII.5.10-12; wording varies by translation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Leo the Great

Sermon 21, On the Nativity (quoted in CCC 1691)

“Christian, recognize your dignity and, now that you share in God’s own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning... Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light.”

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Athanasius (the witness of St. Antony)

Life of Antony (several discourses on the demons, combined)

St. Athanasius records St. Antony teaching his monks, in substance, that since the coming of the Lord the enemy is a defeated foe: the demons can threaten and terrify, but their real power is broken, and they trade on fear precisely because fear is most of what they have left.

A summary of Antony’s teaching as recorded by St. Athanasius; not a direct quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Morning surrender.** Each morning this week, before your feet do anything important, pray one line: “Jesus, Stronger One, this house is yours.” Seven words, seven days.

- **Reconnaissance, not scorekeeping.** Keep a small private tally of when the old pull shows up: the moment, the mood, the place. You are mapping approach routes, not grading yourself.
- **Reread.** Midweek, read Luke 11:14-26 slowly, and stop on “one stronger than he.”

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds.”
2 Corinthians 10:4

Before next session: Read James 1:12-18 and John 8:31-36.

From the Catechism: CCC 409; 2853; 1691.

THE WALL

In one sentence, name the wall you most want down. Then fold this sheet closed, seal it, and write your name on the outside. No one will ever read it but you. Bring it back each week, sealed. At Session 5 you will open it alone, in silence, before the Lord.

The wall I most want down:

And hear this, from all of us: if what you wrote involves harm to yourself or anyone else, or a grip you already know is beyond your strength, the bravest thing you can do this week is tell one trusted person: a priest, a counselor, a doctor. Asking for help is a weapon, not a defeat.

THE STRONGER ONE · TAKE-HOME

Session 2: How Walls Get Built

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

James cleared the air first: “God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one” (James 1:13); whatever voice lures you toward the wall, it is never his. Then he traced sin’s gestation: desire lures, conceives, gives birth, grows to full strength (James 1:14-15), which means there is a window before consent, and that window is where the whole tradition fights: suggestion, delight, consent (St. Gregory). The unbidden suggestion is no sin; sin enters wherever the will says yes, and the yes can come early, by deliberately dwelling in the delight. We found God’s combat coaching of a fallen man in Genesis 4:7 (“sin is couching at the door... you must master it”): a real command that grace makes genuinely possible; and Proverbs 5:22 told us who wove the cords.

We drew the Church’s two lifelines with precision. The pull itself (concupiscence) is not sin, and “cannot harm those who do not consent but resist by the grace of Jesus Christ” (CCC 1264): the pull is the battlefield, not the defeat. And the hardening is real: “Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts” (CCC 1865), until, as Jesus warned, the slave sincerely believes he was always free (John 8:33-34). Grace does not replace your will; it heals and powers it: “work out your own salvation... for God is at work in you” (Philippians 2:12-13).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Gregory the Great

Moralia on Job (the classic analysis, commonly cited at IV.27)

St. Gregory teaches, in substance, that sin advances by steps: first the suggestion, arriving unbidden (from enemy, world, or flesh) and itself no sin; then the delight, where deliberate dwelling can already be a yes; then the consent of the will. The tradition therefore fights at the suggestion: the cheapest ground (that phrase is ours) it will ever be offered.

A summary of St. Gregory’s classic analysis; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Thomas Aquinas

Summa Theologiae I-II (the treatise on habits)

St. Thomas teaches, in substance, that a habit is a second nature: repeated acts leave an inclination, so the next act comes easier. Bent toward evil, the habit is a vice; toward good, a virtue. The law runs in both directions: grace can enlist the very machinery that built your wall to build acquired virtue in its place, while infusing what no repetition can manufacture.

