
How These Studies Were Created

A note on our use of artificial intelligence · CatholicArmory.com

Every study in this series began the old-fashioned way: with Scripture open, a question worth asking, and a desire to hear how the Church has answered it. What is new is the set of tools we used to listen.

The Catholic Church carries two thousand years of reflection on the Word of God. The Fathers of the Church, the great Doctors, the ecumenical councils, the Catechism, and the theologians of our own day form a library so vast that no one person could read it all in a lifetime. In preparing these studies, we used artificial intelligence as a research assistant to search that library: to surface what St. Augustine or St. John Chrysostom actually said about a passage, to locate the relevant paragraphs of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and to trace how a doctrine developed from the apostolic age to the present. The AI did not write our theology. It helped us find the Church's.

Because these tools are powerful but imperfect, we placed strict guardrails around their use. Every patristic quotation and Catechism reference was required to be verified against its source, never invented or embellished. Where the Church has defined a matter, we state it plainly. Where she has not, we say so honestly and refuse to speak with more certainty than she does. Our standard throughout has been complete fidelity to Catholic doctrine as taught by the Magisterium, and nothing was permitted into these pages that could not stand under that light.

We also refused to trust any single tool. Each session was cross-examined by multiple independent AI systems, each tasked with hunting for error: doctrinal imprecision or heresy, overstated claims, misattributed quotations, and the fabrications (often called hallucinations) to which these systems are prone. Where the reviewers disagreed, a human being went back to the sources and settled the question.

Finally, and most importantly, these studies were tested on people, not just machines. A group of trusted reviewers, faithful Catholics whose judgment we rely on, worked through the material session by session in trial runs, flagging anything unclear, unbalanced, or unfaithful before the studies reached their final form.

We offer this work in a spirit of service to the Church, and we submit it gladly to her judgment. If any error remains despite these efforts, the fault is ours alone. Our hope is simple: that these pages help you encounter the living Word of God, in the company of the saints who have loved Him for twenty centuries.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

A Fourteen-Session Inductive Study for Young Adults

LEADER'S GUIDE

And he said to him, Today salvation has come to this house.

Luke 19:9 (RSV2CE)

Using This Guide

This study walks the Gospel of Luke from the temple where it opens to the temple where it ends, in fourteen sessions of 75 to 90 minutes, built for young adults in a simple three-part inductive format. Every session assumes one thing above all: the group discovers, the leader guides, and the text does the converting. All Scripture is quoted from the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition (RSV2CE).

THE SHAPE OF A SESSION

Each session has three parts. The Leader Preparation Guide is yours alone: the Session Overview with its Discovery Aim and Catholic Touchstone, What You Need to Know, Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment, three Voices of the Church, the Catechism Connection, Thread Watch, Session Goals, and a Time Note with pre-chosen cuts for short nights. The Discussion Guide is the meeting itself: an opening prayer, two Win questions to open hearts, a Build section of numbered inductive questions into the text, two Send questions to take it out the door, Live It This Week practices with a Scripture memory verse, and a closing prayer. The Leader Reference Card lists every passage used, in order, so you can flag your Bible before anyone arrives.

READING THE BOXES

ANSWER boxes (parchment): consolidation to share *after* the discussion has run. Never read them first; they are the destination, not the map.

Voices of the Church (Marian blue callouts): Fathers, Doctors, and saints on the night's texts, paraphrased faithfully from verified sources, never invented.

Dig Deeper boxes (light blue): optional enrichment, first to cut when the clock presses.

Live discoveries (marked in gold): moments where the group hunts down an Old Testament passage themselves. Protect these fiercely; a spoiled discovery is a stolen one.

Steelman chains (marked in gold): Protestant or skeptical readings presented at their full strength before the answer is built from the text. Teach the objection so well that its holders would recognize it; then answer it honestly, hedging where the Church herself has not defined.

THE THREADS

This study plants, develops, and resolves threads across its fourteen sessions: a word spoken over Mary that waits five weeks for its answer, four verbs banked at a feeding that come due in an upper room, a psalm verse planted in a lament and shouted at the gates, and one small word, *sēmeron*, today, that lands five times between Bethlehem and a cross. Session 1 includes a sealed My Guess box on Take-Home 1; guard it until Session 6, and open the guesses with full ceremony. The Thread Watch section of each Leader Preparation Guide tells you what is planted, what is developing, and what must not be spoiled.

PARTICIPANT MATERIALS

There is no participant journal. After each session, distribute that session's two-page Take-Home sheet: What We Found, the night's three Voices of the Church, Live It This Week, the Scripture memory verse, the reading before next session, and the week's Catechism references. Take-Homes are spoiler-safe by design; they never contain ANSWER content, Thread Watch notes, steelman material, or advance discovery references.

Table of Contents

SESSION	TITLE AND PASSAGE	PAGE
1	An Orderly Account <i>Luke 1:1–38</i>	5
2	Blessed Is She Who Believed <i>Luke 1:39–2:52</i>	14
3	Today This Scripture Is Fulfilled <i>Luke 3–4</i>	23
4	Put Out Into the Deep <i>Luke 5–6</i>	32
5	Lord, I Am Not Worthy <i>Luke 7–8</i>	41
6	The Christ of God <i>Luke 9</i>	50
7	The One Thing Needful <i>Luke 10–11</i>	59
8	Fear Not, Little Flock <i>Luke 12–13</i>	68
9	This My Son Was Dead <i>Luke 14–15</i>	78
10	Where Are the Nine? <i>Luke 16–17</i>	88
11	Today Salvation Has Come <i>Luke 18:1–19:27</i>	98
12	The Stones Would Cry Out <i>Luke 19:28–21:38</i>	109
13	Do This in Remembrance <i>Luke 22:1–38</i>	120
14	Did Not Our Hearts Burn <i>Luke 22:39–24:53</i>	131

Take-Home sheets 1–14 are published separately as a merged print file, two pages per session, in distribution order.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 1

An Orderly Account

Luke 1:1–38

Prologue and Annunciation: the Gospel of certainty begins with a yes

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that Luke writes as a careful historian for the sake of catechesis, and that the Annunciation is saturated with Old Testament language: Gabriel from Daniel, the Davidic covenant from 2 Samuel 7, and a mysterious word about the Most High overshadowing Mary whose source we will deliberately leave unresolved tonight.

Catholic Touchstone: Mary's *fiat* as the obedience of faith that reverses Eve's disobedience (CCC 494), and the angel's greeting *kecharitōmenē* as a scriptural root the Church's Marian doctrine grows from. A second, quieter touchstone: Luke 1:4 uses the verb *katēcheō*, the word catechesis itself. Your small group tonight is doing exactly what Luke wrote this Gospel for.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke opens with a formal literary preface of the kind Greek historians used, naming his method: he has followed everything closely, consulted eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, and set it down in order so that Theophilus may know the certainty of what he was taught. No other Gospel begins this way. Luke is announcing that Christian faith rests on testimony that can be investigated, not on private feeling. The name Theophilus means lover of God, and the title most excellent suggests a real man of rank, likely a catechumen or new convert, though the Fathers also delighted in reading the name as every soul that loves God.

Church tradition, attested by St. Irenaeus and the Muratorian fragment in the second century, identifies the author as Luke, the beloved physician and companion of St. Paul (Col 4:14, 2 Tim 4:11). Modern scholarship debates how much weight the tradition can bear, and the book itself is formally anonymous, so hold the attribution with honest confidence rather than as a proven fact: the external testimony is early, unanimous, and names a minor figure no one would invent.

Luke then gives us two annunciations built as deliberate parallels. Gabriel appears to Zechariah in the Temple at the altar of incense and to Mary in an obscure Galilean village. Both are troubled, both are told do not be afraid, both receive a promised son with a mission, and both ask a question. The difference between the questions is the theological engine of the passage. Zechariah asks for proof: how shall I know this, since he and Elizabeth are old. Mary asks about the manner: how can this be, since she has no husband. Zechariah doubts the message; Mary believes it and asks how God will accomplish it. He is struck mute; she is given an explanation and a sign she never requested. Faith is not the absence of questions. It is the direction the question points.

Gabriel's words to Mary in 1:32–33 are a mosaic of the covenant God swore to David in 2 Samuel 7: the throne of his father David, reign over the house of Jacob, a kingdom without end. First-century ears would have heard an unmistakable claim: the Messiah is here. And Gabriel himself is a signal. He appears by name in only one other book of the Bible, Daniel, where he delivers the timetable of seventy weeks until the anointed one comes. When Gabriel shows up again after five centuries of silence, the clock has run out.

The greeting itself repays close attention. Gabriel does not address Mary by her name but by a title: *chaire, kecharitōmenē*, rejoice, having-been-and-remaining-graced, a perfect passive participle used as a form of address, unique in Scripture. The steelman chain in tonight's discussion takes the strongest Protestant reading of this word seriously before pressing back, so read that section carefully in advance. Finally, 1:35 contains a word we will plant and refuse to harvest: the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Participants will write a sealed guess about where they have met that image before. Do not resolve it. It pays off in Session 6.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

2 Sam 7:12-16 Davidic covenant: throne, house, kingdom without end — **Lk 1:32-33**

Dan 9:21-27 Gabriel announces the timetable of the anointed one — **Lk 1:19, 26**

Zeph 3:14-17 Rejoice, daughter of Zion, the King of Israel is in your midst — **Lk 1:28**

Ex 40:34-35 The cloud overshadows the tabernacle (leader's eyes only: sealed guess, resolves Session 6) — **Lk 1:35**

Gen 18:14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? Sarah's impossible son — **Lk 1:37**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies III, 22, 4*)

The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience. What the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosed through her faith. Irenaeus, taught by St. Polycarp who was taught by St. John, gives us the New Eve reading within living memory of the apostles, and the Catechism makes his sentence its own in CCC 494.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book II*)

Ambrose contrasts the two questions asked of Gabriel. Zechariah doubted that an aged woman could conceive and asked for proof; Mary, promised something far more impossible, did not doubt that it would happen but asked only how it would come about. Her question was the inquiry of faith seeking understanding, not of unbelief seeking evidence, which is why the same angel silences one and answers the other.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bernard of Clairvaux (*Homilies in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mother, Homily 4*)

In a passage the Church reads every Advent, Bernard imagines all creation holding its breath between Gabriel's question and Mary's answer: Adam and the patriarchs, the whole waiting world, begging the Virgin to speak the word that heaven and earth await. Answer quickly, O Virgin, Bernard pleads: the whole economy of the Incarnation waited in that silence on a free and faithful

yes.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 484–486 The Annunciation inaugurates the fullness of time; the Holy Spirit is sent to sanctify the womb of the Virgin.

CCC 490–493 Full of grace: the Church's reflection on Gabriel's greeting and the grace given Mary from her conception.

CCC 494 Mary's fiat as the obedience of faith; the Irenaeus knot passage quoted directly.

CCC 2676 The Hail Mary unpacked: the greeting of Gabriel and Elizabeth, the daughter of Zion, the dwelling of God with His people.

CCC 4–6 Catechesis defined: the same word Luke uses in 1:4 for what Theophilus received.

THREAD WATCH

Overshadow (SEALED GUESS, plants tonight, resolves Session 6): Lk 1:35 uses *episkiazō*.

Participants seal a written guess on Take-Home 1 about where God's presence overshadows something in the Old Testament. The same verb returns at the Transfiguration cloud in Lk 9:34, and both are commonly read as evoking Ex 40:34-35, where the Greek Old Testament uses this same verb for the glory cloud filling the tabernacle. Say nothing tonight.

Temple bookends (plants tonight, resolves Session 14): The Gospel opens with a priest at the incense altar. Watch where Luke chooses to end. Do not flag this for the group; let the symmetry land in the final session.

Mary ponders (plants tonight, develops Session 2): Mary considers Gabriel's greeting in 1:29; she will treasure and ponder in 2:19 and 2:51. Luke is sketching the first and model disciple.

Today / sēmeron (plants Session 3): Not yet in play, but be ready: the study's title word first sounds in the Nazareth synagogue.

SESSION GOALS

1. Establish Luke's historical method and catechetical purpose from the prologue, and connect *katēcheō* to what your group is doing right now.
2. Trace the parallel structure of the two annunciations and articulate the difference between Zechariah's question and Mary's.
3. Let the group discover Gabriel's Daniel 9 backstory and the 2 Samuel 7 covenant language for themselves, live, with Bibles open.
4. Run the *kecharitōmenē* steelman chain honestly: present the Protestant reading at full strength before pressing back from the grammar and the greeting's uniqueness.
5. Plant the sealed overshadow guess on Take-Home 1 without resolving it, and close on Mary's fiat as the pattern of every disciple's yes.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If the evening runs long, cut Question 3 (the Daniel 9 discovery) first and simply state Gabriel's pedigree in one sentence, then drop the Dig Deeper boxes. Never cut Question 5 (the steelman chain) or Question 8 (the fiat); they are the session's spine. The sealed guess takes ninety seconds and must happen.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, who overshadowed the Virgin of Nazareth. As we open this Gospel written so that we might know the certainty of the things we have been taught, give us Luke's care for the truth and Mary's readiness to say yes. Teach us in these fourteen weeks to hear the word of God and keep it. We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. When someone tells you news that sounds too good to be true, what actually convinces you to believe them?

W2. Think of one thing about the faith you believed as a kid simply because someone you trusted taught it to you. Have you ever gone back and checked it out for yourself? What happened?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Ask each question and wait. Let the group dig, disagree, and discover before you consolidate. The shaded ANSWER boxes are for you to share after the discussion, never to read in place of it. When a question sends the group to the Old Testament, have them physically find the passage; the discovery is the point.

1. Read Luke 1:1–4 aloud. What does Luke claim about his sources and his method? What does he say his goal is for Theophilus?

Leader: Draw out the verbs: followed closely, eyewitnesses, orderly account, certainty.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke claims investigation, not invention: he has traced everything carefully from the beginning, relying on eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, and arranged it in order. His stated goal is that Theophilus may know the **certainty** of the things he was taught. The Greek verb behind taught is *katēcheō*: Theophilus has been catechized, and Luke writes to give that catechesis historical foundations. This entire study is a Luke 1:4 exercise.

2. Read Luke 1:5–25. Where exactly is Zechariah when Gabriel appears, and what is he doing? What does he ask the angel, and what does it cost him?

Leader: Establish the Temple setting firmly; it matters later in the study more than the group knows.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Zechariah is a priest inside the Temple sanctuary, offering incense at the hour of prayer, as close to the presence of God as his lot will ever bring him. Told that his prayer is heard and Elizabeth will

bear a son, he asks *How shall I know this?* He wants proof, and the proof he receives is nine months of silence. Note where Luke's Gospel begins: in the Temple, at the altar. File that away.

3. Live discovery: Gabriel introduces himself by name in verse 19. This is only the second book of the Bible where Gabriel appears by name. Send the group hunting: find Daniel 9:21-27. What was Gabriel's message there, and what does his reappearance now signal?

Leader: Give them two or three minutes with Bibles. If nobody lands on Daniel, give the book and let them find the chapter.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

In Daniel 9, Gabriel delivers the prophecy of seventy weeks: a countdown until an anointed one, a messiah, comes to finish transgression and bring in everlasting righteousness. Gabriel is Scripture's timetable angel, and some Second Temple interpreters read his seventy weeks as a messianic countdown, one reason expectation ran so hot in the first century; the chronology itself remains one of Scripture's most debated. But when, after roughly five centuries without a word from him, Gabriel reappears in the Temple, Luke's first readers could hear the signal regardless of anyone's arithmetic: the Messiah is not coming someday; he is coming now.

4. Read Luke 1:26–38. The two annunciations are built as parallels: an appearance, fear, do not be afraid, a promised son, a question. Compare Zechariah's question (1:18) with Mary's (1:34). What is the difference, and why does Gabriel answer one and silence the other?

Leader: This is the heart of the parallel structure. Let the group wrestle with why one question is faith and the other is not.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Zechariah asks for verification: how shall I *know*, give me evidence. Mary asks about the manner: how *can* this be, since she has no husband. She does not doubt that God will do it; she asks how God will do it. St. Ambrose saw it precisely: hers is the question of faith seeking understanding, his the question of unbelief seeking proof, and the promise made to Mary was by far the harder one to believe. Faith is not the absence of questions but their direction.

5. Steelman chain: Gabriel greets Mary: Hail, full of grace (1:28). Many Protestant translations render this greatly favored one, and the strongest Protestant reading argues: the word describes God's favor shown to Mary for her task, not a state of sinless fullness; Stephen is called full of grace in Acts 6:8 and nobody claims he was immaculate. Take that reading seriously as a group. Then look closer at the Greek word itself, *kecharitōmenē*. What is unusual about how Gabriel uses it?

Leader: Present the Protestant case at full strength first and let it stand. Then press: the grammar, and the fact that it replaces her name.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The steelman deserves its due: the word alone, as vocabulary, does not prove the Immaculate Conception, and Catholics should not claim it does. But two features resist the thinner reading.

First, the grammar: *kecharitōmenē* is a perfect passive participle, describing a completed action with continuing results, having been and remaining graced. Stephen in Acts 6:8 is described with a different construction entirely, an adjective phrase (*plērēs charitos*, "full of grace"), not the perfect passive participle Gabriel uses; the grammar of Acts 6:8 tells us nothing either way about the duration of Stephen's grace, and we should not pretend it does. Second, Gabriel uses the word as a form of address, in place of Mary's name, as if grace-filled is who she is. The dogma rests on Scripture read within Tradition's long reflection, not on a participle alone, and we should say so honestly. But the participle is doing real work, and the Church noticed it very early.

DIG DEEPER: REJOICE, DAUGHTER OF ZION

Gabriel's opening word *chaire*, rejoice, echoes the prophets' summons to the daughter of Zion: rejoice, for the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst (Zeph 3:14–17; see also Zech 9:9). If the echo is intended, Gabriel is greeting Mary as Israel-in-person, the daughter of Zion in whose midst, literally in whose womb, the Lord now comes to dwell. CCC 2676 builds the Hail Mary on exactly this reading.

6. Live discovery: Read Gabriel's promise in 1:32–33 slowly. This is built chiefly on one specific Old Testament passage. Find 2 Samuel 7:12–16 and map the pieces: which phrases in Gabriel's speech come from the covenant with David?

Leader: Have them build the mapping themselves, phrase by phrase, out loud.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The throne of his father David draws on the throne promise (2 Sam 7:13, 16); son of the Most High echoes I will be his father and he shall be my son (7:14); and of his kingdom there will be no end seals the promise that David's house and kingdom shall be made sure forever (7:16). Reign over the house of Jacob is Luke's own extension: the everlasting Davidic kingship now named over all Israel. 2 Samuel 7 is the principal source, but Gabriel speaks it enlarged, in covenant language any Jew would recognize, announcing that the thousand-year-old promise to David comes true in the child Mary is asked to bear.

7. Sealed guess: Gabriel answers Mary's how in 1:35: the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. That word overshadow is strange and specific. Somewhere in the Old Testament, God's presence overshadows something. On your Take-Home sheet is a box marked My Guess. Write where you think this image comes from, or your best guess at what it might mean, fold it, and do not discuss it. We will open these in a few weeks.

Leader: Ninety seconds, pens down, no discussion, no hints. Collect nothing; they keep the sheet. LEADER'S EYES ONLY: the verb is *episkiazō*, it returns at the Transfiguration cloud (Lk 9:34), and both are widely read as evoking the glory cloud filling the tabernacle in Ex 40:34–35 (the Greek OT uses the same verb there). Resolves in Session 6. Reveal nothing tonight, even if someone lands on it; smile and write down that they should say it again in Session 6.

8. Read 1:37–38 again. Gabriel offers Mary a precedent, for with God nothing will be impossible, language borrowed from the promise of a son to another woman long ago (Gen 18:14). Then Mary answers. What exactly does she consent to, and what does her yes cost her?

Leader: Slow the group down here. Betrothed virgin, small town, visible pregnancy. Let the risk register before the theology.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Mary consents to everything and specifies nothing: behold the handmaid of the Lord. She accepts a pregnancy she cannot explain to Joseph, to Nazareth, or to anyone, in a world where the explanation could cost her her betrothal and by the letter of the law her life. St. Irenaeus, within living memory of the apostles, read this verse against Genesis 3: the knot tied by Eve's unbelief is untied by Mary's faith, the New Eve whose obedience opens what disobedience closed (CCC 494). And St. Bernard pictures the whole waiting world on its knees between the angel's question and her answer, while St. Augustine supplies the principle beneath the scene: God, who created us without us, willed not to save us without us (CCC 1847). God needed no one's permission; he freely willed that our salvation should enlist our freedom, and Mary's fiat is that freedom's finest hour.