A summary of St. Thomas’s teaching on habit; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Cassian

Conferences and Institutes

St. Cassian, carrying the desert’s wisdom west, teaches in substance that great falls begin as unwatched thoughts; that the vices feed one another in sequence; and that the fight is joined at a thought’s first appearance, before it is entertained: at the gate, as this study puts it, not in the courtyard.

A summary of the desert teaching St. Cassian recorded; not a direct quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **One pre-decided move.** Pick your most common trigger moment and decide now, in peacetime, what you will do when it comes: leave the room, pray one line, text a friend. Wars are won in peacetime decisions.
- **The three-minute examen.** Nightly: where did the pull start, where did it warm, where was the door held or opened? End the same way, win or lose: thank God for one thing, and ask, “Stronger One, hold the door with me tomorrow.”
- **Reread.** Midweek, read James 1:12-18 once, slowly, and stop on “he himself tempts no one.”

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

Genesis 4:7

Before next session: Read Genesis 3:1-13 and Matthew 4:1-11.

From the Catechism: CCC 405; 1264; 1735; 1865-1866; 2515.

THE STRONGER ONE · TAKE-HOME

Session 3: Know Your Enemy

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

We watched two foundational, deliberately contrasted campaigns. In Eden, three moves: fog the Word (“Did God say...?”), deny the death (“You will not die”), slander the Father (“God knows... you will be like God”); and once the wall fell, his occupation policy: shame, hiding, blame. We noticed the most important tactical fact of the war: he never forces; he cannot force the will. In the campaign for our consent his weapon is the lie, which is why the truth disarms it (Scripture also shows permitted affliction, Job above all, always under God’s limits). In the wilderness the same campaign failed: Jesus answered every move from memory, all three swords drawn from Deuteronomy 6-8, Israel’s wilderness manual; and we saw the devil quote Psalm 91, proof that even Scripture in his mouth is bait: test where a voice leads, not how it sounds.

Our standing orders are exact: be sober, be watchful, resist, submit to God first (1 Peter 5:8-9; James 4:7), and never panic, converse, or command. Acts 19:13-16 showed us why commanding is not ours: the sons of Sceva used the right name without being sent, and even St. Michael says only “The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9). The enemy is real, and on a leash: “the power of Satan is, nonetheless, not infinite” (CCC 395). We left less afraid than we arrived.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Ignatius of Loyola

Spiritual Exercises, Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (First Week)

St. Ignatius teaches, in substance: the enemy is weak before firm resistance and strong before wavering; like a false lover he demands secrecy, and is undone the moment his whispers are told to a confessor or wise guide; and like a commander besieging a fortress, he strikes where the walls are weakest.

A faithful summary of the First Week rules; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Francis de Sales

Introduction to the Devout Life, Part IV

St. Francis teaches, in substance, that temptation itself, however long or violent, is not sin: the soul is stained only when the will consents. So long as the yes is withheld, the battle honors God. Do not be alarmed at the fierceness of the attack: intensity of temptation is not evidence of defeat. (As spiritual writers like to put it, in our phrasing: the enemy besieges most furiously the city he has not taken.)

A summary of his teaching on temptation in Part IV; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Teresa of Ávila

The Book of Her Life, and her teaching generally

St. Teresa writes, in substance, that devils frighten only souls that hand them the advantage: fear itself is the ground they trade on, and a soul in God’s grace need not be cowed by their threats. Stay close to your Lord, and the terrors shrink to their true size.

A summary of her well-attested teaching; wording varies by translation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Forge your countersword.** Memorize one verse aimed at your recurring lie; write it on a card and carry it. For the fog: 1 Peter 1:25. For the denial: Genesis 4:7. For the slander: Romans 8:32. Jesus fought from memory. So will you.
- **Break one secrecy.** Tell your tell-someone person one whisper you have been keeping private: not necessarily your wall, any whisper. In daylight, this week.
- **Post the watch.** Add the St. Michael prayer to your night prayers this week, prayed as a soldier reporting to the watch commander.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

James 4:7

Before next session: Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

From the Catechism: CCC 391-395; 1673; 2116-2117; 2846-2849.