DIG DEEPER: GABRIEL'S TIMING AND THE FULLNESS OF TIME

St. Paul says God sent his Son when the time had fully come (Gal 4:4). Daniel's seventy weeks (Dan 9:24–27), delivered by this same Gabriel, was read by some Second Temple interpreters as a messianic countdown, one likely contributor to the heightened messianic expectation of the first century. Luke's chronological anchors in 1:5 and 3:1 are his historian's way of insisting: this happened, datably, when the clock struck.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Mary said yes before she understood everything, and her question was how, not prove it. Where in your life right now is God waiting on a yes you keep postponing until you have more certainty?

S2. Luke wrote an orderly account so one man could know the certainty of what he had been taught. Who catechized you, formally or not? And who might be waiting, without knowing it, for you to be their Luke?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray the Angelus once a day this week, ideally at noon. It is the Church's daily rehearsal of tonight's passage; a card with the text is on your Take-Home sheet.
- Look up CCC 494 and read the St. Irenaeus quotation slowly, once, out loud.
- Before next session, read Luke 1:39–2:52: the Visitation, the Magnificat, the Nativity, and two trips to the Temple.

Scripture memory: **Luke 1:38**, *Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, you sent your angel to a town nobody important had heard of, to a girl the world would never have chosen, and on her answer you hung the salvation of the world. Give us her faith that asks how instead of demanding proof, and her courage to answer before the cost is fully counted. Behold your servants, Lord. Let it be done to us according to your word. **Amen.***

Leader Reference Card: Session 1

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Flag these in your Bible before the group arrives.

Passage Used for

Luke 1:1–4 Q1: prologue, method, katēcheō / certainty for Theophilus

Luke 1:5–25 Q2: Zechariah in the Temple, the question that asks for proof

Daniel 9:21–27 Q3 live discovery: Gabriel and the seventy-weeks countdown

Luke 1:26–38 Q4–Q8: the Annunciation

Luke 1:18 with 1:34 Q4: the two questions compared

Acts 6:8 Q5 steelman: Stephen, full of grace, the strongest counter-text

Zephaniah 3:14–17 Dig Deeper: rejoice, daughter of Zion (with Zech 9:9)

2 Samuel 7:12–16 Q6 live discovery: Davidic covenant mosaic in Lk 1:32–33

Genesis 18:14 Q8: nothing impossible with God, Sarah's precedent

Galatians 4:4 Dig Deeper: the fullness of time

CCC 484–494, 2676, 4–6 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 1:39–2:52, the Visitation and the Magnificat. Pack a bookmark at 2 Samuel 6; you will need it, and the group should not know why yet.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 2

Blessed Is She Who Believed

Luke 1:39–2:52

Visitation, Magnificat, Nativity, and the Temple: the Ark goes to the hill country

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover, with 2 Samuel 6 open beside Luke 1, that Luke has painted the Visitation in the colors of the Ark of the Covenant coming to the hill country of Judah, and that the Magnificat is a daughter's variation on Hannah's song. They then follow the infant Messiah into the Temple twice and hear the first shadow fall: a sword through Mary's own soul.

Catholic Touchstone: Mary as Ark of the New Covenant and the biblical logic of Marian veneration (CCC 2676); the Magnificat as the Church's own evening prayer (CCC 2619); and the perpetual virginity question met head-on through the word *prōtotokos*, firstborn.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Tonight's centerpiece is a discovery you must not spoil. In 2 Samuel 6, David brings the Ark of the Covenant, the gold-covered chest carrying God's presence, up to Jerusalem through the hill country of Judah. He leaps and dances before it, asks in awe how the Ark of the Lord can come to him, and the Ark stays three months in the house of Obed-edom, blessing it. Luke 1:39–56 echoes beat after beat: Mary travels into the hill country of Judah, John leaps in Elizabeth's womb, Elizabeth cries out how is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me, and Mary remains about three months. Luke, the careful historian, has arranged his account so that a reader soaked in the Septuagint sees the new Ark, the vessel of the divine presence, going up into the hills. The overshadowing word from last week is quietly waiting behind this scene; say nothing, the sealed guesses stay sealed until Session 6.

The Magnificat is built from Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, the barren woman whose prayed-for son was given back to God at the sanctuary. Mary sings the same theology: the proud scattered, the mighty pulled down, the hungry filled, the rich sent away empty. This is the anthem of the anawim, the lowly faithful remnant, and it introduces the great Lukan reversal theme that will run through the woes of the Sermon on the Plain, Lazarus at the gate, and the tax collector who went home justified. The Church has sung it at Vespers every evening for some fifteen centuries.

The Nativity itself Luke tells with a historian's frame (the census, the governorship of Quirinius) and a poet's economy: a manger, swaddling cloths, shepherds. Note where the word of the angel lands: a Savior is born this day, in the city of David. This day, *sēmeron*, the study's title word, whispers here for the first time; it becomes thematic next week in Nazareth. The manger, a feeding trough in the city whose name means house of bread, was read Eucharistically by the Fathers early and often.

The Presentation (2:22–38) and the Finding (2:41–52) both take us to the Temple, which should feel familiar: the Gospel opened there, and Luke is not done with it. Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* declares the child a light to the Gentiles, and then Simeon turns to Mary alone with the Gospel's first shadow: this child is set for the fall and rising of many, and a sword will pierce through your own soul also. Plant that sword; it hangs over the whole study and falls at the cross. The Finding gives us Jesus' first recorded words, a question about necessity: did you not know that I must be in my Father's house. And twice in this passage Luke tells us what Mary did with all of it: she kept these things, pondering them in her

heart (2:19, 2:51). The thread from 1:29 develops; Luke is showing us the first contemplative, the first disciple, and very possibly naming his eyewitness source for these chapters.

One apologetics landmine sits in 2:7: she gave birth to her first-born son. Tonight's steelman chain takes seriously the Protestant argument that firstborn implies a second-born and that the perpetual virginity is unbiblical. Prepare by reading the answer box carefully: *prōtotokos* is a legal-cultic title about the child's status and consecration under Exodus 13:2, not a census of later siblings, and there is even ancient funerary evidence of the word used for the only child of a mother who died bearing him.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

2 Sam 6:2–16 The Ark goes up to the hill country: David leaps, asks how can it come to me, three months at Obed-edom — **Lk 1:39–56**

1 Sam 2:1–10 Hannah's song: the mighty brought low, the lowly raised — **Lk 1:46–55**

Ex 13:2, 12 Every firstborn male consecrated to the Lord — **Lk 2:7, 22–23**

Lev 12:8 The offering of the poor: two turtledoves or two young pigeons — **Lk 2:24**

Isa 42:6, 49:6 A light to the nations — **Lk 2:32**

Mal 3:1 The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple — **Lk 2:22, 46**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book II*)

Commenting on the Magnificat, Ambrose urges that Mary's song is meant to become ours: let Mary's soul be in each of you to magnify the Lord, let her spirit be in each of you to rejoice in God. Christ has one Mother in the flesh, but by faith Christ is the fruit of all of us; every soul that believes conceives and brings forth the Word of God. The Church reads this passage in the Liturgy of the Hours.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable (*Homilies on the Gospels, Book I*)

Bede observes that Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, blesses Mary above all for her faith: blessed is she who believed. The blessedness of bearing Christ in the body was hers alone, Bede says, but the blessedness of believing the word and keeping it is offered to every disciple, which is why Mary is not only the Lord's mother but the first and model member of the Church.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Paul II (*Redemptoris Mater, 12–19*)

John Paul II takes Elizabeth's sentence, blessed is she who believed, as the key to Mary's whole life, which he describes as a pilgrimage of faith. Her yes at the Annunciation had to be renewed in the dark: at the manger, at Simeon's sword, at the losing and finding in the Temple, and finally at the

cross. Mary is venerated not for privilege alone but because she believed, and kept believing when believing cost the most.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 2676 The Hail Mary and Mary as the Ark: full of grace, the Lord is with thee, the dwelling of God with His people.

CCC 2619 The Magnificat as the song of the Mother of God and of the Church, thanksgiving of the whole People of God.

CCC 495, 499–501 Theotokos and the perpetual virginity: what the Church means and does not mean by firstborn and brothers.

CCC 529 The Presentation: Jesus received as the Messiah, Simeon and Anna the expectation of Israel in person.

CCC 534 The Finding in the Temple: the only event that breaks the silence of the hidden years, a glimpse of total consecration to his Father's mission.

THREAD WATCH

Overshadow (SEALED, resolves Session 6): Tonight's Ark discovery walks right up to the sealed guess without touching it. If someone connects the Ark to the overshadowing cloud out loud, receive it warmly and vaguely, and privately rejoice: they are one step from Session 6. Confirm nothing.

Mary ponders (develops tonight): 2:19 and 2:51. Name the pattern for the group: Luke keeps showing us Mary receiving events into her heart. Where might Luke have gotten these family memories?

Sword through the soul (plants tonight, falls in Session 14): Simeon's word to Mary at 2:35. Do not resolve; just make sure the group feels the shadow.

Temple bookends (develops quietly): Two more Temple scenes tonight. Keep the tally privately; the symmetry lands in Session 14.

Today / sēmeron (whispers tonight, plants Session 3): 2:11, unto you is born this day. Underline it in your own Bible; next week it becomes the study's title.

SESSION GOALS

1. Run the 2 Samuel 6 discovery live and let the group assemble the Ark parallels themselves, beat by beat.
2. Read the Magnificat against Hannah's song and name the great reversal as a Lukan theme to watch.
3. Handle the firstborn steelman honestly, presenting the Protestant case at strength before answering from Exodus 13 and the word's legal meaning.
4. Sit with Simeon's two oracles: light to the Gentiles, and the sword that plants the Passion in chapter 2.
5. Establish Mary's pondering as Luke's portrait of the model disciple, and plausibly his source.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If pressed, compress Question 6 (the Finding) to a single read-and-comment and drop the Dig Deeper boxes. Never cut Question 2 (the Ark discovery) or Question 4 (the firstborn steelman); they are tonight's spine. If the group is slow, the Presentation and Finding can share one combined discussion.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, when your Son entered the world, the joy could not stay still: a mother hurried into the hills, an unborn prophet leaped, an old man sang that he could die in peace. Give us tonight the eyes of Elizabeth, to recognize the Lord when he comes to us hidden and small, and the heart of Mary, to keep your words and ponder them. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. When you got the best news of your life, who did you go to first, and why that person?

W2. Is there an object, a place, or an heirloom your family treats as almost sacred? What makes something feel set apart?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight hinges on the group discovering the Ark parallels themselves. Resist every urge to connect the dots for them. Ask, wait, and let the text do the work; consolidate with the ANSWER boxes only after the discussion has run.

1. Read Luke 1:39–45. List everything that happens when Mary arrives: what does Elizabeth say, what does John do, how long does Mary stay (v. 56)? Just gather the details; hold your interpretations.

Leader: *You are loading the evidence table for Q2. Get the details on a whiteboard or paper if you can: hill country of Judah, the leap, the loud cry, mother of my Lord, how has this happened to me, about three months.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The raw data: Mary travels in haste into the hill country of Judah; at her greeting the child leaps in Elizabeth's womb; Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaims with a loud cry; she asks why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me; and Mary remains about three months. Every one of those details is about to matter.

2. Live discovery: Now find 2 Samuel 6:2–16, David bringing the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem. Read it as a group and compare it to your list from Question 1, beat by beat. What is Luke doing?

Leader: *Give them time. The parallels: hill country of Judah (2 Sam 6:2, Baale-judah); David leaps and dances before the Ark (6:14–16); David says how can the ark of the Lord come to me (6:9); the Ark blesses the house of Obed-edom for three months (6:11). If they stall, ask: who leaps in each story? Who asks the awed question? How long does each visitor stay?*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke appears to have composed the Visitation with the Ark narrative in view: both journeys pass through the Judean hills (Baale-judah, that is Kiriath-jearim, lies in that hill country), a figure leaps

before the presence of the Lord, the same awed question sounds with one substitution (mother of my Lord where David said ark of the Lord), a loud cry of joy rings out, and each visit lasts about three months, in the Ark's case bringing blessing to the house. The Ark carried the presence of God in the wilderness: the tablets of the word, the manna, the rod of the priest. Mary carries the Word made flesh, the living Bread, the eternal High Priest. She is the Ark of the New Covenant, and this is the biblical grammar behind the Church's veneration of her: the honor paid to the Ark was never worship of a gold box, and honor paid to Mary is always about Who she carried. CCC 2676 builds the Hail Mary on this very reading.

3. Read the Magnificat, Luke 1:46–55, and then 1 Samuel 2:1–10, Hannah's song. What does Mary borrow, and what pattern do both songs celebrate about how God works?

Leader: A lighter comparison after the heavy lifting of Q2. Let them find the reversals: proud and mighty down, lowly and hungry up.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Mary sings in the tradition of Hannah, another unexpected mother whose son was given to God's sanctuary: exultation in God my Savior, the mighty pulled from thrones, the hungry filled, the rich dismissed empty. This is the great reversal, the anthem of the *anawim*, the poor and lowly faithful of Israel, and it is Luke's overture. Watch it return in the blessings and woes, in Lazarus at the rich man's gate, in the tax collector who went home justified. The Church has made this song her own evening prayer at Vespers for over fifteen centuries (CCC 2619): every day ends with Mary's theology of grace.

4. Steelman chain: Luke 2:7 says Mary gave birth to her first-born son. The strongest Protestant argument runs: firstborn implies later-born; Matthew 1:25 says Joseph knew her not until she had borne a son; the Gospels name Jesus' brothers, James, Josés, Judas, and Simon, and mention his sisters too (Mark 6:3); taken together, the plain reading is an ordinary family, and the perpetual virginity is a later tradition contradicted by the text. Give that argument its full weight as a group. Then ask: in Israel's law and culture, what did the title firstborn actually do? Look at Exodus 13:2.

Leader: Let the Protestant case breathe; it is a reasonable reading of English. Then press on what *prōtotokos* meant legally.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The steelman is fair as far as English goes, but *prōtotokos* is a legal and cultic title, not a birth-order tally. Under Exodus 13:2 the firstborn male is the child who opens the womb and must be consecrated to the Lord, a status conferred at birth whether or not any sibling ever follows; Luke uses the word precisely to set up the Presentation in 2:22–24, where that law is quoted. A Jewish funerary inscription from Egypt, predating Christianity, memorializes a woman who died giving birth to her firstborn son, a child who by definition had no younger siblings. As for Matthew 1:25, the Greek *heōs* (until) affirms what was true up to a point without asserting a change afterward: Michal had no child until the day of her death (2 Sam 6:23), and Christ is with us until the close of the age (Matt 28:20) without ceasing to be with us after. As for the brothers of the Lord, Scripture's own usage of *adelphos* covers kinsmen broadly (in Gen 14:14 the Hebrew calls Lot Abraham's

brother and the Greek Septuagint uses adelphos, though he is actually his nephew, which is why English translations like the RSV2CE render it kinsman), and Luke, who knows this family's story best, never calls anyone else Mary's child. The perpetual virginity (CCC 499–501) is not proven by 2:7, and we should not claim it is; but neither is it contradicted by it, and the great majority of the ancient Church, which read this Greek natively, saw no conflict; when Helvidius pressed this very objection in the fourth century, Jerome answered him at length and Helvidius found almost no following.

DIG DEEPER: A MANGER IN THE HOUSE OF BREAD

Bethlehem means house of bread, and the newborn King is laid in a manger, a feeding trough. The Fathers could not resist the sign and neither should we: the one born in the house of bread, placed where food is set out for the flock, will one day take bread and say this is my body. Luke's crib is already pointing at the altar. Hold the thought; it matures in Session 13.

5. Read Luke 2:22–38, the Presentation. Simeon says two things: a public oracle over the child (2:29–32) and a private word to Mary (2:34–35). What does each announce? Notice also which offering Mary and Joseph bring (2:24), and check Leviticus 12:8 to see what it tells you about the Holy Family.

Leader: Three finds here: light to the Gentiles, the sword, and the offering of the poor.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The Nunc Dimittis declares this child salvation prepared for all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, Isaiah's servant songs come true; Luke, the Gentile evangelist, hangs his whole two-volume work on that line. Then Simeon turns to Mary alone: the child is set for the fall and rising of many, a sign spoken against, and a sword will pierce through your own soul also. The first shadow of the cross falls in chapter 2, and it falls on his mother. And the offering named (a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons) is, by Leviticus 12:8, the concession made for those who cannot afford a lamb: the Holy Family is poor, the anawim of the Magnificat, and Mary carries the true Lamb in her arms. The blessedness Elizabeth named, blessed is she who believed, will have to survive this sword; St. John Paul II called Mary's whole life a pilgrimage of faith for exactly this reason.

6. Read Luke 2:41–52, the Finding in the Temple. These are Jesus' first recorded words in Scripture. What does he say about himself, and what does Luke tell us, twice in this chapter, that Mary does with what she cannot yet understand (2:19, 2:51)?

Leader: End the Build on Mary's pondering; it sets up the Send questions.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The boy's first words are a statement of necessity and identity: did you not know that I must be in my Father's house. At twelve he knows whose Son he is, and the Temple, where this Gospel began and where tonight has now taken us twice more, is his Father's house. And Mary, who does not yet understand, does the thing Luke shows her doing all through these chapters: she kept all these things in her heart. That pondering is Luke's portrait of the model disciple, hearing the word and keeping it even in the dark, and it is his quiet footnote about sources: who else could have told him

these stories? Then the curtain falls on thirty hidden years in one line: he was obedient to them, and increased in wisdom and stature (CCC 534).

DIG DEEPER: ANNA, AND THE ONES WHO WAIT

Luke pairs Simeon with Anna, an elderly widow who never left the Temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day (2:36–38). Luke loves these pairings of men and women, and he loves the quiet faithful who wait decades for a promise. Between Zechariah, Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna, the Messiah is welcomed almost entirely by the patient old. There is a vocation hiding in that.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Elizabeth's blessing was for believing, not achieving: blessed is she who believed. What promise of God do you have the hardest time actually believing will be kept for you?

S2. Mary kept and pondered what she could not understand. What is one thing in your life right now that you cannot explain, that you could start carrying the way she did, in prayer instead of panic?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray the Magnificat aloud once this week, ideally in the evening. You will be praying the very canticle the Church sings at Vespers every evening. And if you can, pray Evening Prayer itself and join the Church's liturgy in full.
- Read CCC 2676 and notice how much of the Hail Mary is simply Luke 1.
- Before next session, read Luke 3:1–4:44: the Baptist, the baptism, the genealogy, the desert, and a hometown sermon that nearly gets Jesus killed.

Scripture memory: **Luke 1:45**, *Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, you made a young woman of Nazareth the Ark of the New Covenant and taught her to carry what she could not comprehend. Give us her pondering heart, Elizabeth's glad recognition, and Simeon's patience to wait for what you have promised. May our souls magnify the Lord, tonight and every evening of our lives. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 2

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Flag these before the group arrives, especially 2 Samuel 6.

Passage Used for

Luke 1:39–45, 56 Q1: Visitation evidence table

2 Samuel 6:2–16 Q2 live discovery: the Ark to the hill country

Luke 1:46–55 Q3: Magnificat

1 Samuel 2:1–10 Q3: Hannah's song

Luke 2:1–20 Q4 context: Nativity; sēmeron whispers at 2:11

Exodus 13:2 Q4 steelman: what firstborn legally means

Genesis 14:14 Q4: adelphos used for a kinsman

Luke 2:22–38 Q5: Presentation, Nunc Dimittis, the sword

Leviticus 12:8 Q5: the offering of the poor

Luke 2:41–52 Q6: the Finding; 2:19 and 2:51 pondering

CCC 495, 499–501, 529, 534, 2619, 2676 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 3–4. The study's title word arrives in the Nazareth synagogue. Bookmark

Deuteronomy 6–8; the group will be hunting there during the temptation scene.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 3

Today This Scripture Is Fulfilled

Luke 3–4

Baptism, genealogy, desert, and the Nazareth manifesto: the study's title word arrives

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that all three of Jesus' answers to the devil come from one small stretch of Deuteronomy, Israel's wilderness examination, and that Luke's genealogy runs past Abraham all the way to Adam, son of God: Jesus enters the desert as the new Israel and the new Adam, and passes the test both failed. Then in Nazareth he opens Isaiah and speaks the word this study is named for.

Catholic Touchstone: The baptism of the Lord as the manifestation of the Trinity and the anointing of the Messiah (CCC 535–537), Christ's victory over temptation as the recapitulation of Adam and Israel (CCC 538–540), and the Nazareth proclamation of the great Jubilee (CCC 1286, 714).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke 3 opens with a six-part chronological anchor, emperor, governor, tetrarchs, high priests, the historian planting a flag: this happened in datable public time. John's baptism of repentance draws crowds, and his preaching is bracingly concrete: two coats, share one; tax collectors, stop skimming; soldiers, stop extorting. When the people wonder whether John is the Christ, he points forward: one mightier is coming who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

At the baptism, Luke gives us the Trinity in a single frame: the Son praying in the water, the Spirit descending in bodily form as a dove, the Father's voice, Thou art my beloved Son. The words fuse Psalm 2:7, the coronation of the Davidic king, with Isaiah 42:1, the servant in whom God delights, and the dove over the water recalls the Spirit hovering over the deep at creation and over the flood at the world's rebirth. The sinless one stands in a sinner's baptism because he has come to stand where sinners stand; the anointing (Christos means anointed) inaugurates his mission (CCC 535–536).

Then the genealogy, and its placement is the point. Matthew opens his Gospel descending from Abraham to Jesus; Luke pauses between baptism and temptation to climb from Jesus backward, past David, past Abraham, all the way to Adam, the son of God. The next word of the narrative sends this Son of God into the wilderness to be tempted. Luke has built a hinge: where Adam, son of God, fell in a garden of plenty, Jesus, Son of God, will stand in a desert of hunger. St. Irenaeus called this recapitulation: Christ rewinds humanity's story and plays it again, this time without the fall.

The temptations replay Israel's wilderness as much as Eden's garden. Forty days answer forty years, and every one of Jesus' three replies is quoted from Deuteronomy 6–8, Moses' commentary on the desert years: man shall not live by bread alone (Deut 8:3, the manna lesson), you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve (Deut 6:13), you shall not tempt the Lord your God (Deut 6:16, the grumbling at Massah). Tonight's central discovery puts the group in Deuteronomy to find all three themselves. Where Israel demanded bread, flirted with idols, and put God to the test, the true Israel answers Scripture to Satan and stands. Note Luke's ominous exit line: the devil departed from him until an opportune time. That time comes in Session 13, when Satan enters Judas.

Nazareth (4:16–30) is Luke's programmatic scene, moved to the front of the ministry like an overture. Jesus stands, receives the scroll of Isaiah, and reads the mission statement of the anointed one (Isa 61:1–

2 with a line of 58:6): good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed, the acceptable year of the Lord, the Jubilee language of Leviticus 25, when liberty was proclaimed, slaves went free, and ancestral land was restored. Then he sits, and every eye fixed on him, he says the sentence this study is named for: Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. Sēmeron. Not someday. The wonder curdles fast: when Jesus reminds them that Elijah was sent to a Sidonian widow and Elisha healed a Syrian leper, Gentiles both, his hometown tries to throw him off a cliff. The pattern of the whole Gospel, and of Acts, is set in one afternoon: the anointed one, the poor, the outsiders, the rage of the insiders, and the escape: he passes through their midst and goes his way (4:30).

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Isa 40:3–5 A voice in the wilderness; all flesh shall see salvation (Luke alone extends the quote this far) — **Lk 3:4–6**

Ps 2:7 with Isa 42:1 Coronation of the King fused with the Servant's anointing — **Lk 3:22**

Gen 5:1–3 Adam, made in God's likeness: the genealogy's last rung — **Lk 3:38**

Deut 8:3; 6:13; 6:16 Israel's wilderness lessons: the source of all three answers — **Lk 4:4, 8, 12**

Isa 61:1–2 with 58:6 The Spirit-anointed herald of the Jubilee — **Lk 4:18–19**

Lev 25:8–13 The year of liberty behind the acceptable year — **Lk 4:19**

1 Kgs 17:8–16; 2 Kgs 5:1–14 The widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian — **Lk 4:25–27**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory Nazianzen (*Oration 39, On the Holy Lights*)

Preaching on the Lord's baptism, Gregory bids the Church rise and be enlightened with Christ: he is baptized not to be cleansed, for he sanctifies the waters, but to bury the old Adam in the stream and to open heaven over human flesh. Christ goes down into the Jordan carrying the world, and comes up drawing the world after him.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies* V, 21)

Irenaeus reads the temptation as the rematch of Eden: the enemy who conquered a man at the beginning is conquered by a man in the end. Where Adam was beguiled over food in abundance, Christ, fasting and hungry, refuses to break obedience for bread, and answers every assault from the Law, so that the disobedience worked through the tree is undone by obedience, and the strong man is bound by the one he once bound.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the Nazareth sermon*)

Cyril hears in the Isaiah scroll the whole shape of the Incarnation: the Son, anointed with the Spirit not for his own sake but for ours, proclaims release to a race held captive, sight to minds darkened by the fall, and the acceptable time in which God's kindness is poured out. The words were fulfilled that day, Cyril insists, because the Reader was himself the text's subject: the anointed one stood among them, reading his own commission.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 535–537 The baptism of Jesus: acceptance of his mission as suffering Servant, the heavens opened, our own baptism prefigured.

CCC 538–540 The temptations: Jesus the new Adam and true Israel, victorious where Adam and Israel fell, in solidarity with us.

CCC 695 Anointing: the full sense of Christ, the one anointed by the Spirit, manifest at the Jordan and announced at Nazareth.

CCC 714 Isaiah 61 as the promise of the Spirit that Christ opens his preaching with.

CCC 1286 The messianic anointing at the Jordan as the root of Confirmation's theology.

THREAD WATCH

Today / sēmeron (PLANTS TONIGHT, develops Session 11, resolves Session 14): 4:21 is the study's title verse. Name the word for the group and tell them to start hunting it: Luke will say today at the moments that matter most. They already met it once without noticing, at 2:11.

Opportune time (plants tonight, resolves Session 13): 4:13, the devil departed until an opportune time. Do not explain; just read it slowly. It pays off when Satan enters Judas at 22:3.

Gentiles and outsiders (plants tonight, runs the whole study): Zarephath and Naaman at 4:25–27 begin Luke's long line of blessed outsiders: the centurion, the Samaritan, the ten lepers' one grateful foreigner, the thief. Track it aloud from here on.

Overshadow (SEALED, resolves Session 6): Nothing tonight touches it. Three weeks of silence remain.

SESSION GOALS

1. Read the baptism as the Trinitarian anointing of the Messiah, with Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42 fused in the Father's voice.
2. See why Luke parks the genealogy between baptism and desert, and what son of Adam, son of God sets up.
3. Run the Deuteronomy discovery live: the group finds all three of Jesus' answers in Deuteronomy 6–8 and names the pattern, new Israel passing the wilderness exam.
4. Unpack the Nazareth manifesto: Isaiah 61, the Jubilee, and the programmatic sēmeron of 4:21, then face the steelman on the genealogies honestly.
5. Plant the opportune time and the blessed-outsidere threads.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If the clock runs, compress Question 1 (John's preaching) into a summary sentence and drop the Dig Deeper boxes. Never cut Question 4 (the Deuteronomy discovery) or Question 6 (Nazareth and the title word); the session exists for those two. The genealogy steelman (Q3) can shrink to its answer if needed, but do not skip it entirely; someone in your group has heard the objection.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, at the Jordan you tore open the heavens and named your beloved Son; in the desert he stood where we fall; in Nazareth he announced the year of your favor. Anoint this conversation with the same Spirit, teach us to answer temptation with your word, and let your today be spoken over us tonight. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. If a stranger asked the people who knew you at twelve years old what you would grow up to be, what would they have guessed, and how close were they?

W2. What is a test you are actually glad you had to take, in school or in life? What did passing it make possible?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50-60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

The engine tonight is Question 4: the group must find Jesus' three answers in Deuteronomy themselves. Budget fifteen unhurried minutes for it. Everywhere else, keep the pace brisk; two dense chapters are on the table.

1. Read Luke 3:1–20. John's preaching gets very specific when the crowds ask what shall we do (3:10–14). What does repentance look like for each group he answers, and what does that tell you about what repentance is?

Leader: *Draw out how unglamorous the answers are: coats, food, honest scales, no shakedowns.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

John gives no one a mystical program: the man with two coats shares one, tax collectors collect only what is appointed, soldiers rob no one and stop gaming their wages. Repentance in Luke is not a mood but a redirection of money, power, and daily habits, bearing fruits that befit repentance. Watch this: Luke will return to possessions and repentance more than any other evangelist, and a tax collector named Zacchaeus will one day answer John's standard beyond anything John asked.

2. Read Luke 3:21–22. Count the persons present at the baptism. What do the Father's words echo, and why does the sinless one stand in a baptism of repentance at all?

Leader: *Trinity, Psalm 2:7 plus Isaiah 42:1, and solidarity. CCC 536 if the group wants the Church's own words.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

All three divine Persons in one frame: the Son praying in the water, the Spirit descending as a dove, the Father's voice from heaven. Thou art my beloved Son fuses the coronation psalm of the Davidic

king (Ps 2:7) with the servant in whom my soul delights (Isa 42:1): King and suffering Servant anointed in one breath, which is what Messiah, *Christos*, means. He needs no repentance; he stands in the sinners' line because he has come to stand where sinners stand, to let himself be numbered with transgressors from the first day (CCC 536). The dove over the waters is creation's Spirit hovering again: a new creation is beginning in the Jordan.

3. Steelman chain: Skim the genealogy in 3:23–38 and compare its shape to Matthew 1:1–17. A fair-minded skeptic presses hard here: the two genealogies differ, even naming different fathers for Joseph, so at least one is wrong, and the Gospels' reliability is compromised. Give that objection its full force. Then ask two questions of the text: where does Luke's list end that Matthew's does not, and where has Luke placed it in his story?

Leader: Let the difficulty stand honestly before answering. The theological placement is the sure ground; the harmonizations are proposals, and say so.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Honesty first: the lists differ, the difficulty is ancient, and Christians were discussing it by the third century, when Julius Africanus proposed a levirate-marriage solution (legal versus biological fatherhood); others since have suggested Luke traces Mary's line through her father Heli. These are plausible proposals, not proofs, and the Church has defined none of them, so we hold them with open hands. What is certain is what Luke is doing theologically: Matthew descends from Abraham to present the son of David, king of the Jews; Luke climbs from Jesus past David and Abraham to Adam, the son of God, and then, in the very next verse, sends this Son of God into the desert to be tempted. Luke has placed the genealogy as a hinge: the whole human race stands behind Jesus as he walks out to face what Adam faced. His ancestry is not a puzzle to Luke; it is a battle plan.

4. Live discovery: Read Luke 4:1–13. Jesus answers the devil three times, and every answer is a quotation from one small stretch of one Old Testament book. Hunt as a group: find all three sources in Deuteronomy 6–8. Then read around each one. What was happening to Israel when those words were first spoken, and what is Luke telling us about who Jesus is?

Leader: Fifteen minutes, Bibles open. The finds: Deut 8:3 (manna and hunger), Deut 6:13 (worship the Lord only), Deut 6:16 (Massah, putting God to the test). If they stall, point them to chapter 8 first; it is the easiest.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

All three replies come from Moses' sermon about the wilderness years: man shall not live by bread alone is the lesson of the manna (Deut 8:3), worship the Lord only is the charge against idolatry (6:13), you shall not put the Lord to the test names the rebellion at Massah (6:16). Forty days answer forty years. Israel, God's son (Ex 4:22), was tested in the desert on bread, worship, and trust, and failed all three; Jesus, the beloved Son, takes the same exam, hungry, and passes every question, answering Satan with nothing but Scripture. He is the true Israel, and, standing at the end of a genealogy that just called Adam son of God, the new Adam who stands where the first one fell (CCC 538–540). St. Irenaeus called it recapitulation: our story, replayed and won. And note 4:13 like a held breath: the devil departed from him until an opportune time. Remember that phrase; it has an

appointment in chapter 22.

DIG DEEPER: FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Luke is the evangelist of the Spirit: Jesus is conceived by the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit at the Jordan, led full of the Holy Spirit into the desert (4:1), returns in the power of the Spirit to Galilee (4:14), and opens his preaching with the Spirit of the Lord is upon me (4:18). Luke's second volume will begin with the same Spirit falling on the Church at Pentecost. Everything Jesus does in the flesh, the Spirit will do in the Body of Christ; Luke wrote two books to make one argument.

5. Read Luke 4:16–21. Jesus reads Isaiah 61 in his hometown synagogue: anointed to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed, the acceptable year of the Lord. Look up Leviticus 25:8–13. What is the acceptable year, and what does Jesus claim when he sits down and says today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing?

Leader: The Jubilee, and the study's title word. Slow down at 4:21; have someone read it twice.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The acceptable year is the Jubilee of Leviticus 25: every fiftieth year, liberty proclaimed, Israelite slaves freed, ancestral land restored, families reunited, Israel's economy of mercy. Jesus claims to be the herald and the content of the great Jubilee: in him the captives go free and sins are forgiven, and not someday but *sēmeron*, today. This is the word our whole study is named for, and Luke sounds it at his most decisive moments: today a Savior is born (2:11), today this scripture is fulfilled (4:21), and it will ring out again at two turning points we will reach in Sessions 11 and 14. Salvation in Luke is never a distant policy; it is an arrival. When Jesus finishes the reading, he closes the scroll with the vengeance clause of Isaiah 61:2 left unread: the acceptable year is proclaimed, the day of vengeance is not. The Jubilee comes first.

6. Read Luke 4:22–30. The same crowd that marveled tries, minutes later, to throw Jesus off a cliff. What did he say to turn them? Look at his two examples, the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17) and Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs 5). What do they have in common, and why is that so explosive?

Leader: Both are Gentiles. This is Luke's whole program in one riot.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jesus reminds Nazareth that in the days of Elijah and Elisha, God's mercy went past many in Israel to a Sidonian widow and a Syrian leper: outsiders, Gentiles, enemies. The hometown crowd wants the Jubilee as a local privilege; Jesus announces it as a world amnesty, and the room turns murderous. Luke has staged his overture: good news to the poor, grace running past the borders, the rage of the insiders, and the anointed one passing through their midst and going his way (4:30): Luke offers no explanation, only the sovereign fact that his death will come at the appointed time, and in Jerusalem, not Nazareth. Watch the outsiders from here on, the centurion, the Samaritans, a thief on a cross; Luke keeps score, and the score runs one way.

DIG DEEPER: ALL FLESH SHALL SEE

All four Gospels quote Isaiah 40 about the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness. Only Luke keeps quoting until the line all flesh shall see the salvation of God (3:6). It is a small editorial choice that contains his entire two-volume project, from Nazareth's fury tonight to the Gospel reaching Rome at the end of Acts.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Jesus answered every temptation from memorized Scripture. When temptation finds you, what do you actually reach for? What one verse could you carry this month so the reach becomes reflex?

S2. Nazareth loved the Jubilee until it included the wrong people. Whose inclusion in God's mercy do you quietly resent, and what would it cost you to pray for them by name this week?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Memorize this week's verse until you can say it under pressure; it is one of the Lord's own desert answers.
- Circle the word today every time you meet it in Luke from here on. Keep the tally in your Bible's margin.
- Before next session, read Luke 5:1–6:49: four calls, a paralytic through a roof, and a sermon on a plain.

Scripture memory: **Luke 4:8**, *You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, beloved Son and true Israel, you answered the tempter with your Father's word and announced liberty in your Father's name. Cancel our debts, open our eyes, and free whatever in us is still captive, not someday, but today. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 3

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Deuteronomy 6–8 is the load-bearing bookmark.

Passage Used for

Luke 3:1–20 Q1: John's preaching, fruits of repentance

Luke 3:21–22 Q2: the baptism; Ps 2:7 with Isa 42:1

Luke 3:23–38 Q3 steelman: genealogy to Adam, son of God

Matthew 1:1–17 Q3: the comparison text

Luke 4:1–13 Q4: the temptations; 4:13 opportune time

Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13; 6:16 Q4 live discovery: all three answers

Exodus 4:22 Q4: Israel, my firstborn son

Luke 4:16–30 Q5-Q6: Nazareth; sēmeron at 4:21

Isaiah 61:1–2; 58:6 Q5: the scroll Jesus reads

Leviticus 25:8–13 Q5: the Jubilee

1 Kings 17:8–16; 2 Kings 5:1–14 Q6: Zarephath and Naaman

CCC 535–540, 695, 714, 1286 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 5–6, the calls and the Sermon on the Plain. Bookmark Isaiah 6; Simon Peter's knees are going to buckle in a boat, and the group should discover why the scene feels familiar.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 4

Put Out Into the Deep

Luke 5–6

Four calls, a hole in a roof, and the Sermon on the Plain

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that Simon Peter's collapse in the boat follows an exact biblical pattern, Isaiah's own call: the presence of the Holy, the cry of unworthiness, the reassurance, the commission. They then watch Jesus claim a power the scribes rightly say belongs to God alone, and hear Luke's version of the great sermon, blessings paired with woes.

Catholic Touchstone: The forgiveness of sins as divine power that Christ exercises and, scandalously, hands on (CCC 1441–1445, the very paragraphs that quote tonight's scribes); the Twelve as the foundation of the new Israel; and the barque of Peter as the Fathers' image of the Church.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The catch of fish (5:1–11) is Luke's vocation masterpiece. Jesus borrows Simon's boat as a pulpit, then tells a professional fisherman who has worked all night for nothing to put out into the deep and lower the nets. The catch that follows breaks the nets and nearly sinks two boats, and Simon's response is the tell: not excitement but terror. Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. That sequence, glory revealed, sinfulness confessed, fear relieved, mission given, is the standard grammar of a prophetic call, and tonight's live discovery sends the group to Isaiah 6 to find the same four beats: the Lord high and lifted up, woe is me, a man of unclean lips, the coal that takes guilt away, whom shall I send. Simon has just had an Isaiah 6 experience in a fishing boat, which means he has just intuited who is sitting in his boat. Jesus' reply gives fear a new job: do not be afraid; henceforth you will be catching men. They leave everything, a phrase Luke will use again for Levi, and follow.

The paralytic (5:17–26) turns on a sentence the scribes get exactly right: who can forgive sins but God alone? Sins, as offenses against God, can be absolved by no mere creature, and Jesus does not correct the premise; he demonstrates the conclusion. So that you may know the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he heals the visible paralysis to prove the invisible absolution. The Catechism quotes this very verse and then takes the step that startles: Christ willed that his Church should continue this work of forgiveness, entrusting the power of absolution to men (CCC 1441–1445; see Jn 20:23). Every confessional stands on this rooftop story. Note also who carried the man: Jesus saw their faith, a faith that includes the friends who carried him, and forgave him. Intercession is load-bearing in Luke.

Levi's call (5:27–32) extends grace to a tax collector, a collaborator, and the celebration dinner that follows is the first of Luke's great meals; note the pattern beginning, because Luke's Gospel eats its way to Jerusalem, and the meals are the theology. The grumbling starts immediately: this man receives sinners and eats with them. Jesus' answer names his vocation with a physician's image Luke must have loved: those who are well have no need of a physician. Then, after a night spent in prayer on the mountain, Jesus chooses twelve from among the disciples and names them apostles. The number is not decoration: twelve tribes, twelve patriarchs, and now twelve foundations of a reconstituted Israel. Luke flags the prayer before every hinge of this Gospel; start pointing it out.

The Sermon on the Plain (6:17–49) is Luke's counterpart to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, shorter, on level ground, and sharpened. Luke's beatitudes are blunt: blessed are you poor, you that hunger now,

you that weep now. And Luke alone pairs them with woes: woe to you that are rich, that are full, that laugh now. Tonight's steelman takes seriously the claim that Matthew spiritualized what Luke kept raw, or that Luke preaches mere economics. The honest answer holds both: Luke's poor are the anawim of the Magnificat, materially poor and clinging to God, and the woes are not a damnation of bank balances but the Magnificat's reversal spoken in the second person, a warning that consolation taken in full now leaves nothing to inherit. The sermon then runs to the commands that have no parallel in any ancient ethic: love your enemies, bless those who curse you, be merciful even as your Father is merciful, and closes with two houses, one dug down to rock. Hearing without doing, Luke's Jesus says, is a house built on the ground without a foundation; Mary, who heard the word and kept it, has already shown the group what the rock looks like.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Isa 6:1–8 Glory, unworthiness, reassurance, commission: the call pattern – **Lk 5:1–11**

Ps 103:2–3, Isa 43:25 The Lord who forgives all your iniquity, God alone blots out sins – **Lk 5:21**

Gen 49 / Num 1 Twelve tribes, twelve patriarchs: the shape of Israel – **Lk 6:12–16**

Isa 61:1–2 Good news to the poor: the Nazareth scroll behind the beatitudes – **Lk 6:20**

Jer 17:24–27 with Ex 20:8–11 The sabbath command and its purpose – **Lk 6:1–11**

Lev 19:18 pressed further Love of neighbor stretched to love of enemy – **Lk 6:27–36**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book IV*)

Ambrose reads Simon's boat as the Church: Christ teaches from Peter's barque, commands it into deep water, and fills its nets past breaking. The other boats are called to help because the catch is too great for one crew, yet it is Peter's boat the Lord chooses to sit in, and Peter's nets, torn but not lost, that hold a multitude no one expected.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the paralytic*)

Cyril fixes on the scribes' own logic: they said truly that none can forgive sins except God alone, and the Lord accepted their premise. By healing the body at a word to prove the soul had been absolved, he demonstrated that the one they took for mere man wields the very authority they reserved to God, so that the miracle is an argument, and the argument is his divinity.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Sermons on the New Testament, on the two foundations*)

Preaching on the house built on rock, Augustine insists that hearing the word is the beginning and not the building: the man who hears and does not do erects his life on sand that waits for weather.