Session 4: The Armory

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

God does not send his soldiers to war in their own clothes. “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Ephesians 6:10) is received strength, and the armor is issued, piece by piece: truth against the fog, righteousness over the accused heart, the gospel of peace for footing, faith to quench the burning sentences, salvation guarding the mind, and one weapon only: the sword of the Spirit, the Word: in a war against lies, the only offensive weapon is truth. And verse 12 retargeted years of misdirected fire: “we are not contending against flesh and blood”: the people who hurt us were, at worst, occupied territory; the enemy is the occupier.

Then the discovery that resolved a thread we have carried since week one: Isaiah saw God himself put on the heart of this armor: “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head” (Isaiah 59:17). We are issued our Champion’s own kit: it has never lost. And the enemy’s armor, “the armor in which he trusted” (Luke 11:22)? The study’s synthesis, drawn from Session 3’s inventory with Colossians 2:15: his trusted armor is best read as the lie, and it failed at the cross. His armor taken; ours issued. Prayer (v. 18) is the supply line that keeps it all coming.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Chrysostom

Homilies on Ephesians

St. John Chrysostom teaches, in substance, that Paul’s armor is campaign issue, not ceremony: each piece has its function, the whole kit is meant to be worn, and the soldier of Christ lives in constant readiness. (As this study puts it: a man armored everywhere but the head is a casualty waiting for his wound.)

A summary of his preaching on the passage; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Patrick

The Lorica (“St. Patrick’s Breastplate”)

The great battle-prayer long attributed to St. Patrick arms the Christian with a Person: “Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left.” The armor of God, worn, turns out to be Christ himself put on.

Attribution to St. Patrick is traditional rather than certain; quoted from the commonly received English text.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Alphonsus Liguori

Prayer, the Great Means of Salvation and of Perfection

St. Alphonsus teaches, in substance and with famous bluntness, that prayer is the great and necessary means: in his celebrated axiom, the one who prays is certainly saved, and the one who does not pray is certainly lost, for God ordinarily grants his help through our asking. And therefore (the siege image is ours) the enemy’s first objective is to talk the garrison out of praying.

A close summary of his celebrated teaching; not a verbatim quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Suit up daily.** Each morning, pray the armor on in your own words, thirty seconds, ending with your countersword verse: the sword goes in the hand, not the scabbard.
- **Learn the Lorica.** Pray “Christ with me, Christ before me...” once a day, slowly. Own it from memory by Sunday.
- **Fund the supply line.** Put five minutes of prayer in the hour your prayer usually dies, and intercede by name for one person who fights beside you.
- **Bring your sealed sheet next session.** The Wall opens: alone, in silence, before the Lord.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

Ephesians 6:11

Before next session: Read John 20:19-23 and John 6:53-58. And bring your sealed sheet.

From the Catechism: CCC 2725; 1303; 1808.

Session 5: The Demolition Charges

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

The “divine power to destroy strongholds” has street addresses. At the confessional: the risen Jesus breathed on men (a deliberate echo of the breath of Eden, Genesis 2:7) and said “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven” (John 20:23): forgiveness deliberately routed through authorized men, because a wall built in the body is torn down in the body: your voice dragging the lie into daylight, and Christ’s voice answering out loud through his priest: absolved. Naaman taught us why we resist it: “Are not Abana and Pharpar... better?” (2 Kings 5:12): we would attempt some great thing sooner than the humble thing that works, because pride is a load-bearing beam in many a wall. He washed in the muddy Jordan, and his flesh came back like a child’s.