To dig deep, he says, is to let the word cut past feelings and opinions until it reaches Christ the rock, for the storm is not a possibility but a schedule, and only what is founded on him will still be standing when the water recedes.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1441–1445 Only God forgives sins; Christ exercises and confers this divine power. Tonight's scribes are quoted in 1441.

CCC 858–860 The Twelve: called by Jesus and sent as the Father sent the Son, their office handed on to successors. The night of prayer is Luke 6:12; for the Twelve as representing the twelve tribes of Israel, see CCC 765.

CCC 2600 Luke shows Jesus praying before the decisive moments of his mission and of his apostles' mission, the filial prayer the disciples are drawn into.

CCC 2544–2547 Poverty of heart: the beatitude of the poor, the peril of riches, blessed dependence on God.

THREAD WATCH

Meals with sinners (PLANTS TONIGHT, develops throughout, resolves Sessions 13–14): Levi's banquet at 5:29 is the first course of Luke's table theology. Start the tally aloud: who does Jesus eat with, and who complains? The table is heading somewhere, an upper room and a roadside inn at Emmaus.

Prayer before the hinge (plants tonight): 6:12, all night in prayer before choosing the Twelve. Luke shows Jesus praying at every turning point: baptism, this choice, the confession, the Transfiguration, Gethsemane. Name it once tonight and keep pointing.

Blessed outsiders (develops): A tax collector joins the inner circle. The Nazareth pattern continues.

Overshadow (SEALED, resolves Session 6): Next session. Guard it one more week; if anyone asks, smile.

SESSION GOALS

1. Run the Isaiah 6 discovery live: the group maps Simon's boat onto the prophet's call and names what the parallel implies about Jesus.
2. Work the paralytic as the Catechism does: the scribes' premise granted, the divine power demonstrated, and the shocking hand-off to the Church.
3. Establish the meals thread at Levi's table and the physician saying as Luke's mission statement.
4. See the Twelve as the reconstitution of Israel, chosen after a night of prayer.
5. Face the poor versus poor in spirit steelman honestly and let the woes land as the Magnificat in the second person.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

Two full chapters tonight; be disciplined. If pressed, treat the sabbath controversies (6:1–11) in one summary sentence and drop both Dig Deeper boxes. Never cut Question 1 and its discovery (Isaiah 6) or Question 3 (the paralytic); if the sermon discussion runs deep, let the two-houses close (Q6) become the closing prayer's on-ramp. This session has a natural split point after Question 4 if your group ever runs a makeup night.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, you stepped into a working man's boat and turned his failure into a calling. Step into what we bring tonight, the empty nets and the long nights, and speak the word that fills them. Give us Simon's honesty about our sins and his readiness to leave everything, and make us merciful as your Father is merciful. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. Have you ever succeeded at something right after being completely sure it was hopeless? What changed?

W2. Who is the most unlikely friend you have ever made, someone nobody would have predicted you would share a table with?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Open with the boat and give the Isaiah discovery room to breathe. Keep the middle questions moving; the sermon needs twenty minutes at the end. Ask, wait, consolidate with the ANSWER boxes only after they have dug.

1. Read Luke 5:1–11. Simon has fished all night and caught nothing, and he is a professional. What does it cost him to say nevertheless at your word I will let down the nets? And when the nets fill, why is his reaction fear rather than joy?

Leader: *Let them feel the professional humiliation of the command and the strangeness of falling at someone's knees over fish.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Obedying costs Simon his expertise: the carpenter's son is telling the fisherman where the fish are, in daylight, in deep water, after a failed night. His nevertheless is the first act of faith in the boat. And when the catch breaks the nets, Simon does the math no one taught him: abundance like this is not luck, it is presence, and sinful men do not survive the presence of the Holy. Depart from me is not modesty; it is theology. He has just realized what is sitting in his boat.

2. Live discovery: Simon's reaction follows an exact biblical script. Find Isaiah 6:1–8 and read it as a group. Map the beats of Isaiah's call onto Luke 5: what happens first, what does each man cry out, what is each told, and what is each given to do?

Leader: *The four beats: glory revealed (the Lord on the throne / the impossible catch), unworthiness confessed (woe is me, unclean lips / depart from me, a sinful man), fear relieved (the coal, your guilt is taken away / do not be afraid), commission given (whom shall I send / you will be catching men). Let them build the table.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Beat for beat, Simon's boat is Isaiah's temple: glory breaks in, the man confesses his sin, God relieves the fear, and a mission is given. The pattern is the standard grammar of a prophetic call, and Luke's point rides on the casting: in Isaiah 6 the glory belongs to the Lord of hosts; in Luke 5 it belongs to the man in the boat. Simon's knees have worked out Christology before his mouth can. Notice too that the call does not erase his sinfulness, it repurposes it: the sinful man becomes the fisher of men, and the boat, as St. Ambrose loved to say, becomes the Church, nets straining but never lost, with room for other boats when the catch is too big for one crew.

3. Read Luke 5:17–26. The scribes object: who can forgive sins but God alone? Is their theology wrong? And what exactly does the healing prove, according to Jesus' own words in verse 24?

Leader: Grant the scribes their premise; it is correct. Then follow the syllogism where it goes. CCC 1441 is in the answer if the group wants the Church's words.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The scribes' premise is perfectly sound, and the Catechism agrees with them: only God forgives sins, because sin is an offense against God (CCC 1441). Jesus never disputes it. Instead he supplies the minor premise in public: the invisible claim (your sins are forgiven) is verified by the visible impossibility (rise and walk), so that you may know the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Grant the scribes' theology and watch the healed man carry his bed, and the conclusion walks out the door with him. And the scandal has a second act: the risen Christ breathes this same authority onto men (Jn 20:22–23), which is why the Church has confessors at all (CCC 1441–1445). Every absolution ever spoken stands on this rooftop. Notice, finally, what Jesus saw: their faith, the faith of the men at the ropes and perhaps the man's own with it. Luke believes in carried people.

4. Read Luke 5:27–32. Levi leaves everything, and his first act as a disciple is to throw a banquet. Who is at the table, who is grumbling at the edge of the room, and how does Jesus' physician saying answer them?

Leader: Establish the meal pattern out loud: this is the first of many tables in Luke, and the guest list is the offense every time.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

A tax collector, a collaborator with Rome skimming his neighbors, is called with one word and answers like the fishermen: he left everything. His banquet fills with his only friends, other tax collectors and sinners, and the Pharisees ask the question that will chase Jesus to the cross: why do you eat with them? The physician saying is the mission statement of this whole Gospel: those who are well have no need of a physician. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Mark the table well; Luke's Jesus eats his way through this Gospel, and every meal is doctrine. The guest list at Levi's house is the first draft of the guest list at every Mass.

5. Read Luke 6:12–16 and then 6:17–26. First: what does Jesus do all night before choosing the Twelve, and why twelve? Then the sermon: **steelman chain**: Luke says blessed are you poor where Matthew

says poor in spirit, and Luke alone adds woes to the rich, the full, and the laughing. The strong objection cuts both ways: either Matthew softened Jesus into spirituality, or Luke flattened him into economics. Give both readings their full force, then test them against the Magnificat and against who the anawim were.

Leader: Two-part question; take the Twelve quickly and spend the time on the beatitudes and woes.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jesus spends the whole night in prayer, Luke's signal before every hinge, and chooses twelve: not a round number but a rebuilt Israel, twelve foundations answering twelve tribes, the patriarchs of the new people of God (CCC 858–860). As for the steelman: both accusations fail because both halves are true. Luke's poor are the *anawim* his Gospel has sung about since the Magnificat: materially poor and, in that poverty, clinging to God with their whole weight, the widow with two coins, the beggar at the gate. Matthew names the disposition; Luke refuses to let the disposition float free of actual money, actual hunger, actual tears. And the woes are not a damnation of wealth but the Magnificat conjugated in the second person: you that are rich have received your consolation, the same verb a paid receipt uses. Take your comfort in full now, and there is nothing left on account. Luke will spend three more parables making this exact point, one of them featuring a rich man and a beggar we meet in Session 10.

DIG DEEPER: LORD OF THE SABBATH

The two sabbath controversies (6:1–11) turn on a claim hiding in plain sight: the Son of man is lord of the sabbath. The sabbath is God's own institution from creation week; announcing lordship over it is not a liberal opinion about rules, it is a divine claim, of a piece with forgiving sins. Notice the pattern building: Luke's Jesus keeps exercising prerogatives Israel reserved to God, and the authorities are not wrong to notice. They are wrong about what follows.

6. Read Luke 6:27–38 and 6:46–49. Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, be merciful even as your Father is merciful, and then the two houses. What is the difference between the builders, according to Jesus? And who, in this Gospel so far, has already modeled hearing the word and doing it?

Leader: Land the sermon on obedience, and let the group find their way back to 1:38.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The builders differ in one verb: both hear, one does. The house dug down to rock survives the flood that is coming for every house; the storm in this parable is not hypothetical weather but a schedule, as St. Augustine put it. And the group has already met the master builder: a girl in Nazareth who heard the most impossible word ever spoken and answered let it be to me according to your word, then kept and pondered everything she could not understand. Luke's Gospel of mercy has a spine of obedience, and the standard is the Father himself: be merciful, even as your Father is merciful, which next week a Roman centurion and a weeping woman will illustrate better than anyone expects.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Where in your life right now is Jesus saying put out into the deep, asking you to try again, at his word, in the exact place you have already failed?

S2. The paralytic got to Jesus because his friends refused to give up. Who are you carrying right now, and who carried you? Say one name out loud if you are willing.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Go to Confession this week if you can. Tonight's rooftop is why the sacrament exists; kneel where the paralytic lay.
- Pray by name, once a day, for the one person you would least like to bless. That is the sermon's assignment, not the study's.
- Before next session, read Luke 7:1–8:56: a centurion's word we say at every Mass, a widow's son, a weeping woman, and a storm.

Scripture memory: **Luke 6:36**, *Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, your Son called sinners from boats and tax booths and made them the foundations of your Church. Forgive our sins as only you can, teach us to carry one another to you, and dig our lives down to the rock. Make us merciful, Lord, even as you are merciful. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 4

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Isaiah 6 is the load-bearing bookmark.

Passage Used for

Luke 5:1–11 Q1-Q2: the catch and the call

Isaiah 6:1–8 Q2 live discovery: the call pattern

Luke 5:17–26 Q3: the paralytic; scribes quoted in CCC 1441

John 20:22–23 Q3: the authority handed on

Luke 5:27–32 Q4: Levi's banquet, the physician saying

Luke 6:1–11 Dig Deeper: lord of the sabbath

Luke 6:12–16 Q5: night of prayer, the Twelve

Luke 6:17–26 Q5 steelman: beatitudes and woes

Luke 6:27–38 Q6: love of enemies, merciful as the Father

Luke 6:46–49 Q6: the two houses

CCC 1441–1445, 858–860, 2600, 2544–2547 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 7–8. Bookmark 1 Kings 17; a funeral procession outside a town called Nain is going to look very familiar to anyone who knows Elijah, and the group should make the connection themselves.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 5

Lord, I Am Not Worthy

Luke 7-8

A centurion's word, a widow's son, a weeping woman, and a question in a storm

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that the words they say at every Mass before Communion are a Roman soldier's, that the raising at Nain is staged, down to a verbatim phrase, as Elijah at Zarephath, and that the storm on the lake ends in the question the whole Gospel is built to answer: who then is this?

Catholic Touchstone: The Domine, non sum dignus of the liturgy (CCC 1386 sets the centurion's words on our lips at Communion); the encounter of mercy and love in the sinful woman, with the faith-and-love question handled honestly; and Luke's unmatched attention to the women who followed and funded the mission.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The centurion of Capernaum (7:1–10) is a Gentile, an officer of the occupation, and the elders' character reference for him is remarkable: he loves our nation, and he built us our synagogue. But his theology is the marvel. He stops Jesus short of his door with the sentence the Church has made her own at every Mass: Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but say the word, and let my servant be healed. He reasons as a soldier: authority does not require presence, a word suffices. Jesus marvels, Luke says, the only time in this Gospel that Jesus marvels at something good, and declares that not even in Israel has he found such faith. The Nazareth pattern rings again: the outsider sees what the insiders miss. At every Mass, at the moment of maximum intimacy, the Church puts this Gentile soldier's words in our mouths (CCC 1386): the Lord under my roof, at his word.

Nain (7:11–17) is tonight's live discovery, and it must not be spoiled. A widow's only son is being carried out of the town gate; Jesus, moved with compassion, touches the bier, raises the young man, and, Luke writes, gave him to his mother. That phrase is a quotation. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah raises the son of the widow of Zarephath, and the Septuagint's sentence, he gave him to his mother, is the one Luke reproduces word for word. Nain sits just across the Hill of Moreh from Shunem, where Elisha raised another woman's son. The crowd's verdict, a great prophet has arisen among us, is exactly the conclusion Luke has staged, and it is exactly one size too small, which is the storm question's job to expose. Remember also whose son Jesus cited at Nazareth: the widow of Zarephath's. He has just done what he was nearly killed for mentioning.

The sinful woman (7:36–50) at Simon the Pharisee's table is Luke at full power: a woman of the city, uninvited, weeping over Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair, while the host silently concludes that a real prophet would know better than to be touched by her. Jesus, hearing the silent thought, tells the parable of the two debtors and turns the room inside out: her extravagance is not scandal but receipt, the overflow of a forgiveness already received. Tonight's steelman lives in the two verses that follow. Verse 47 grounds forgiveness in love, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; verse 50 grounds salvation in faith, your faith has saved you. A Protestant reading takes 7:50 as sola fide in miniature and treats 7:47 as evidence rather than cause. Prepare to present that at full strength, and to answer with the Catholic both-and: faith is the root and love the life of the same grace, fides caritate

formata, faith working through love (Gal 5:6), and the parable itself refuses the separation, for the debtor's love is the proof that the cancellation was real. Where the exegesis of 7:47's *hoti* clause is genuinely disputed, say so; the Church does not need the grammar to fall one way to hold that the faith that saves is never alone.

Luke 8 opens with a paragraph no other evangelist wrote: the Twelve, and also some women, Mary called Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means. The mission of Jesus ran on the generosity and courage of named women, one of them from inside Herod's own household, and Luke, who will make women the first witnesses of the resurrection, says so plainly. The parable of the sower follows with its own key (the seed is the word of God), and the section closes with the two panels that set up next week: the storm, where the disciples' question, who then is this, that he commands even wind and water, hangs unanswered in the air, and the raising of Jairus's daughter with the healing of the hemorrhaging woman folded inside it, faith reaching through a crowd to touch the tassel of his garment. Hold the storm question with both hands at session's end; Peter answers it in Session 6.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

1 Kgs 17:8–24 Elijah raises the widow's son; he gave him to his mother — **Lk 7:11–17**

2 Kgs 4:32–37 Elisha at Shunem, a few miles from Nain on the same hill — **Lk 7:11**

Mal 3:1 with Ex 23:20 **I send my messenger to prepare the way; Luke quotes them as a composite, before thy face** — **Lk 7:27**

Ps 107:23–32 He made the storm be still; the sailors' fear and wonder — **Lk 8:22–25**

Num 15:38–39 The tassel on the garment's edge that the woman grasps — **Lk 8:44**

Isa 61:1 with 35:5–6 The blind see, the lame walk, the poor hear good news: the answer sent to John — **Lk 7:22**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Sermon 98, on the widow of Nain*)

Augustine reads the three raisings in the Gospels as three depths of the soul's death: the girl still in the house is sin within the heart, the young man at the gate is sin gone out into deed, and Lazarus in the tomb is sin grown into habit. Yet the Lord raised all three, so no one, Augustine insists, should despair: the same voice that stopped the bier at Nain can stop any procession, however far it has gotten from the house.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great (*Forty Gospel Homilies, Homily 33*)

Preaching on the woman at Simon's table, Gregory turns her into the pattern of true penance: for every instrument of vanity she found a corresponding offering, eyes that had allured now weep, hair that had adorned now wipes, lips that had spoken lightly now kiss the feet of Mercy itself.

Whatever in us has served sin, Gregory concludes, must be enlisted in love's service, so that penance is not the destruction of the self but its conversion.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the centurion*)

Cyril marvels with the Lord at the soldier's reasoning: accustomed to command, the centurion grasped that Christ's authority over sickness needed no journey and no touch, only a word, and in confessing himself unworthy of the visit he proved worthier than those who presumed upon it. Faith, Cyril observes, measured the Lord more truly from a distance than familiarity managed at close range.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1386 The centurion's words placed on our lips before Communion: Lord, I am not worthy.

CCC 2712 Contemplative prayer as the prayer of the forgiven sinner who loves much.

CCC 1987–1995 Justification: conversion, faith, and charity conferred together; the background to the faith-and-love question.

CCC 2616 Prayer to Jesus answered during his ministry: the leper, Jairus, the sinful woman, faith reaching for him.

THREAD WATCH

Who then is this? (PLANTS TONIGHT, resolves Session 6): The storm question at 8:25 is the cliffhanger. End the session with it deliberately unanswered; Peter answers it next week at 9:20, and the Father answers over Peter's head at 9:35.

Blessed outsiders (develops tonight): A Gentile centurion out-believes Israel. Add him to the tally aloud.

Meals with sinners (develops tonight): Second great table scene: a Pharisee's house this time, and the scandal reversed, the host fails the hospitality the sinner supplies.

Overshadow (SEALED, RESOLVES NEXT SESSION): Remind the group at close: bring your Take-Home 1 next week with the My Guess box intact. Say nothing else.

SESSION GOALS

1. Connect the centurion's sentence to the words of every Mass, and his outsider's faith to the Nazareth pattern.
2. Run the Nain discovery live: the group finds 1 Kings 17 and catches Luke's verbatim phrase, then names why a great prophet is true but too small.
3. Work the sinful woman with the steelman at full strength: faith and love in justification, honestly and without caricature.

4. Give Luke 8:1–3 its due: the named women who financed and followed the mission.
5. Leave the storm question ringing and set the table for Session 6, including the sealed-guess reminder.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If time runs short, summarize John's question and Jesus' answer (7:18–35) in one sentence on the way to Q3, and compress Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman into the leader's framing of Q6. Never cut Q2 (the Nain discovery), Q4 (the steelman), or the closing minute that leaves the storm question unanswered and reminds them to bring Take-Home 1 next week.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, a soldier once told you that a word from you would be enough, and the Church has never found a better prayer. Say the word over us tonight: heal what is sick, raise what has died in us, forgive what weighs on us, and still whatever storm we carried through the door. We are not worthy that you should enter under our roof, and you enter anyway. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. Whose word do you trust so completely that you would act on it without checking, and how did they earn that?

W2. Describe a time you were shown mercy you absolutely could not repay. What did you do with it?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight has two summits, the Nain discovery and the sinful woman's steelman, with the Mass connection at the start and a cliffhanger at the end. Keep John the Baptist's interlude brief and protect twenty minutes for Question 4.

1. Read Luke 7:1–10. What do the Jewish elders say about this centurion, what does he say about himself, and what is the logic of his but say the word? Where have you heard his sentence before?

Leader: *Let someone recognize the Communion echo on their own if possible. Then draw out the soldier's reasoning about authority.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The elders vouch for him, he loves our nation and built our synagogue, but the centurion vouches against himself: I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, and I did not presume to come to you. His logic is a soldier's: I say to one, go, and he goes; authority does not need proximity, a word is enough. Jesus marvels, the only time in Luke he marvels at faith, and crowns an occupying Gentile officer above all Israel. And the Church heard something permanent in his sentence: at every Mass, as the Lord prepares to come under the roof of our bodies, we pray this man's prayer almost word for word (CCC 1386). The outsider of Capernaum wrote the Communion line of the world.

2. Live discovery: Read Luke 7:11–17 slowly, then hunt: this scene is staged as a rerun of a specific Old Testament raising. Find 1 Kings 17:8–24. What matches, and which phrase does Luke quote word for word? Then weigh the crowd's verdict in 7:16: a great prophet has arisen among us. True, false, or too small?

Leader: The matches: a widow, her son, dead (Luke adds that he is her only son); the man of God meets her; the son is raised; and the verbatim phrase, he gave him to his mother (1 Kgs 17:23). If they stall, ask which widow Jesus mentioned at Nazareth.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke has restaged Zarephath outside Nain: a widow's son, the man of God at the town gate, the raising, and the exact sentence of the Septuagint, he gave him to his mother. Nain sits just across the Hill of Moreh from Shunem, where Elisha raised another son. So the crowd's verdict, a great prophet has arisen, is the conclusion Luke built them to reach, and it is true and too small at once. Elijah stretched himself on the boy and cried out to the Lord to act; Jesus touches the bier and issues an order in his own name: young man, I say to you, arise. The prophet petitions; this one commands. The gap between those verbs is the gap the storm question will tear open at the end of tonight. And notice the engine of the miracle: no one asked. He had compassion on her. Mercy moved first.

3. Read Luke 7:18–23. John, in prison, sends to ask: are you he who is to come? Jesus answers with a list. Where does the list come from, and why answer a yes-or-no question with a resume?

Leader: Quick question; Isaiah 35 and 61. The answer is yes, in the key of prophecy.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The list chiefly evokes Isaiah, read aloud: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the poor have good news preached to them (Isa 35:5–6; 61:1). The cleansing of lepers and the raising of the dead, the very things Luke has just narrated, reach beyond Isaiah to the works of Elijah and Elisha, the prophets Jesus invoked at Nazareth. Jesus answers the Baptist in the only currency a prophet fully trusts: Scripture being fulfilled before his messengers' eyes. And the gentle coda, blessed is he who takes no offense at me, concedes what Nazareth proved: fulfillment does not look the way the audience ordered. Even the greatest man born of woman must let the Messiah define himself.

4. Steelman chain: Read Luke 7:36–50 with care. Verse 47 says her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; verse 50 says your faith has saved you. The strongest Protestant reading holds that verse 50 states the cause (faith alone) and verse 47 states the evidence (love as proof, not ground). Give that reading its full strength, including how the parable of the two debtors supports it: the love follows the cancellation. Then press: can this passage separate faith from love at all, and what does the Church actually claim about how they relate?

Leader: Do not rush to the answer. The Protestant reading of the parable's logic is genuinely strong; honor it, then hold the both-and.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The steelman earns its keep: in the parable, the debtor loves because he was forgiven, so love is the receipt, not the payment, and 7:50 says plainly that faith saved her. A Catholic should concede all of that without flinching, and the Council of Trent does: nothing before justification, neither faith nor works, merits the grace of it. But watch what the passage refuses to do: it never lets faith and love

come apart. Her faith arrives weeping, kissing, anointing; the faith that saves her is the faith already working through love (Gal 5:6), *fides caritate formata*, faith alive with charity, against a Pharisee whose orthodoxy sat at table and offered Mercy neither water, nor kiss, nor oil. Where the grammar of 7:47 is genuinely disputed, whether the *hoti* gives the ground or the evidence of forgiveness, say so honestly; the Church's teaching does not hang on that clause. It hangs on the whole scene: the faith that saves is never alone, and love is what saved faith looks like in a body (CCC 1991).

DIG DEEPER: THE WOMEN OF LUKE 8:1-3

Only Luke records the mission's funding: Mary Magdalene, freed of seven demons; Joanna, wife of Herod's own steward; Susanna; and many others, who provided for them out of their means. The verb is the one the Church uses for deacons' service. A movement whose patrons included a woman from Herod's own household is exactly the kind of detail Luke's investigation (1:3) would preserve, and Mary Magdalene and Joanna, named here as providers, reappear by name at the empty tomb (24:10). Among the first witnesses of the resurrection were women who had been funding the mission all along.

5. Read Luke 8:4–15, the sower. Jesus gives the key himself: the seed is the word of God. Walk the four soils. Which failure mode does he describe as the danger for people like us, and what does the good soil actually do (v. 15)?

Leader: Brief but personal. Verse 14's thorns are the young adult's soil: cares, riches, pleasures, fruit that never ripens.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The path never receives, the rock receives without root and folds at testing, and the thorns, Luke's most contemporary soil, receive and grow while the cares and riches and pleasures of life choke the fruit before it ripens. The good soil is described with Luke's favorite verbs: those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience. Hold fast is what Mary has been doing since 2:19. The sower is not running a seed shortage; the variable in the parable is never the seed. It is the ground we let ourselves become.

6. Read Luke 8:22–25. Asleep in the stern, wakened by terrified fishermen, he rebukes wind and raging water, and asks them: where is your faith? Then read Psalm 107:23–32. Who stills storms in Israel's Scriptures? Sit with the disciples' question in verse 25 and do not answer it: who then is this?

Leader: End here deliberately. Read the question twice and close the discussion with it hanging. Do not let anyone answer it tonight; tell them the answer has an appointment next week.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Psalm 107 is unambiguous: it is the Lord who made the storm be still, so that the waves of the sea were hushed, while sailors cried to him in their trouble. That psalm was Israel's own grammar for storms at sea. So when a word from the stern flattens the lake, their fear changes object, from the storm to the one who stopped it, and their question is the Gospel's engine: who then is this, that he

commands even wind and water, and they obey him? Say nothing more tonight. Peter answers it next week, and then a voice out of a cloud answers it over Peter's head. Bring your Take-Home 1 with the sealed My Guess box; next session, we open them.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. The centurion believed a word at a distance was enough. Where are you demanding that God show up in person, on your terms, before you will trust him with something?

S2. The woman at Simon's table let her gratitude be seen, at real social cost. What would it look like this week for your gratitude to God to become visible enough to be misunderstood?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- At Mass this week, when you say Lord, I am not worthy, say it as the centurion: slowly, and meaning the second half, but only say the word.
- Read Psalm 107 once, out loud, and mark verses 28–30.
- Before next session, read Luke 9:1–62, and bring Take-Home 1 with your sealed guess. Do not peek at it, and do not look anything up.

Scripture memory: **Luke 7:50**, *Your faith has saved you; go in peace.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, you stopped a funeral with compassion, defended a weeping woman with a parable, and hushed a storm with a word. We leave tonight carrying the boat's question: who then is this? Answer it in us, Lord, not only next week but every day, until our faith learns to sleep through storms because of who is in the boat. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 5

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. 1 Kings 17 is the load-bearing bookmark; Psalm 107 closes the night.

Passage Used for

Luke 7:1–10 Q1: the centurion; CCC 1386

Luke 7:11–17 Q2: Nain

1 Kings 17:8–24 Q2 live discovery: Zarephath; he gave him to his mother

2 Kings 4:32–37 Q2 background: Elisha at Shunem

Luke 7:18–23 Q3: John's question

Isaiah 35:5–6; 61:1 Q3: the answer's source

Luke 7:36–50 Q4 steelman: the sinful woman

Galatians 5:6 Q4: faith working through love

Luke 8:1–3 Dig Deeper: the women who provided

Luke 8:4–15 Q5: the sower

Luke 8:22–25 Q6: the storm; the question left open

Psalm 107:23–32 Q6: who stills the sea

CCC 1386, 2712, 1987–1995, 2616 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 9, the hinge of the Gospel: Peter's confession, the Transfiguration, and the opening of the sealed guesses. Bring your own Take-Home 1 too, and have Exodus 40:34–35 flagged where no one can see it.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 6

The Christ of God

Luke 9

The confession, the Transfiguration, the sealed guesses opened, and a face set toward Jerusalem

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants answer the storm question through Peter's mouth, discover the Eucharistic grammar of the feeding, and then open their sealed guesses from Session 1 as the cloud overshadows the mountain: the same verb spoken over Mary, *episkiazō*, tracing back to the glory cloud of Exodus 40. The session ends at the Gospel's hinge, 9:51, as Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem.

Catholic Touchstone: The Transfiguration as the Trinity's confirmation of the way of the cross (CCC 554–556); Mary as Ark and tabernacle of the New Covenant, now confirmed from the mountain; and Luke's daily in take up his cross daily as the shape of discipleship.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke 9 is the Gospel's hinge, and tonight is the study's summit so far. Plan the sealed-guess ceremony deliberately: it belongs at Question 5, after the group has read the Transfiguration and found the overshadowing cloud, and before you consolidate. Have them take out Take-Home 1, open the My Guess box, and read their guesses aloud, and only then walk the chain together: Exodus 40, Luke 1:35, Luke 9:34. Whoever came closest in Session 1 gets the floor first; if anyone guessed the cloud or the tabernacle, let them say it again in triumph, as promised.

The chapter opens with the sending of the Twelve and Herod's haunted question, who is this about whom I hear such things, which stacks a third asking onto Nain's crowd and the storm's disciples. Then the feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle of Jesus' ministry, apart from the Resurrection itself, recorded in all four Gospels. Watch Luke's verbs: taking the five loaves, he blessed and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. Take, bless, break, give: Luke deliberately echoes this sequence twice more, in the upper room (22:19, where "gave thanks" stands in place of "blessed") and exactly at Emmaus (24:30), and he knows it. The feeding is deliberately liturgical, the Messiah hosting Israel in the wilderness like the manna, mediated through the hands of the Twelve, with twelve baskets left over. Do not preach Session 13 tonight; just make the group memorize the verbs.

Peter's confession (9:18–22) happens, Luke alone notes, while Jesus was praying alone. The storm question finally gets its answer: the Christ of God. And the answer detonates a paradox: Jesus charges them to tell no one and immediately defines the Christ by suffering: the Son of man must suffer many things, be rejected, be killed, and on the third day be raised. The *must*, *dei*, is divine necessity, the same word the twelve-year-old used about his Father's house. Then the cost is generalized with Luke's signature adverb: if any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily. Not once, heroically; daily, hiddenly. This is tonight's memory verse and the study's working definition of discipleship.

The Transfiguration (9:28–36) is the Father's answer to the question Peter just answered. Luke's account has three details the others lack: Jesus goes up the mountain to pray; Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets in person, speak of his departure, exodus, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem; and the disciples are heavy with sleep, a preview of Gethsemane. The cloud that overshadows them is

the payoff of our longest thread. Episkiazō: the power of the Most High will overshadow you (1:35); the cloud overshadowed them (9:34); and behind both, the cloud covering the tent of meeting when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Ex 40:34–35, where the Septuagint uses the same verb family). The logic runs both directions: the mountain shows what the cloud means, God's own glory-presence descending, and therefore shows what happened to Mary, the tabernacle the glory filled, the Ark our Session 2 discovery unveiled. The Father's voice completes the storm question's answer: this is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him, with Deuteronomy 18:15's promised prophet folded in. When the voice has spoken, Jesus is found alone: the Law and the Prophets have testified and withdrawn; listen to him.

Then the descent: a demon the disciples could not cast out, a second passion prediction landing on uncomprehending ears, an argument about which of them is greatest answered with a child, and John forbidding an outside exorcist, rebuked. And at 9:51 the Gospel turns on its hinge: when the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. The phrase evokes Isaiah's suffering servant, I have set my face like a flint (Isa 50:7), and it opens Luke's great central journey, ten chapters of teaching on the road, which the study now walks until Session 12. Every session from here on happens with Jerusalem in view. The chapter closes with three would-be followers and the hard sayings about the plow; the journey admits no lookers-back.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Ex 16 with Ps 78:19 Manna: can God spread a table in the wilderness? — **Lk 9:12–17**

Ex 40:34–35 The cloud overshadows the tabernacle; the glory fills it (SEALED GUESS RESOLUTION) — **Lk 9:34 with 1:35**

Ex 24:15–18; 34:29 Moses on the mountain, the cloud, the shining face — **Lk 9:28–36**

Deut 18:15 A prophet like Moses: him you shall heed — **Lk 9:35**

1 Kgs 19:8–18 Elijah at the mountain of God — **Lk 9:30**

Isa 50:7 I have set my face like a flint — **Lk 9:51**

1 Kgs 19:19–21 Elisha's call: permitted to kiss his parents farewell before following, a contrast Jesus sharpens — **Lk 9:61–62**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great (*Sermon 51, on the Transfiguration*)

Leo preaches that the Transfiguration's great purpose was to remove the scandal of the cross from the disciples' hearts: the brightness shown on the mountain was given so that when the Lord hung disfigured on Calvary, they might remember what his humiliation concealed. The glory was not new that day, Leo insists; only the unveiling was. And in the Father's command, listen to him, the whole obedience of the Church is contained.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book VII*)

Ambrose lingers on the cloud: not a cloud of storm and darkness like Sinai's, but a luminous overshadowing of the Spirit, the same presence that came upon Mary at the Annunciation, revealing not fear but mystery. Moses and Elijah appear and pass, for Law and Prophecy were heralds; when the voice has spoken, Jesus is found alone, because the fulfillment does not stand in a row with its witnesses.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 45)

Aquinas teaches that it was fitting for Christ to be transfigured before his Passion so that the disciples, and we with them, might endure the cross by glimpsing the end of the road: no one bears a hard journey well without some foretaste of its destination. The clarity shown on the mountain, he argues, is the very glory promised to the bodies of the blessed, so the Transfiguration is not only Christ unveiled but our own future shown ahead of schedule.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 554–556 The Transfiguration: a foretaste of the Kingdom, the Trinity manifested, the cross confirmed as the way to glory.

CCC 697 The cloud as symbol of the Holy Spirit: from the tent of meeting to Mary to the mountain to the Ascension.

CCC 1335 The feeding miracles as prefigurations of the Eucharist's superabundance.

CCC 2600 Luke's Jesus at prayer before every decisive moment: baptism, confession, Transfiguration.

THREAD WATCH

Overshadow (RESOLVES TONIGHT): The ceremony at Question 5. Chain: Ex 40:34–35, Lk 1:35, Lk 9:34, one verb, *episkiazō*. Payoff sentence for the group: what the tabernacle foreshadowed, Mary is, and the mountain proves it. Honor whoever guessed closest in Session 1.

Who then is this? (RESOLVES TONIGHT): Peter answers at 9:20; the Father answers at 9:35. Close the loop from the storm out loud.

Take-bless-break-give (plants tonight, resolves Sessions 13–14): Make the group memorize the four verbs of 9:16. Say only: Luke will use them again. Twice.

The journey (plants tonight): 9:51 opens the travel narrative. From tonight until Session 12, everything happens on the road to Jerusalem; keep saying so.

Exodos (plants tonight, resolves Session 14): Moses and Elijah discuss his exodus at 9:31. Name the word, let it hum, and promise nothing.

SESSION GOALS

1. Close the who-is-this arc: Herod's question, Peter's confession, the Father's voice, in that order.

2. Fix the four verbs of the feeding (took, blessed, broke, gave) in the group's memory without preaching ahead.
3. Run the sealed-guess ceremony with full honors: guesses read aloud, then the episkiazō chain assembled together.
4. Let Luke's crosses be daily: the memory verse as the working definition of discipleship.
5. Turn the corner at 9:51 and orient the group for the journey narrative.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

Protect twenty-five minutes for Questions 4 and 5 together, the Transfiguration and the ceremony. If the clock presses, compress Question 1 (the sending and Herod) into leader framing and treat the descent material (9:37–50) inside Question 6's setup. Nothing else tonight is optional; this is the session the study has been building toward, and a rushed ceremony wastes five weeks of discipline. This session splits naturally after Question 3 if you ever need two nights.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, on the mountain you unveiled your Son and commanded us to listen to him. Unveil him again tonight: in the breaking open of your word, in answers we have waited weeks to hear, and in whatever cross you are asking each of us to carry today. Let your glory overshadow this room as it overshadowed the tent of meeting, and give us ears for your voice. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What is the longest you have ever waited for an answer to something, and was the answer worth the wait?

W2. If you had to answer in one sentence, tonight, before we read anything: who do you say Jesus is? Keep your sentence; we will come back to it.

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight has a ceremony in the middle: the sealed guesses from Session 1 open at Question 5, after the group reads the Transfiguration, and not one minute before. Keep Take-Home 1 sheets face down until then. Everything before it should feel like a climb.

1. Read Luke 9:1–9. The Twelve are sent with power and authority, and word reaches Herod, who asks the question this Gospel keeps collecting: who is this about whom I hear such things? Count with the group: who else has asked some form of this question so far?

Leader: *Quick stocktake: Nain's crowd (a great prophet?), the storm boat (who then is this?), Simon the Pharisee (who is this who forgives sins?), now Herod. The pressure is building on purpose.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke has been stockpiling the question: the crowd at Nain reached for a great prophet, the Pharisee's table asked who is this who even forgives sins, the boat asked who then is this that wind and water obey him, and now a tetrarch with John's blood on his hands asks it nervously from a palace. Luke is a careful builder: he has made the question unavoidable precisely so that tonight it can be answered twice, once from a disciple's mouth and once from a cloud.

2. Read Luke 9:10–17. Watch Jesus' hands in verse 16: list the four verbs in order. Where is the crowd, what do the leftovers number, and through whose hands does the bread actually reach the people?

Leader: *Took, blessed, broke, gave. Wilderness setting, twelve baskets, the disciples distribute. Fix the verbs; promise only that Luke will use them again.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Took, blessed, broke, gave: memorize that sequence, because Luke echoes it at the two most important tables of this Gospel, and he is planting it here on purpose. The scene is manna revisited: a crowd in a lonely place, fed to satisfaction by God's Messiah, with twelve baskets over, one per tribe, one per apostle, and the bread reaches every hand through the Twelve. The Fathers and the Catechism alike read the feeding as a prefiguration of the Eucharist's superabundance (CCC 1335). Tonight, just bank the verbs. They mature in Session 13.

3. Read Luke 9:18–27. Luke alone tells us Jesus was praying alone before he asked. Peter finally answers the storm question: the Christ of God. Why does Jesus immediately forbid them to tell anyone, and immediately redefine the title by suffering? And what does Luke's word *daily* (9:23) do to your picture of carrying a cross?

Leader: Two moves: the messianic secret guarded because Messiah suggested conquest to many in the crowd, and the daily that domesticates martyrdom into Monday.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Peter's confession is correct and combustible: to many in Israel, Christ suggested a political conqueror, and proclaiming the title would have risked raising an army Jesus did not come to lead. So the title is silenced until it can be redefined, and the redefinition follows instantly: the Son of man *must* suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be raised, the divine *dei* of the Father's plan. Then the cost goes universal, and Luke alone adds the adverb that changes everything: take up his cross *daily*. Not one grand martyrdom but ten thousand hidden ones: the tongue held, the comfort surrendered, the person forgiven again. Luke's discipleship is heroism on a schedule, and it is tonight's memory verse.

4. Read Luke 9:28–36 slowly. Note what Jesus goes up the mountain to do, who appears, and what topic Luke says they discussed (v. 31). Then find the strange word in verse 34: what does the cloud do to them?

Leader: Draw out: prayer, Moses and Elijah (Law and Prophets), his departure, in Greek *exodos*, at Jerusalem, and the cloud that **OVERSHADOWED** them. When the word lands, pause the room and move straight to Question 5.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke's Transfiguration is framed in prayer, and its conversation topic is unique to him: Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets in person, speak of the *exodos* he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, a new and greater Exodus, accomplished not from Egypt but at the cross, through the sea of death to resurrection. File that word; it returns at the end of our study. The Father's voice completes tonight's arc, this is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him, folding in Deuteronomy's promised prophet, and when the voice ends, Jesus is found alone: the witnesses withdraw, the Fulfillment remains. But before any of that, verse 34: the cloud came and **overshadowed** them. Hold everything. Take out your Take-Home 1.

5. THE OPENING OF THE GUESSES: Open the My Guess box you sealed five weeks ago. Read your guess aloud to the group, exactly as written, no edits. Then, together, hunt down the chain: the angel's words in Luke 1:35, tonight's cloud in Luke 9:34, and Exodus 40:34–35. One verb links all three. What does the mountain reveal about what happened to Mary?