At the altar: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:56). Abides: the occupancy word. The swept house of week one is answered: the Stronger One does not just evict; he moves in, and this food strengthens charity, wipes away venial sin, and preserves us from future mortal sins (CCC 1394-1395). And in our own mouths: the baptismal renunciation, renewed every Easter, unsheathed in the first person: “In the name of Jesus, I renounce the lie that...” Resist and renounce: ours by baptism; never converse, never command. The Wall opened tonight: read, renounced, resolved. The sentence on it deserves better than paper: bring your own sins connected with it, if any, to Confession; wounds are not sins, and are entrusted rather than confessed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Vianney

The Curé of Ars

The patron of parish priests, who spent long hours day after day in the confessional, taught in substance that beside God’s mercy our sin is as a grain of sand beside a torrent, and that souls stay chained for years to sins one honest confession would have struck off.

A summary of his constant teaching and practice; not a verbatim quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Ignatius of Antioch

Letter to the Ephesians (ch. 20), early second century (traditionally c. 107)

Writing in chains on the road to martyrdom, St. Ignatius calls the one bread of the Eucharist “the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death.” If it is medicine against death itself, it is medicine against every lesser death first: including the slow one a stronghold deals.

The quoted phrase is his, as commonly rendered in English.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Mystagogical Catecheses (Lecture 1)

St. Cyril reminds the newly baptized how they faced the west, the region of darkness, and renounced Satan to his face “as though he were present”: a treaty publicly torn up: then turned bodily east to profess Christ. Tonight’s renunciation is your own baptism, unsheathed.

A summary of Lecture 1; the lectures are transmitted under St. Cyril’s name, though some scholars attribute their final form to his successor John.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Go.** Bring your sentence to Confession this week. If it has been years: “Father, it has been a long time, and I need help making this confession.” That sentence has never once been bad news to a priest.
- **Receive on purpose.** At Communion this week, one silent word before you leave the pew: “Abide.” Let the Amen mean: the house is yours.
- **Renounce at the gate.** When the old suggestion arrives: “In the name of Jesus, I renounce the lie that __,” then your countersword verse. Gate, renunciation, sword: thirty seconds.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 John 1:9

Before next session: Read Romans 12:1-2 and Philippians 4:4-9.

From the Catechism: CCC 1468; 1394-1395; 1237.

THE STRONGER ONE · TAKE-HOME

Session 6: The Battle of the Mind

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

The renewed mind begins with the presented body (Romans 12:1-2): nobody thinks their way into new living as reliably as they live their way into new thinking. Then the technique most of us were never taught: not the wrestling match (attention is the thought's food) but two verbs from the tradition: dash: break the thought against Christ at first appearance with a short prayer, declining the debate entirely: and tell: disclose the recurring thought to someone wise, because a disclosed thought loses its garrison. Redirection, not suppression: the watchman's eye is on Christ, not on the thought. And guard the wellhead (Proverbs 4:23): "Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life."

Second technique: replace. "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just... think about these things" (Philippians 4:8): the mind, like the swept house, is not emptied of a lie but crowded with truth, and the opposing virtue starves a vice by small contrary acts done for love: Session 2's machinery now conscripted for the Kingdom. And the discovery many in recovery have leaned their weight on: "God is faithful... with the temptation will also provide the way of escape" (1 Corinthians 10:13): common to man (you are not a special monstrosity), measured by a faithful God, exit shipped with the test, sometimes a humble door or call or short prayer, sometimes the strength to endure. The house was occupied at the altar; this week we furnish it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Benedict of Nursia

The Rule, ch. 4

St. Benedict instructs, in substance: as soon as wrongful thoughts come into your heart, dash them against Christ, and disclose them to a spiritual father. Two moves, immediate and humble: the thought is not entertained or debated but broken at once against the Rock, and told.

A close summary of Rule ch. 4; wording varies by translation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Climacus

The Ladder of Divine Ascent

St. John of the Ladder teaches, in substance, that the fight with a thought is easiest at its first appearance and grows harder with every second of hospitality; meet the first movement with the name of Jesus and refuse the conversation. As we would put it: no one has ever lost a debate he declined to attend.