Leader: Ceremony order: every guess read aloud first, applause for the closest, then the chain assembled on a whiteboard: Ex 40:34–35 (the cloud covers the tent, the glory fills the tabernacle), Lk 1:35 (the power of the Most High will overshadow you), Lk 9:34 (the cloud overshadowed them). Same verb, *episkiazō*. If someone guessed it in Session 1, this is their promised moment: let them say it again.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The chain, assembled: in Exodus 40, Israel finishes the tabernacle and the cloud covers the tent of meeting while the glory of the Lord fills it, the verb of the Greek Old Testament being the same *episkiazō* family. In Luke 1:35, Gabriel promises Mary that the power of the Most High will overshadow her. Tonight on the mountain, the cloud of divine glory overshadows again, and now everyone can see what the word means: God's own presence descending to fill a dwelling. So the mountain interprets the Annunciation backward: what the cloud did to the tabernacle, the Most High did to Mary. She is the tent of meeting of the New Covenant, the Ark our Session 2 hill-country discovery unveiled, the dwelling the glory filled, which is why Elizabeth's cry copied David's before the Ark, and why the Church has never been able to speak of Mary without speaking of the One she carried. Five weeks was the right length to wait: some answers need to be earned.

DIG DEEPER: HEAVY WITH SLEEP

Luke alone notes that Peter, John, and James were heavy with sleep on the mountain (9:32), and drowsiness returns on the Mount of Olives, where Jesus finds the disciples sleeping for sorrow (22:45). Luke does not name the three there, but the echo is hard to miss: glory and agony both find the flesh weak. Luke is gently warning every disciple: the mountaintop does not exempt you from the olive grove, and grace will have to carry what enthusiasm cannot.

6. Read Luke 9:46–48, 9:51, and 9:57–62. Fresh from the mountain, the disciples argue about who is greatest, and Jesus answers with a child. Then verse 51: he set his face to go to Jerusalem. Check Isaiah 50:7 and identify whose voice that phrase echoes. What do the three would-be followers at the chapter's end learn about the road that starts here?

Leader: The hinge. Isaiah's servant sets his face like flint toward suffering. From here to Session 12, everything happens on this road.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The greatness argument gets a child for an answer, he who is least among you all is the one who is great, the Magnificat's reversal now aimed at the Church itself. Then Luke turns the entire Gospel on one sentence: when the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. The phrase echoes the suffering servant's resolve, I have set my face like a flint (Isa 50:7): the one the cloud just glorified chooses the road to the cross with Isaiah's own resolve. Ten chapters of journey begin here, and the three would-be followers are its gate inscription: no den, no

delay, no looking back, for the servant's plow cuts one direction. Everything we read from now until Session 12 happens with Jerusalem in view. So does everything a disciple does daily.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Your sealed guess waited five weeks for its answer. What prayer of yours is still sealed, still waiting? What would it mean to trust God's timing with it the way you trusted the study's?

S2. Take out the one-sentence answer you gave in the Win question tonight: who do you say Jesus is? After the confession, the cloud, and the voice, would you change a word? Say your revised sentence to the group.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Each morning this week, before your feet hit the floor, name the day's cross and say the memory verse. Daily means daily.
- Read Exodus 40:34–38 once more on your own, then pray one Hail Mary slowly with the tabernacle in mind.
- Before next session, read Luke 10:1–11:54: seventy sent out, a Samaritan on the Jericho road, two sisters, and the Our Father.

Scripture memory: **Luke 9:23**, *If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, you answered our sealed question with a cloud of glory, and our deepest question with your own voice: this is my Son; listen to him. Give us the grace to listen when he speaks of crosses, to carry ours daily without drama, and to walk the road he set his face toward, all the way to where it goes. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 6

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Exodus 40:34–35 stays hidden until the ceremony.

Passage Used for

Luke 9:1–9 Q1: the sending; Herod's question

Luke 9:10–17 Q2: the feeding; the four verbs at 9:16

Luke 9:18–27 Q3: the confession; take up his cross daily

Luke 9:28–36 Q4: the Transfiguration; exodus at 9:31; overshadow at 9:34

Luke 1:35 Q5 ceremony: the Annunciation link

Exodus 40:34–35 Q5 ceremony: the glory cloud and the tabernacle

Deuteronomy 18:15 Q4: listen to him

Isaiah 50:7 Q6: set his face like a flint

Luke 9:46–48, 51, 57–62 Q6: the child, the hinge, the plow

1 Kings 19:19–21 Q6 background: Elisha's call, the contrast

CCC 554–556, 697, 1335, 2600 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 10–11, on the road: the seventy, the Good Samaritan, Martha and Mary, and the Lord's own prayer. A challenge to Marian devotion also appears at 11:27–28; read the steelman in advance, because it resolves with the very threads we closed tonight.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 7

The One Thing Needful

Luke 10–11

The seventy, a Samaritan on the Jericho road, two sisters, and the Lord's own prayer

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that the Good Samaritan has an Old Testament ancestor almost no one has read, a company of merciful northern Israelites, men of Samaria, in 2 Chronicles who anoint, clothe, and carry Judah's wounded to Jericho, and that Jesus' answer to the woman who blesses his mother's womb, rightly translated, crowns Mary rather than demoting her.

Catholic Touchstone: Prayer as the disciple's first work: the one thing needful at Mary of Bethany's feet, the Our Father as, in Tertullian's phrase the Catechism borrows, the summary of the whole Gospel (CCC 2761), and the confessor as Good Samaritan (CCC 1465). Tonight also completes a Marian arc: the steelman at 11:27–28 resolves with the very threads Sessions 1, 2, and 6 built.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The journey to Jerusalem is now underway, and Luke fills the road with teaching. First the sending of the seventy (some manuscripts read seventy-two): where the Twelve answered the tribes of Israel, seventy answers the number of the world's nations in Genesis 10 (seventy in the Hebrew text, seventy-two in the Greek, which is why the manuscripts split exactly there). The mission is already sized for the world. They return exulting that even the demons submit, and Jesus lifts their eyes higher: rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Then Luke gives us something rare and precious: Jesus rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, thanking the Father for hiding these things from the wise and revealing them to babes. It is the most Trinitarian sentence of joy in the Gospels, and it is aimed at the childlike, a theme Session 11 will finish.

The Good Samaritan (10:25–37) begins with a lawyer's test question and Jesus' counter-question; the lawyer answers his own exam perfectly, Deuteronomy 6:5 joined to Leviticus 19:18, and then, desiring to justify himself, asks the question that births the parable: who is my neighbor? The Jericho road drops some three thousand three hundred feet through bandit country; the priest and Levite pass by on the other side, possibly guarding ritual purity from a corpse, certainly guarding themselves; and the third traveler is the audience's enemy. Tonight's live discovery is one of the study's best-kept secrets: 2 Chronicles 28:8–15, where men of Samaria, at a prophet's word, clothe the naked captives of Judah, anoint them, set the feeble on donkeys, and carry them to Jericho, the city of palm trees. The parable resonates unmistakably with a real story in Israel's own Scriptures in which men of Samaria were the merciful ones, and almost nobody in your group will have read it. Let them find it and gasp. The parable's final twist deserves equal care: the lawyer asked who is my neighbor, defining a category to limit; Jesus asks which of these three proved neighbor, defining a vocation to perform. Go and do likewise. The Fathers also loved a second, Christological reading, and Ambrose gives it to us: the human race is the man half dead, the Law and the priesthood pass by unable to heal, Christ the outsider binds our wounds with oil and wine, carries us on his own beast, and pays the innkeeper, the Church, until he comes back. Both readings are true; teach the moral one first and let the Fathers' reading land as a gift.

Martha and Mary (10:38–42) must be handled without caricature. Martha's service, diakonia, is honorable, the very word for the Church's ministry; her fault is not the kitchen but the anxiety, you are

anxious and troubled about many things. Mary has chosen the one thing needful, the good portion: to sit at the Lord's feet and hear his word, the posture of a disciple before a rabbi, a posture rarely open to women in first-century convention, and Jesus refuses to take it from her. The Church has always read the sisters as the contemplative and active lives, and the point is not that action is wrong but that it must flow from listening or it curdles into anxiety. Luke immediately proves the point with his next scene: the disciples watch Jesus praying and ask, Lord, teach us to pray.

Luke's Our Father (11:1–4) is shorter than Matthew's, five petitions, and the Catechism calls the Lord's Prayer the summary of the whole Gospel (CCC 2761, quoting Tertullian). The friend at midnight and the ask-seek-knock sayings follow, with Luke's own punchline: where Matthew has the Father giving good things, Luke has him giving the Holy Spirit to those who ask. The Beelzebul controversy, the finger of God (Exodus 8:19's phrase for what Pharaoh's magicians could not fake), and the strong man despoiled carry the kingdom's claim. Then the moment tonight's steelman lives in: a woman in the crowd cries, blessed is the womb that bore you, and Jesus answers, blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it (11:27–28). Read badly, it demotes his mother. The Greek particle *menoun* can be read either as a correction (rather) or as an escalation (yes indeed, and more than that); even on the corrective reading, what Jesus redirects attention to is a description of exactly one person Luke has been portraying since chapter 1: the one who heard the word (let it be to me according to your word), was blessed for believing it (blessed is she who believed), and kept it in her heart, twice (pondering it, Luke tells us, the first time). The steelman must be given at full strength, many Protestant readers take this verse as Jesus deflecting Marian devotion, and then pressed with Luke's own portrait: the beatitude Jesus pronounces is one his mother uniquely fulfills, which is why the Church's veneration of Mary has never competed with hearing and keeping the word. It is what hearing and keeping the word looks like.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Gen 10 (the table of nations) Seventy nations: the mission sized for the world — **Lk 10:1**

Deut 6:4–5 with Lev 19:18 The lawyer's own summary: love God, love neighbor — **Lk 10:27**

2 Chr 28:8–15 Merciful men of Samaria anoint, clothe, and carry Judah's wounded to Jericho — **Lk 10:30–35**

Ex 8:19 The finger of God: what the magicians could not counterfeit — **Lk 11:20**

Jon 3 with 1 Kgs 10:1–13 Nineveh repented; the queen of the South came to hear wisdom — **Lk 11:29–32**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book VII*)

Ambrose reads the Jericho road as the story of the race: Adam went down from the city of peace and fell among the powers that stripped him of grace and left him half dead. Law and priesthood looked and passed, for they could diagnose but not heal; then Mercy itself came down the road as the despised outsider, bound our wounds with the oil of comfort and the wine that stings, carried us on his own body, and paid the innkeeper until his return. The Samaritan, Ambrose concludes, is the Lord, and the inn is the Church.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Sermon 103, on Martha and Mary*)

Augustine will not let the sisters be enemies: Martha's work is good, he preaches, and someone had to feed the Lord; but Martha's portion passes away with the world's need, while Mary chose what will never be taken, for in the kingdom no one serves the hungry where no one hungers. Martha's busy hands are the Church in time; Mary at his feet is the Church in eternity, and we do the first well only by wanting the second more.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage (*On the Lord's Prayer*)

Cyprian, writing scarcely more than two centuries after the upper room, marvels that we dare to say Father: the prayer Christ taught is prayed in Christ's own voice, so that the Father recognizes his Son's words on his children's lips. And because it says our Father and give us, Cyprian insists, Christian prayer is never private property: we pray as one people or not at all, and no one comes to the Father alone.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 2761 The Lord's Prayer as the summary of the whole Gospel, Tertullian's phrase made the Church's own.

CCC 1465 The confessor as the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds: the parable inside the sacrament.

CCC 2601, 2607–2615 Jesus at prayer awakening the disciples' request; his teaching on bold, persistent, filial asking.

CCC 2708–2712 Meditation and contemplative prayer: Mary of Bethany's portion described.

THREAD WATCH

Blessed outsiders (develops strongly tonight): A Samaritan is the parable's hero, on the heels of a Samaritan village refusing Jesus at 9:52–55. Add him to the running tally; the ten lepers in Session 10 continue the line.

Mary hears and keeps (RESOLVING ECHO tonight): The 11:27–28 steelman is the Mary-ponders thread paying a dividend. When you press with 1:38, 1:45, 2:19, and 2:51, the group should recognize every reference; they discovered them all.

Prayer before the hinge (develops): 11:1, the disciples ask because they watched him pray. Keep pointing at Luke's praying Christ.

The journey (ambient): Everything tonight happens on the road. Say so once at the top.

SESSION GOALS

1. Size the mission of the seventy against Genesis 10 and hear Jesus' joy in the Spirit over the childlike.

2. Run the 2 Chronicles 28 discovery live: the merciful men of Samaria who brought Judah's wounded to Jericho, then the parable's who-is-neighbor inversion, then Ambrose's Christological reading as a crown.
3. Read Martha and Mary without caricature: anxiety versus attention, and the one thing needful.
4. Pray the Our Father as catechesis: five petitions, the Father who gives the Holy Spirit.
5. Resolve the 11:27–28 steelman with Luke's own Marian portrait: menoun, and the beatitude Mary uniquely fulfills.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If pressed, take the sending of the seventy (Q1) as leader framing in two minutes, and fold the sign of Jonah material into the closing. Never cut Q2 and Q3 (the Samaritan discovery and inversion), Q5 (the Our Father), or Q6 (the Marian steelman); they are tonight's spine. The Beelzebul controversy can live entirely in its Dig Deeper box if the clock demands.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, your Son rejoiced in the Holy Spirit that you reveal your mysteries to the little ones. Make us little enough to see. Teach us tonight to pray as he prayed, to sit where Mary sat, and to go where the Samaritan went, and let nothing we do flow from anxiety instead of your word. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. Who taught you to pray, and what is the first prayer you remember knowing by heart?

W2. When your week gets overloaded, what is the first thing you drop? Be honest about where prayer sits on that list.

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight's crown jewel is the 2 Chronicles discovery at Question 2; give it a full ten minutes and let the group's astonishment do the teaching. The Marian steelman closes the Build; by then the group will have every text they need already in hand from Sessions 1 and 2.

1. Read Luke 10:1–3, 10:17–24. Why seventy (or seventy-two) this time instead of twelve? Skim Genesis 10 and count what it catalogs. And when the missionaries return thrilled about demons, where does Jesus redirect their joy?

Leader: *Genesis 10 lists the nations of the world, seventy in the Hebrew count, seventy-two in the Greek. The mission is scaled to the map. Joy belongs to names written in heaven, not to spiritual success.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Twelve answered the tribes of Israel; seventy answers the table of nations in Genesis 10, the whole Gentile world in miniature (the Hebrew text counts seventy nations, the Greek seventy-two, which is exactly why the manuscripts of Luke split between the two numbers). Luke, the Gentile evangelist, is drawing the mission's map early. And when the seventy return high on results, Jesus reorders their joy: do not rejoice that the spirits submit, rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Ministry success is a poor foundation for joy; election and grace are bedrock. Then Luke shows us something found nowhere else: Jesus rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, thanking the Father for revealing to babes what the wise cannot see. Keep that word babes; Session 11 finishes the thought.

2. Live discovery: Read Luke 10:25–35, the Good Samaritan, and gather its details: oil and wine, bound wounds, a beast to ride, the road to Jericho. Now the hunt: find 2 Chronicles 28:8–15 and read it aloud. What did the men of Samaria once do, at a prophet's word, for the wounded of Judah, and where did they carry them?

Leader: Give them time; almost no one knows this text. The finds: the men of Samaria clothed the naked captives, anointed them, carried the feeble on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees. The parable's details echo their own Scriptures.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Buried in 2 Chronicles is the Good Samaritan's ancestor: northern Israelites of Samaria, whom later tradition connects with the Samaritans, take Judah captive, and at the prophet Oded's rebuke they rise, clothe the naked prisoners from the spoil, anoint them, set all the feeble on donkeys, and deliver them to Jericho. Luke supplies oil, wine, a beast, and the Jericho road; 2 Chronicles adds clothing, food and drink, anointing, donkeys, and Jericho itself. The parable echoes the lawyer's own Bible, in which men of Samaria had already once been the merciful ones. Whether or not Jesus alludes to it directly, Israel's own Scriptures already held a memory of Samaritan mercy that this parable awakens. And its closing twist is the real blade: the lawyer asked who is my neighbor, seeking a boundary; Jesus asks which of these three proved neighbor, assigning a vocation. Neighbor is not a category you screen others into. It is a thing you go and become: go and do likewise.

3. The Fathers read this parable a second way, from inside. Hear St. Ambrose's reading from the Voices box: the wounded man is the human race, the Samaritan is Christ, the inn is the Church. What does each detail become in that reading, and what does it get right about the Gospel that the moral reading alone misses?

Leader: Walk the allegory gently: oil and wine as the sacraments' comfort and sting, his own beast as the Incarnation carrying us, the two coins and the promised return. It supplements, not replaces, the moral reading.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

In the Fathers' reading, humanity is the traveler who went down from peace and fell among robbers, stripped of grace and left half dead; the priest and Levite are the Law and the sacrifices, able to see the wound but not to heal it; and the despised outsider who comes where we are is Christ, binding wounds with oil and wine, carrying us on his own body, lodging us in the inn of the Church, and paying in advance until he comes again. The Catechism itself calls the confessor the Good Samaritan who binds up wounds (CCC 1465). What the allegory protects is the parable's deepest truth: before go and do likewise is possible, it must be received. We love as neighbors because we were first the man in the ditch, and Someone stopped.

4. Read Luke 10:38–42. Name precisely what Jesus corrects in Martha, and what he refuses to take from Mary. What is the one thing needful, and what happens to service when it stops flowing from it?

Leader: Guard Martha from caricature: her *diakonia* is honorable; the correction is anxious and troubled, not hardworking. Mary's posture, at his feet hearing his word, is a disciple's place.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jesus does not correct Martha's serving, Luke honors it with the Church's own word for ministry, *diakonia*; he corrects the anxiety devouring it: you are anxious and troubled about many things.

Mary has taken the posture of a disciple before a rabbi, at his feet, hearing his word, a seat convention rarely offered women, and Jesus rules it will not be taken away from her. The one thing needful is not a rebuke of kitchens but an ordering of loves: action that flows from listening feeds people; action cut off from listening frays into resentment, as Martha's does you-statement proves (do you not care?). St. Augustine's balance holds: Martha's portion is good and passes with the world's need; Mary's portion is better and never ends. The Church needs both sisters, in that order, in each of us.

5. Read Luke 11:1–13. The disciples do not ask for a sermon on prayer; they ask because they watched him pray. Walk the five petitions of Luke's Our Father slowly. Then look at verse 13: what, in Luke's version, does the Father give to those who ask him?

***Leader:** Take the petitions one by one and keep it devotional, not academic. The punchline: Matthew's good things becomes Luke's the Holy Spirit.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke's form is lean: Father, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, give us each day our daily bread, forgive us our sins as we forgive, lead us not into temptation. Praise before petition, God's name and reign before our bread and debts, and the terrifying reciprocity of forgiveness in the middle. The Catechism, borrowing Tertullian, calls this prayer the summary of the whole Gospel (CCC 2761), and St. Cyprian saw why it says our and us throughout: no one prays it alone even when praying it alone. Then the promise beneath all asking: if evil fathers give good gifts, how much more will the heavenly Father give **the Holy Spirit** to those who ask him. Luke names the gift behind every gift. Prayer's final answer is not things; it is God's own indwelling life, which is why persistence (the friend at midnight) is not nagging heaven but enlarging the vessel.

DIG DEEPER: THE FINGER OF GOD

Answering the Beelzebul slander, Jesus says: if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you (11:20). The phrase is Exodus 8:19, the magicians of Pharaoh conceding the plague they could not counterfeit: this is the finger of God. The exorcisms are the plagues of a new Exodus, the strong man's house despoiled, and the tradition heard one more overtone: the ancient hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* calls the Holy Spirit *digitus paternae dexteræ*, the finger of the Father's right hand.

6. Steelman chain: Read Luke 11:27–28. A woman cries out, blessed is the womb that bore you, and Jesus answers, blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. The strong Protestant reading: Jesus deliberately redirects honor away from his mother to obedience, and Marian devotion repeats the woman's mistake. Give that reading its full force. Then prosecute it against Luke's own Gospel: who, in everything we have read since Session 1, actually fits the beatitude Jesus pronounces?