A summary of his teaching on thoughts; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Story of a Soul (the Little Way)

St. Thérèse teaches, in substance, that holiness is built of small deliberate acts of love done at once: the little contrary act, the small comfort surrendered, the failure met with a child's confidence rather than dramatic self-reproach. Each small act, done for love, lays a course of the counter-wall.

A summary of her spirituality as she describes it; not a direct quotation.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Dash and tell.** Meet the first movement of the old thought with your short prayer, instantly, no debate: and tell one trusted person about the thought that recurs most.
- **One course of the counter-wall daily.** Your opposing-virtue act, once a day, small, for love: Thérèse-sized.
- **Hang Philippians 4:8.** Write it where the old habit lived (mirror, desk, lock screen) and let it furnish the room.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:2

Before next session: Read Romans 7:14-25, Luke 22:31-34, and John 21:9-19.

From the Catechism: CCC 2015; 1810-1811; 2520.

THE STRONGER ONE · TAKE-HOME

Session 7: When the Wall Rebuilds

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

The Church does not lie about the terrain: Baptism “has not abolished the frailty and weakness of human nature, nor the inclination to sin” (CCC 1426): grace is real, and the war is long. Scripture contains our worst week in the first person: “I do not do the good I want...” (Romans 7:19): and turns on a name, not a plan: “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (the last line restates the fight; Romans 8 unfolds the deliverance). And Peter is the Church’s primary scriptural pattern: “Satan demanded to have you... but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31-32): the enemy on his leash, a fall foreseen without a faith failing, restoration prepared before the denial with a job attached: and beside a charcoal fire (John 21:9, answering the denial fire of 18:18), one “do you love me” for each denial, as the Church has long seen it, and Peter’s office confirmed. For us the shape holds: love asked, wound addressed, the road resumed: and any penance given is medicine, never probation.

We named the enemy’s two-stroke engine: before the sin, “it is no big deal”; after, “it is unforgivable.” Minimize, then annihilate: both strokes exist to keep you from the means of grace, and the switch is his tell. The tactic against both is unglamorous: get up fast: “Jesus, I trust in you” in the crater, Confession soon (shame does not set the schedule), back to the front. We found the verse that defines the righteous by their rising (Proverbs 24:16: “a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again”) and memorized the script against the gloater (Micah 7:8). And we walked the ridge between the two ditches: despair and presumption (CCC 2091-2092): hope rests on Christ’s fidelity, not on the streak: never more than one good confession from home.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Catherine of Siena

The Dialogue

St. Catherine records, in substance, the Father teaching that he sometimes permits his servants to see their own falls because self-knowledge is the soil of humility, and humility of every virtue: what is permitted is permitted for love, measured, and ordered to a greater mercy. A fall, taken to God, maps your poverty: and poverty known is the ground grace builds on.

A summary of a constant theme of the Dialogue; not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Francis de Sales

Introduction to the Devout Life, Part III, ch. 9

St. Francis teaches, in substance: when we fall, correct yourself gently and calmly, not with stormy self-reproach: the heart that rages at its own fault adds a second fault and exhausts the strength repentance needed. Repent firmly and peacefully, and begin again at once, without waiting to feel worthy.

A summary of his teaching in Part III, ch. 9 (On Gentleness toward Ourselves); not a direct quotation.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Faustina Kowalska

Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul (approved private revelation)

St. Faustina records our Lord teaching, in substance, that the greater the misery of a soul, the greater its claim on his mercy, and that what grieves him is less the size of the sin brought to him than the smallness of the

trust. “Jesus, I trust in you” is a complete act of resistance, five words long, available in the crater.