***Leader:** Let the Protestant case stand at strength; it is the plain English reading. Then press with the texts the group already owns: 1:38, 1:45, 2:19, 2:51, and the Greek *menoun*, whose ambiguity means the demoting reading is not required by the text.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The steelman deserves respect: read as a rebuttal, the verse makes womb-blessing a mistake to be corrected, and any devotion built on Mary's motherhood totters. But two things resist it. First the particle: *menoun* is genuinely ambiguous in Greek, capable of meaning either rather or yes, and more than that; the demoting reading is a choice, not a necessity. Second, and decisively, Luke's own narrative: who heard the word of God and kept it? The one who answered let it be to me according to your word (1:38), whom Elizabeth blessed both in her motherhood (blessed is the fruit of your womb, 1:42) and, more deeply, in her faith (blessed is she who believed, 1:45), who kept all these things in her heart (2:19, 2:51), pondering them (2:19). Jesus is not demoting his mother; he is naming the deeper reason she is blessed, the reason Luke has been demonstrating for ten chapters. Her physical motherhood was grace given once; her hearing and keeping is discipleship the rest of us can imitate, which is exactly what the Church means by calling her the first disciple. The woman in the crowd was right; Jesus' rather tells us why she was right, and it is tonight's memory verse.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Whose ditch do you walk past on the other side of the road, at work, in your family, online? What would stopping actually cost you this week?

S2. Martha was doing good things anxiously. Which of your good commitments has quietly disconnected from prayer, and what is one concrete way to sit down first this week before you serve?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray Luke's Our Father slowly once a day, one petition per breath. Ask explicitly for the Holy Spirit at the end; Luke says that is the point.
- Do one hidden Samaritan act this week: planned, costly enough to feel, and told to no one.
- Before next session, read Luke 12:1–13:35: a rich fool, ravens and lilies, a narrow door, and a hen gathering her brood.

Scripture memory: Luke 11:28, *Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, forgive us as we forgive, and lead us not into temptation. And give us, above every other gift, the Holy Spirit, that we may hear your word as Mary heard it and keep it as she kept it. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 7

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. 2 Chronicles 28 is the secret weapon; do not let anyone see the bookmark.

Passage Used for

Luke 10:1–3, 17–24 Q1: the seventy; joy in the Spirit

Genesis 10 Q1: the table of nations

Luke 10:25–37 Q2–Q3: the lawyer and the Samaritan

Deuteronomy 6:4–5; Leviticus 19:18 Q2: the lawyer's summary

2 Chronicles 28:8–15 Q2 live discovery: the merciful men of Samaria who brought Judah's wounded to Jericho

Luke 10:38–42 Q4: Martha and Mary

Luke 11:1–13 Q5: the Our Father; the Father gives the Holy Spirit

Exodus 8:19 Dig Deeper: the finger of God

Luke 11:14–26 Dig Deeper context: Beelzebul, the strong man

Luke 11:27–28 Q6 steelman: blessed rather; menoun

Luke 1:38, 45; 2:19, 51 Q6: the texts that resolve it

CCC 2761, 1465, 2601, 2607–2615, 2708–2712 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 12–13: possessions, providence, and the narrow door. Bookmark Exodus 12:11; a small phrase about belts and lamps is older than it looks, and the group should find its source themselves.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 8

Fear Not, Little Flock

Luke 12–13

Barns, ravens, girded loins, a fig tree on probation, and the narrow door

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that let your loins be girded and your lamps burning is Passover posture, Israel dressed for departure in Exodus 12, and that Jesus answers the question will those who are saved be few not with a number but with an imperative: strive. Along the way, 12:47–48 quietly hands them a biblical root of the Church's teaching that guilt is measured by knowledge, the principle behind its distinction between grave and lesser sin.

Catholic Touchstone: Providence and poverty of heart against the rich fool's soliloquy; the vigilance of servants who wait in Passover dress; degrees of culpability (CCC 1854–1864) straight from the master's returning; and the narrow door held together with the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom, severity and tenderness in one Gospel breath.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke 12 opens with crowds trampling one another while Jesus warns his disciples about hypocrisy, the leaven of the Pharisees, and about the only fear worth having: not those who kill the body, but the One with authority beyond death. Yet the same breath counts sparrows and numbers the hairs of your head. Lukan spirituality holds those two wires together, holy fear and granular tenderness, and tonight's title verse is their junction: fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

The rich fool (12:13–21) is triggered by an inheritance dispute Jesus declines to arbitrate, warning instead against all covetousness. The parable's engine is its pronouns: the man converses entirely with himself about what is entirely his, my crops, my barns, my grain, my soul, a soliloquy with no thou in it, neither God nor neighbor. He is not condemned for the harvest but for the horizon: laying up treasure for himself, not rich toward God. St. Basil's homily on this parable is one of the patristic era's thunderclaps on wealth, and your group should hear its argument: the barns were already full before he built bigger ones, and the storehouses he needed were standing ready all along, the mouths of the hungry. The ravens and lilies teaching that follows (12:22–34) is not naive economics but reordered anxiety: your Father knows that you need them; seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well. Sell your possessions, give alms, purses that do not grow old. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also: the heart follows the treasure, not the other way around, which makes almsgiving a cardiology.

Watchfulness (12:35–48) opens with tonight's live discovery: let your loins be girded and your lamps burning. Send the group to Exodus 12:11 and let them find Israel eating the first Passover in exactly that posture, belt fastened, sandals on, staff in hand, dressed for the Exodus, ready to move the moment God says move. Jesus is dressing his disciples for a departure; whose departure, the exodos of 9:31 has already whispered. Then the astonishing reversal of 12:37: the master on his return will gird himself and serve the watching servants, a promise that walks into the upper room of Session 13. Peter asks whether the parable is for the Twelve or for all, and the answer, the faithful and wise steward set over the household, lands on leaders first. And then 12:47–48: the servant who knew his master's will and did not act shall receive a severe beating, but the one who did not know shall receive a light one. Right there, in

red letters, punishment is proportioned to knowledge. The verse does not by itself define mortal and venial sin; the Church's full distinction requires grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent (CCC 1857-1862), and Scripture's classic text is 1 John 5:16-17. But Jesus himself here grades culpability by what the servant knew, and that principle is one of the hinges on which the distinction turns. Tonight's steelman lives in this neighborhood. The strong Protestant claim of assurance, the truly saved cannot finally be lost, and its once-saved-always-saved popularization deserve full-strength presentation: eternal life is a gift, not a wage, and no one snatches the sheep from the Father's hand. Then press with tonight's own texts: servants can stop watching; a steward can turn to beating the servants and be assigned a place with the unfaithful; the door is narrow and some who ate and drank in his presence hear I do not know where you come from. The Catholic position is not anxiety but vigilant confidence: sure of God's fidelity, unpresuming about our own, working out salvation in fear and trembling while the Father delights to give the kingdom.

Luke 13 turns to repentance with the news cycle of the day: Pilate's massacre of Galileans, the tower of Siloam's eighteen dead. Jesus refuses the crowd's arithmetic (worse sinners, worse deaths) and universalizes the warning: unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. The barren fig tree follows, planted in a vineyard, three fruitless years, and a gardener who begs one more: let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. Judgment delayed is not judgment canceled; it is mercy purchasing time, and the gardener is spending himself to buy it. The bent woman freed on the sabbath (a daughter of Abraham, loosed from a bond of eighteen years) enrages a synagogue ruler and delights the crowd; mustard seed and leaven promise a kingdom that grows from imperceptible beginnings. Then someone asks the theology-class question, Lord, will those who are saved be few?, and Jesus answers the crowd in the second person: strive (agonizesthe, the athlete's agony) to enter by the narrow door. He will not publish attendance figures; he issues an entrance summons, and the guest list he does reveal runs east and west, north and south, to the table of the patriarchs, while some who presumed proximity (we ate and drank in your presence) stand outside. Some are last who will be first. The chapter closes with the lament that aches: O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not. The city's house is forsaken, and they will not see him until they say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, words we will hear taken up at the gates in Session 12.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Ecc1 2:1-11 with Ps 39:6 Vanity of stored abundance: whose will these things be? → **Lk 12:16-21**

Ex 12:11 Passover posture: loins girded, sandals on, ready for the Exodus → **Lk 12:35**

Job 38:41 with Ps 147:9 Who provides for the raven? → **Lk 12:24**

Isa 5:1-7 The vineyard of the Lord and its fruitless planting → **Lk 13:6-9**

Isa 25:6-8 (previewed) The feast of all peoples on the mountain → **Lk 13:29**

Ps 118:26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord → **Lk 13:35**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Basil the Great (*Homily on Luke 12:18, I Will Tear Down My Barns*)

Basil cross-examines the rich fool with terrifying courtesy: the man had storehouses already, the bellies of the poor, and called the surplus his own when it was only passing through his hands. The bread you hold back belongs to the hungry, Basil preaches, the cloak in your chest to the naked, the silver in the ground to the needy; we are stewards arraigned for hoarding what was issued for distribution.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great (*Forty Gospel Homilies, Homily 31*)

On the barren fig tree, Gregory hears the three years as the long patience of God and the gardener's plea as intercession still holding back the axe. The digging about the roots he reads as the humbling of the soul, and the manure, distasteful as it is, as the remembrance of our sins laid around our roots: what shames us, offered in penance, becomes the very fertilizer of fruit. But he will not let the parable comfort procrastination: the reprieve is a year, not an amnesty.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the narrow door*)

Cyril notes that the Lord, asked for statistics, answered with a summons: the question whether few are saved profits nothing, but the striving profits everything. The door is narrow, he says, not because God grudges entrance but because pride, luxury, and the bulk of our self-importance do not fit through it; the door admits whoever will stoop, and the striving is the stooping.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1854–1864 Mortal and venial sin: gravity, knowledge, consent; the distinction tonight's 12:47–48 roots in Jesus' own words.

CCC 305 Filial trust in providence: the Father who feeds the birds and knows our needs.

CCC 2544–2547 Poverty of heart: abandonment to providence, freedom from anxiety about tomorrow.

CCC 1036 The Church's urgency about the narrow door: warnings that summon our freedom, not forecasts that cancel hope.

CCC 1431–1439 Interior repentance: the conversion tonight's tower and fig tree demand.

THREAD WATCH

Passover posture (plants tonight, resolves Session 13): The Exodus 12:11 discovery dresses the disciples for a departure. Do not say the words Last Supper; just leave the belt fastened.

The master who serves (plants tonight, resolves Session 13): 12:37, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. Read it once, slowly, and move on. It detonates in the upper room: I am among you as one who serves (22:27).

Blessed is he who comes (plants tonight, resolves Session 12): 13:35 ends on Ps 118:26. The crowd takes up this very acclamation at the gates in Session 12, with Luke adding one word, the King; let the group discover the echo then.

The banquet from east and west (plants tonight, develops Session 9): 13:29's table of the patriarchs sets up next week's banquet parables and the Isaiah 25 discovery.

Journey (ambient): 13:33, it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem. The road knows where it is going.

SESSION GOALS

1. Read the rich fool by his pronouns and let St. Basil's stewardship argument land with its full patristic weight.
2. Reorder anxiety with ravens, lilies, and the little flock: providence as the ground of generosity.
3. Run the Exodus 12:11 discovery: watchfulness as Passover posture, and bank the master-who-serves promise for Session 13.
4. Work the assurance steelman honestly, and find in 12:47–48 the scriptural root of the mortal-venial distinction.
5. Hold severity and tenderness together: the narrow door, the striving, and the hen who would gather her brood.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

Two dense chapters; triage in advance. If pressed, take the bent woman and the mustard seed and leaven (13:10–21) as one sentence of leader framing, and let the Siloam material live inside Q5's setup. Never cut Q3 (the Exodus discovery), Q4 (the steelman), or Q6 (narrow door and the lament); and do not let Q1 swallow the evening, however lively the money conversation gets.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, you feed the ravens and clothe the grass, and it is your good pleasure to give us the kingdom. Loosen tonight whatever we are hoarding, fasten our belts for wherever you send us, and keep our lamps burning. Teach us to fear nothing but losing you, and to strive for the door your Son holds open. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What is something you keep stockpiling, physically or digitally, that you honestly do not need more of? What is the stockpile promising you?

W2. Have you ever been packed and ready before news that changed everything, a call, a move, a diagnosis, a birth? What did readiness feel like compared to being caught flat?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Money talk gets personal fast; let it, but keep it charitable and keep it moving. The Exodus discovery at Q3 needs its full ten minutes, and the steelman at Q4 needs your calmest, most generous voice: some of your group grew up on assurance, and the goal is light, not victory.

1. Read Luke 12:13–21. Count the possessive pronouns in the rich man's speech, and notice who he is talking to. What exactly is he condemned for, and what does rich toward God mean? Bring in St. Basil's argument from the Voices box: where does Basil say the man's grain should have gone?

Leader: *My crops, my barns, my grain, my soul; a soliloquy. Not condemned for the harvest but for the horizon.*
Basil: *the storehouses that stood ready were the mouths of the hungry.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The man's speech is a hall of mirrors: my crops, my barns, my grain, my goods, my soul, and his only conversation partner is himself. God's verdict word, fool, is the psalmist's word for the one who lives as if there were no God, and the sentence exposes the tense of his whole life: this night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be? He is not condemned for a good harvest but for a closed loop, laying up treasure for himself instead of being rich toward God, and St. Basil names what rich toward God looks like in grain: the surplus was issued for distribution, the bread belongs to the hungry it could feed, and bigger barns are a way of burying what was meant to circulate. Wealth in Luke is never neutral storage; it is either seed or sepulcher.

2. Read Luke 12:22–34. Ravens and lilies: what is the actual argument against anxiety here, and what is the anxiety replaced with? Land on verses 32–34: what does the Father delight to do, and which direction does verse 34 say the heart follows?

Leader: The argument is a *fortiori*: if God feeds ravens and dresses grass, how much more you. Anxiety is replaced by seeking the kingdom. And treasure leads, heart follows.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The argument runs from lesser to greater: ravens neither sow nor reap and are fed; lilies neither toil nor spin and outdress Solomon; and you are of more value than the birds. Anxiety adds not a cubit and ignores a Father who knows that you need these things. The cure is not pretending needs away but reordering the seeking: seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well. Then the sentence this session is named for: fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, the whole Gospel's tenderness in one line, immediately followed by sell, give alms, make purses that do not grow old. Verse 34 explains the sequence: where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The heart is a follower; it goes where the treasure went. Almsgiving is how a disciple relocates his own heart.

3. Live discovery: Read Luke 12:35–40: let your loins be girded and your lamps burning. That dress code is a quotation of a posture. Find Exodus 12:11 and read how Israel was commanded to eat the first Passover. What is Jesus dressing his disciples for? And then read 12:37 slowly: what does this master do that no master in the ancient world would do?

Leader: The find: belt fastened, sandals on, staff in hand, eaten in haste, it is the Lord's Passover. Ready for the Exodus. Then 12:37: the returning master girds himself and serves the servants. Bank it; say only that this promise has an appointment.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Exodus 12:11 is the source: Israel ate the first Passover dressed to leave, loins girded, sandals on, staff in hand, in haste, because redemption was minutes away and God's people do not meet it in pajamas. Jesus dresses his disciples in Passover posture: a departure is coming, the *exodos* the mountain spoke of, and watchfulness is not nervous scanning but packed readiness. Then verse 37 breaks every social rule in the ancient world: the master on his return will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them. Masters do not wait on slaves; this one will. File the promise carefully. Five chapters from now, on Passover night, someone at a table will say I am among you as one who serves, and this verse will stand up and take a bow.

4. Steelman chain: Read Luke 12:41–48. The strongest Protestant doctrine of assurance argues: salvation is God's gift and God's grip, the saved cannot finally be lost, and teaching otherwise breeds anxious works-religion. State that case at full strength, with its best texts (no one shall snatch them out of my Father's hand). Then prosecute it against tonight's parable: what happens to the steward who stops watching, and what do verses 47–48 establish about how God measures guilt?

Leader: Honor the steelman; assurance guards real truths (grace, God's fidelity, no snatching). Expect the strong reply that the fallen steward was never truly saved and that warnings are God's means of preserving the elect; grant its coherence, then note that Luke presents the steward as one set over the household, and that the never-truly-saved move makes present assurance unknowable in practice. Then press: the steward set over the household can be assigned a place with the unfaithful, and 12:47–48 grades punishment by knowledge, the principle the mortal-venial distinction presupposes. CCC 1857–1862.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Give assurance its due: salvation is unmerited gift, the Father's grip is real, and no thief snatches sheep from his hand. Its strongest defenders add two moves: the warnings themselves are the very means God uses to keep the elect persevering, and a steward who turns to beating the servants never truly belonged to Christ at all; they went out from us because they were not of us (1 John 2:19). State both moves fairly. Then answer them from tonight's text: Luke will not let this steward be an outsider. He is the answer to Peter's question about the Twelve, the faithful and wise steward set over the household, warned precisely as one of the Lord's own officers. And if every apparent falling away only proves the person was never saved, assurance quietly changes its subject: no one can be certain now that his present faith is the persevering kind, which is the very certainty the doctrine promised. What the steelman cannot survive is tonight's steward: set over the household, he says my master is delayed, beats the servants, gets drunk, and is assigned his portion with the unfaithful. The sheep cannot be snatched, but Luke keeps showing they can walk: watching can stop, lamps can gutter, stewards can turn. The Catholic reading is vigilant confidence, certain of God's fidelity without presuming on our own perseverance, which is why the Church prays for final perseverance as a grace rather than claiming it as a possession. And verses 47–48 quietly hand us a whole moral theology: the servant who knew his master's will and did not act receives the severe beating; the one who did not know, the light one. Culpability is proportioned to knowledge, from the Lord's own lips. This verse does not by itself spell out the Church's three conditions for mortal sin, grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent (CCC 1857-1862), but it establishes the principle they presuppose: God measures guilt by what we knew and willed, not by the act alone. To whom much is given, of him will much be required is not a threat to the little flock; it is the syllabus for its stewards.

DIG DEEPER: REPENT OR PERISH: READING THE NEWS WITH JESUS

Told about Galileans butchered by Pilate, Jesus rejects the crowd's math twice: do you think they were worse sinners? No. The tower of Siloam's eighteen were not worse offenders either. He forbids the spectator's theology that reads other people's catastrophes as other people's verdicts, and he re-aims the data: unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Tragedy in Luke is not a window for judging the dead; it is a mirror and an alarm clock for the living, and the fig tree's gardener is already digging around your roots to buy you the year.

5. Read Luke 13:1–9. What question is the crowd really asking about the massacre and the tower, and how does Jesus redirect it? Then the fig tree: who is speaking for the tree, what does the reprieve cost him, and how long is it?

***Leader:** The crowd wants a theology of other people's disasters; Jesus hands them a deadline of their own. The gardener intercedes and does the dirty work himself; the reprieve is a year, not an amnesty. Gregory's homily in the Voices box supplies the manure image.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The crowd is doing what crowds do with catastrophe: converting victims into worse sinners so the survivors can feel safe. Jesus cancels the calculation, no, I tell you, and turns the alarm toward the

audience: unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Then mercy gets a parable: three fruitless years, an owner with an axe, and a gardener who pleads let it alone, sir, this year also, and pays for the delay in his own sweat, digging and dunging. St. Gregory the Great heard in the manure the memory of our own sins, laid around the roots in penance until shame becomes fertilizer. The reprieve is real and it is dated: judgment delayed is mercy spending itself to buy fruit, not a verdict overturned. Every one of us is living in the gardener's extra year; the only question the parable leaves open is what grows in it.

6. Read Luke 13:22–35. Someone asks: will those who are saved be few? Look carefully at what Jesus does and does not answer. Who ends up inside the door, from where, and who is shocked to be outside? Then read the lament of 13:34–35: what image does Jesus choose for himself, and what does Jesus say they must say before they will see him again?

***Leader:** He refuses the statistic and issues the imperative: strive. The table fills from east and west; the shocked outsiders had proximity (we ate and drank in your presence) without discipleship. The hen and her brood; and Ps 118:26 as the condition, which the group will hear shouted in Session 12.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Asked for a number, Jesus answers in the second person plural: strive, *agōnizesthe*, the athlete's agony, to enter by the narrow door. St. Cyril's comment stands: the door is narrow not because God grudges entrance but because our swollen self-importance does not fit; the striving is the stooping.

The guest list he does reveal runs from east and west, north and south to recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the outsiders' thread now seated at the patriarchs' own table, while some with every proximity credential, we ate and drank in your presence, hear I do not know where you come from. Presumption, not weakness, is the parable's target. And then severity turns its face and shows tenderness underneath: O Jerusalem... how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not. The narrow door and the open wings belong to the same Lord. The lament ends on a condition and a countdown, you will not see me until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, and in Session 12 we will stand at the city gates and hear a crowd shout this very acclamation, with Luke's telling addition: Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. If God audited your barns this week, your accounts, closets, and calendar, what would he find stored that was issued for distribution? Name one surplus you could put back in circulation before we meet again.