A summary of the Diary’s central themes; an approved private revelation, open to prudent acceptance and binding on no one.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- **Memorize the script.** Micah 7:8, cold, by Wednesday: said aloud once each night as an act of faith before God, whether or not you fell that day.
- **Shrink the gap.** Decide in peacetime: within one minute of any fall, “Jesus, I trust in you”; within one week, the confessional. Write both where you will find them in the dark.
- **Gentleness drill.** Once this week, catch the self-savaging voice mid-sentence and correct yourself the de Sales way: firmly, calmly, toward the remedy.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.”

Micah 7:8

Before next session: Read Galatians 5:1, 13-25 and Mark 5:1-20.

From the Catechism: CCC 1426; 2091-2092.

THE STRONGER ONE · TAKE-HOME
Session 8: The Spoils of War

Keep this sheet. It is yours, and it is private.

WHAT WE FOUND

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore” (Galatians 5:1): the gift and the garrison in one sentence, and freedom’s content is love: “through love be servants of one another” (5:13). “The more one does what is good, the freer one becomes” (CCC 1733). The voice we tracked for eight weeks was finally named from Jesus’s own mouth: the devil is “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44): the pattern behind every whisper, amplified by flesh and world: and answered for good: “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free... if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (8:32, 36). The truth that frees is not merely information but ultimately a Person (John 14:6); against the father of lies, God sent his Son.

The Gerasene: tombs, chains, “Legion”: then “sitting there, clothed and in his right mind,” begging to come along: and sent home instead: “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mark 5:19). Freedom’s first assignment is testimony, delivered where they knew you walled. And Isaiah’s buried fourth verse gave the study its final discovery: the captives freed in verse 1 become the builders in verse 4: “They shall build up the ancient ruins... the devastations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4). The Stronger One “divides his spoil” (Luke 11:22): the spoils are people: recovered, then deployed. In the garrisoned house, the fruit grows (Galatians 5:22-23): and we went out with Israel’s shout: “the snare is broken, and we have escaped!” (Psalm 124:7).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Against Heresies IV.20.7

One of his best-known sentences, literally: “the glory of God is a living man, and the life of man is the vision of God” (the popular modern paraphrase: “the glory of God is man fully alive”). A human being restored to full life is what the Father’s renown looks like in public. Every wall that comes down makes God visible.

Both the common rendering and the more literal one are given; the sentence is his.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine of Hippo

Confessions, Book I (ch. 1)

We began with Augustine bound (the chain of habit, Book VIII). We end with the sentence he placed at the front of the same book: “you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Every stronghold was a counterfeit rest. The man of the chain became the man of the rest: by finally coming home.

Quoted in the standard English rendering of Confessions I.1.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. John Paul II

Homily at Oriole Park at Camden Yards, Baltimore, 8 October 1995

“Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.” The stronghold promised freedom as license and delivered slavery; Christ delivers freedom as the power to love: and it holds.

LIVE IT: THE STANDING ORDERS (FOR LIFE, NOT A WEEK)

- **Keep the garrison.** Morning suit-up, nightly examen, frequent Confession and Communion, the countersword, the tell-someone person: freedom's watch schedule, kept lightly and joyfully, from love, never for earning.
- **Work your card.** Pray the name daily. Do the act this month. Then find the next name; the ruins are large and the crew is hiring.
- **Tell the shape.** When God opens the door, tell the Gerasene version: how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

Galatians 5:1

From the Catechism: CCC 1733; 1832; 2044.

THE COMMISSIONING CARD

The restored rebuild the ruins (Isaiah 61:4). Somebody you know may need encouragement, prayer, or hope tonight, and your own history gives you a rare empathy and credibility for reaching them: used with discernment, stability, and help. Names are never shared aloud. Write, and then do:

One name I will pray for daily (someone who may need encouragement, prayer, or hope):

One act of strengthening within my reach this month (an invitation, a conversation, a meal, the shape of my story):

The Gerasene rule: narrate mercy, not pathology. What can always be told: "I was stuck; Christ was stronger; here is where mercy lives." How much more, and to whom, is discernment work: your confessor or director helps. Your Wall stays yours.