S2. Girded loins and burning lamps: what in your spiritual life have you filed under someday that watchfulness would move to today?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Give one thing away this week that costs you something to release, money, time, or a possession you like. Let your heart follow the treasure.

- Make a concrete plan for Confession if it has been a while; tonight's fig tree is about the gift of time, and 12:47–48 is about not presuming on what we know.
- Before next session, read Luke 14:1–15:32: banquets, the cost of discipleship, and three parables about lost things, one of them the most famous story Jesus ever told.

Scripture memory: **Luke 12:32**, *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, your Son called us a little flock and promised us the kingdom. Empty our barns of what belongs to the hungry, gird us for the departure you are preparing, and lead us stooping through the narrow door. Gather us, Lord, as a hen gathers her brood, and do not let us be unwilling. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 8

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Exodus 12:11 is the load-bearing bookmark; Psalm 118:26 gets planted for Session 12.

Passage Used for

Luke 12:13–21 Q1: the rich fool; St. Basil

Luke 12:22–34 Q2: ravens, lilies, little flock, treasure and heart

Luke 12:35–40 Q3: girded loins and burning lamps

Exodus 12:11 Q3 live discovery: Passover posture

Luke 12:37 Q3: the master who serves (bank for Session 13)

Luke 12:41–48 Q4 steelman: the steward; degrees of culpability

Luke 13:1–9 Q5: Siloam and the fig tree

Luke 13:22–30 Q6: the narrow door; east and west

Luke 13:31–35 Q6: the hen and the brood; Ps 118:26 planted

Psalm 118:26 Q6: the condition, shouted in Session 12

CCC 1854–1864, 305, 2544–2547, 1036, 1431–1439 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 14–15: the banquets and the lost things, including the prodigal son. Bookmark Isaiah 25:6–8; the group should discover for themselves whose feast every banquet parable has been previewing.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 9

This My Son Was Dead

Luke 14–15

The banquet of the unrepayable, the cost of the road, and three parables of the lost

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover that every banquet parable has been previewing Isaiah's feast on the mountain, where death itself is swallowed up, and then walk the parable of the prodigal son slowly enough to find the Sacrament of Reconciliation hiding in plain sight: the Catechism itself reads the story as the map of conversion (CCC 1439).

Catholic Touchstone: The Eucharistic banquet of the poor, maimed, lame, and blind; the hard grace of counting the cost; and Confession as the father's embrace: contrition, confession, and the robe, ring, and feast of restoration. The elder brother receives equal pastoral attention; most parish groups contain more of him than of his sibling.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke 14 opens at a Pharisee's sabbath dinner, the third great table scene, where Jesus heals a man with dropsy under hostile watch, then reads the room's seating scramble and teaches the guests (take the lowest place) and the host (invite those who cannot repay you: the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just). The guest list is the theology: grace, by definition, invites the unrepaying. A guest's pious toast, blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, triggers the parable of the great banquet: invitations issued, excuses tendered (field, oxen, wife, the respectable machinery of a settled life), and the master's house filled instead from the streets with exactly the list Jesus just gave the host, while none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet. Tonight's first discovery sends the group to Isaiah 25:6–8, the feast of fat things on the mountain for all peoples, where the Lord swallows up death forever and wipes away tears: the horizon every table in Luke has been pointing toward, and the reason excuses are tragedies.

Then the road again, and the hardest sentence in the Gospel: if any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Tonight's steelman takes the hostile reading at full strength, Jesus the family-wrecker, the cult leader's demand, and answers it from inside the Hebrew Bible: hate in Semitic comparative idiom means to love less, to subordinate, as when Leah is hated (Gen 29:30–31 uses loved less and hated interchangeably) or Jacob I loved but Esau I hated (Mal 1:2–3) assigns preference, not malice; Matthew's parallel makes the comparative force explicit, whoever loves father or mother more than me (Mt 10:37). The demand is still staggering, rightly understood: Christ claims the supreme place in every love, and the tower-builder and king-at-war parables insist that the claim be costed before it is signed. Salt that has lost its taste closes the chapter as the portrait of uncosted discipleship.

Luke 15 is the Gospel's beating heart: one parable in three movements, told at grumblers. The setting is the meals thread at full pressure: tax collectors and sinners drawing near, Pharisees and scribes murmuring, this man receives sinners and eats with them, and Jesus answering the murmur with the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost sons. The sheep and coin establish the pattern: the seeker's initiative (which of you does not leave the ninety-nine and go after the one), the disproportionate search, and joy that demands company, rejoice with me. Both end with heaven's arithmetic: more joy

over one sinner who repents. St. Gregory the Great preached the coin's detail the modern eye misses: a drachma bears an image, and the woman sweeping her house for the coin is God turning the house upside down for the creature stamped with his own likeness.

The prodigal (15:11–32) deserves the slowest walk of the study so far. The younger son's request, give me the share of property that falls to me, asks his father to act as if dead; the far country and the famine strip him to feeding pigs, an occupation that ends a Jewish son's identity; and coming to himself, he drafts a confession in three clauses: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants. Watch what the father's run does to the draft. While he was yet at a distance, the father saw him (which means the father was watching the road), had compassion, and ran, a run widely seen in that culture as beneath a patriarch's dignity, gladly paid, embraced and kissed him before one syllable of the speech. The son gets through contrition and confession; the third clause, the demotion to employee, dies in the father's arms, answered instead by the robe (the best one), the ring (authority), the shoes (a mark of the free son of the house; servants commonly went barefoot), and the fatted calf, because this my son was dead, and is alive again. The Catechism reads the whole arc as the process of conversion and repentance (CCC 1439), the paragraph the Catechism sets within its teaching on the Sacrament of Reconciliation: the misery of the far country, the coming to oneself, the resolve, the confession, and the father's restoration exceeding all petition, culminating in a feast; so the path of Reconciliation ends with the penitent restored to communion and pointed back to the Eucharistic table. Then the camera turns to the field. The elder brother's anger is the parable's live wire for parish people: these many years I have served you (the verb is a slave's), I never disobeyed, you never gave me a kid, and this son of yours (not my brother). The father's answer is as tender as the run: Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours; it was fitting to make merry, for this your brother was dead. Luke leaves the elder brother standing at the door, music pouring out, choice unmade, because the parable's last character is its audience.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Isa 25:6–8 The feast of fat things for all peoples; death swallowed up forever — **Lk 14:15–24**

Prov 25:6–7 Do not put yourself forward; better to be told, come up here — **Lk 14:7–11**

Gen 29:30–31 Leah loved less / hated: the comparative idiom — **Lk 14:26**

Mal 1:2–3 Jacob I loved, Esau I hated: preference, not malice — **Lk 14:26**

Ezek 34:11–16 I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out — **Lk 15:3–7**

Gen 41:42 Robe and ring: Pharaoh's investiture of Joseph, authority restored — **Lk 15:22**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Peter Chrysologus (*Sermons on the Prodigal Son*)

Chrysologus, the golden-worded, preaches the father's run as the Gospel's whole physics: it is not the manner of age to run, yet love outstrips dignity, and the father falls on his son's neck so that the son's rehearsed speech is smothered in the embrace. The father, he says, was not ignorant of where his son had been; mercy chose to see only that he was coming home, and the kiss restored what the

confession had not yet finished asking.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great (*Forty Gospel Homilies, Homily 34*)

On the sheep and the coin, Gregory hears the shepherd carrying the sheep on his shoulders as Christ carrying our nature home in the Incarnation, and the coin as the soul: a drachma is stamped with an image, and the woman ransacks her house by lamplight because what is lost bears the likeness of the owner. The friends and neighbors summoned to rejoice he reads as the angels, for heaven's joy over one repentant sinner is not a courtesy but a feast.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book VII*)

Ambrose walks the prodigal's return as the soul's: the father sees him afar off because God sees the penitent before the penitent sees God, and runs because grace moves faster than repentance. The robe is the garment lost in Adam restored, the ring the seal of the Spirit, the shoes the readiness of the Gospel, and the calf, Ambrose does not hesitate, is rich with the mystery of the Eucharist: the feast that stands ready whenever a brother dead in sin comes home alive.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1439 The process of conversion and repentance described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son: the Catechism's own walk through tonight's text.

CCC 545 Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: the scandal of the meals as mercy's method.

CCC 1443 Reconciliation with the Church: readmission to the community's table as sign of God's forgiveness.

CCC 2839 Returning to the Father like the prodigal: the confession of our sin as the door of prayer.

THREAD WATCH

Meals with sinners (peak pressure tonight): 15:1–2 is the thread's thesis statement: this man receives sinners and eats with them. All three parables answer the murmur. The table's destination (Sessions 13–14) is two stops away.

Banquet of the unrepaying (develops from Session 8): Last week's east-and-west table becomes tonight's Isaiah 25 discovery. The poor, maimed, lame, and blind guest list echoes 4:18.

Blessed outsiders (develops): The streets and hedges fill the banquet. Keep the tally.

Lost and found (plants tonight, resolves Session 11): The seeking shepherd of 15:4 returns in person at 19:10: the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost, said over a tax collector in a tree. Say nothing; let Session 11 close the loop.

SESSION GOALS

1. Run the Isaiah 25 discovery and let the banquet parables acquire their true horizon: the feast where death is swallowed.
2. Handle the hate father and mother steelman with full honesty: idiom explained, demand undomesticated.
3. Walk the sheep and coin for the seeker's initiative and heaven's arithmetic of joy.
4. Take the prodigal at CCC 1439's pace: contrition, confession, and the restoration that outruns the speech, with the robe, ring, shoes, and feast named for what they are.
5. Give the elder brother his full evening: the slave's verb, the refused feast, and the father who comes out to entreat him too.

Time Note (75-90 minutes)

The prodigal needs thirty unhurried minutes; build the night backward from that. If pressed, compress the sabbath healing and seating instruction (14:1-14) into leader framing and fold the salt saying into Q3's close. Never cut Q1's Isaiah discovery, Q3's steelman, or anything in Q4 through Q6. If your group runs long every week, this is the session to let run.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, you watch the road for us. Before we can finish our speeches you are already running, and the feast is already warming. Give us tonight the younger son's honesty, spare us the elder son's ledger, and seat us gladly among the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, the company you keep. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What is the best welcome-home you have ever received, or ever given? What made it unforgettable?

W2. When you receive an invitation, what actually determines whether you go: the event, the host, or who else will be there? Be honest.

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight ends in the most famous story ever told, and familiarity is the enemy: your group thinks they know it. Slow everything down after Q4; read the parable in sections, not one pass; and give the elder brother real time, because he is sitting in your circle. The ANSWER boxes consolidate; the text converts.

1. Live discovery: Read Luke 14:12–24: the guest list Jesus commands (the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind) and the great banquet with its excuses. Then hunt: find Isaiah 25:6–8. Whose feast is this, who is invited, and what happens to death at that table? What have all of Luke's banquet parables been previewing?

Leader: *The find: the Lord's feast on the mountain, for all peoples, where he swallows up death forever and wipes tears from all faces. Every table in Luke points here.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Isaiah saw it first: on this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, and at that table he will swallow up death for ever and wipe away tears from all faces. That is the banquet every Lukan table has been previewing, which is why the invitation list Jesus commands, the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, those who cannot repay, is not charity advice but eschatology: grace invites the unrepaying because the host of Isaiah's feast needs nothing back. The excuses in the parable are therefore tragedies, not etiquette problems: field, oxen, and marriage, the respectable furniture of a settled life, politely declining the defeat of death. And the house will be filled regardless, from streets and hedges, the east-and-west crowd of last week now given an address. The one way to miss the banquet, the parable warns, is to be too invested to come.

2. Read Luke 14:7–11, the seating instruction. What is Jesus actually teaching under the table manners, and where have we heard everyone who exalts himself will be humbled before in this study?

Leader: Quick one. Proverbs 25:6–7 behind it; the Magnificat's reversal as social practice; friend, go up higher.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Under the etiquette is the Magnificat with place cards: he has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree, now issued as practical instruction. Take the lowest place is not strategic modesty (angling for friend, go up higher as a compliment) but training for a kingdom whose entire seating chart runs on grace: everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted, a sentence Luke will repeat verbatim over a Pharisee and a tax collector in Session 11. The wisdom is old (Prov 25:6–7); the stakes are new: the table being rehearsed is Isaiah's.

3. Steelman chain: Read Luke 14:25–33. The hostile reading says plainly: a teacher demanding that followers hate father, mother, wife, and children is a cult leader, and this verse is the Gospel's ugliest. Give that objection its full force; do not soften it prematurely. Then interrogate the idiom: read Genesis 29:30–31 and Malachi 1:2–3, and compare Matthew 10:37. What does hate mean in this Hebrew pattern, and what does the demand still cost once the idiom is understood?

Leader: Let the ugliness be felt first. Then: Leah loved less and hated used interchangeably; Jacob loved, Esau hated as covenant preference; Matthew's parallel states it comparatively: loves more than me. The idiom decoded, the claim remains total: first place in every love.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The steelman deserves its moment: in English, the sentence sounds like the entrance exam of a cult. But the group's own hunt dissolves the translation problem without dissolving the demand. Genesis 29 says Leah was *hated* in one verse and *loved less* in the verse before, the same fact in two registers; Malachi's Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated assigns covenant preference, not personal malice; and Matthew's parallel makes the comparative force explicit: whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Semitic hate here is comparative: to love less, to give second place. So the verse is not a command to despise your family, and the Church has never read it as one. But do not let relief domesticate it: Jesus claims first place ahead of every human love and even your own life, a claim no sane man makes unless he is more than a man, and he immediately demands the claim be costed like a tower and a war, in advance, with eyes open. Salt that has lost its taste is his name for the discipleship that signed without reading the terms.

4. Read Luke 15:1–10. First the setting: who is drawing near, who is murmuring, and about what? Then the sheep and the coin: in each parable, who moves first, what is the search like, and what does the finder do that seems out of all proportion?

Leader: The murmur (15:2) is the thesis all three parables answer. The seeker's initiative, the extravagant search, the party that costs more than the coin. Gregory's image-on-the-drachma is in the Voices box.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The frame is the meals thread at maximum pressure: this man receives sinners and eats with them, and instead of defending himself Jesus describes God. In both parables the lost thing does nothing but be lost; the shepherd goes after the one until he finds it, the woman lights the lamp and sweeps

the house and seeks diligently. Ezekiel promised exactly this: I myself will search for my sheep. And both finders do the same disproportionate thing: they throw a party, rejoice with me, joy that demands company, because, Jesus says, that is heaven's own arithmetic: more joy over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine with nothing to repent. St. Gregory pressed the coin's detail: a drachma bears an image, and the house is ransacked by lamplight because the lost thing is stamped with the owner's likeness. You are the coin. The sweeping you have felt is not punishment; it is the search.

5. Read Luke 15:11–24 slowly. Track three things: what the younger son's request means to a living father; the three clauses of the confession he drafts in the pigsty; and everything the father does before and instead of letting him finish it. What do the robe, the ring, and the shoes each restore? And why a feast?

***Leader:** Give me my share now = act as if dead. The draft: sinned / not worthy / make me a hired servant. The father sees far off (he was watching), runs (an elder's indignity), embraces before the speech; the third clause never gets said. Robe: honor; ring: authority (Gen 41:42); shoes: sonship. CCC 1439 walks this arc as the shape of conversion and Confession.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The request is a small patricide: the share that falls to me falls at death, so the son asks his father to be dead for accounting purposes, and the father grants freedom at the price of his own heart. The far country runs its course to the pig trough, where coming to himself the boy drafts penance in three clauses: I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants. Now watch the father dismantle the draft. He sees him while still at a distance, which means he never stopped watching the road; he has compassion and runs, and in that culture a patriarch's running was widely seen as beneath his dignity; that is the price, and he pays it laughing; he embraces and kisses him before a syllable is spoken. The son gets out his contrition and his confession, and the third clause, the demotion to employee, dies in the embrace, because the father will take his son back as a son or not at all. Then the liturgy of restoration: the best robe (honor covering rags), the ring (authority, as Pharaoh ringed Joseph), shoes (a mark of the free son; servants commonly went barefoot), and the fatted calf, for this my son was dead, and is alive again. The Catechism reads this exact arc as the process of conversion and repentance (CCC 1439), and it sets the parable at the center of its teaching on the Sacrament of Reconciliation: the far country, the coming to oneself, the resolve, the spoken confession, and a father's welcome that exceeds everything the penitent dared to ask, ending in a feast. St. Ambrose said the quiet part: the feast that stands ready for every returning child is the Eucharist. Every Confession ends pointed at an altar.

6. Read Luke 15:25–32. The elder brother: list his exact grievances and his exact words for his father and his brother. What does his language reveal about how he has understood these many years in his father's house? And notice what the father does that he did not have to do, and how the parable ends, or does not.

***Leader:** The slave's verb (these many years I have served you), the ledger (I never disobeyed; you never gave me), this son of yours. The father comes out and entertains him, repeats Son, all that is mine is yours, and*

corrects one pronoun: this your brother. The story ends with the door open and the choice unmade; the audience finishes it.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The elder brother has been lost at home. His grievance speech betrays him: these many years I have *served* you uses a slave's verb for a son's life; I never disobeyed is a ledger, not a love; you never gave me a kid prices the relationship in livestock; and this son of yours amputates a brother. He has lived in the father's house on the hired-servant terms his brother proposed and the father refused, and the proof is that the feast sounds to him like injustice. But mark what the father does: he comes out, to the field, to the second lost son, and entreats him, and answers the ledger with intimacy: Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours, then hands back the amputated pronoun: it was fitting to make merry, for this your brother was dead and is alive. And there Luke stops. Music from the house, father in the doorway, elder son unresolved, because the parable was told to murmuring Pharisees and it is still being told to everyone who has kept the rules and resents the mercy. The last character in the story is the reader, and the door is open.

DIG DEEPER: THREE PARABLES, ONE MISSING SEARCHER

The sheep had a shepherd to seek it and the coin had a woman; who goes to the far country after the son? In the story, no one; and Christians have long heard that silence as an invitation: the Father's answer to it in history is the Son who leaves the Father's house for the far country of our exile, eats with pigsty people, and carries the lost home on his shoulders. The parable's missing searcher is the one telling it, and the road he is walking as he tells it (Session 6's hinge) ends at the price of the search.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

- S1.** Which brother are you this season, honestly: the one in the far country, or the one keeping score in the field? What would coming to yourself look like this week?
- S2.** The father saw him because he was watching the road. Who are you being asked to watch the road for, without conditions, without a speech required, ready to run?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Go to Confession this week and let CCC 1439 be your examination's frame: far country, coming to yourself, the walk home, the words, the robe. The feast follows.
- Invite someone who cannot repay you: a meal, coffee, a seat at your table, chosen precisely because there is nothing in it for you.
- Before next session, read Luke 16:1–17:37: a shrewd steward, a rich man and a beggar, ten lepers, and a question about where the nine went.

Scripture memory: **Luke 15:10**, *Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, you saw us at a distance and ran. Meet every far country in this room with your embrace, silence our speeches about being hired servants, and teach the elder brother in each of us to come in to the music. This night, let there be joy before your angels over sinners coming home. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.***

Leader Reference Card: Session 9

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Isaiah 25 is the load-bearing bookmark; Genesis 29 and Malachi 1 arm the steelman.

Passage Used for

Luke 14:7–11 Q2: places at table; Prov 25:6–7

Luke 14:12–24 Q1: the guest list and the great banquet

Isaiah 25:6–8 Q1 live discovery: the feast where death is swallowed

Luke 14:25–33 Q3 steelman: hate father and mother; the cost

Genesis 29:30–31; Malachi 1:2– 3 Q3: the comparative idiom

Matthew 10:37 Q3: the idiom translated

Luke 15:1–10 Q4: the murmur, the sheep, the coin

Ezekiel 34:11–16 Q4: I myself will search

Luke 15:11–24 Q5: the prodigal and the father; CCC 1439

Genesis 41:42 Q5: robe and ring, Joseph's investiture

Luke 15:25–32 Q6: the elder brother

CCC 1439, 545, 1443, 2839 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 16–17: money, Lazarus, and ten lepers. Bookmark Leviticus 14:1–4; the group should discover for themselves why Jesus sends lepers to priests, and what that has to do with a confessional.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 10

Where Are the Nine?

Luke 16–17

A shrewd steward, a beggar named Lazarus, and one grateful Samaritan in ten

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover why Jesus sends ten lepers to the priests, Leviticus 14 makes the priest the ordained verifier of cleansing, a pattern that walks straight into the confessional, and they watch the one returning Samaritan fall at Jesus' feet *eucharistōn*, giving thanks: the Eucharist's own verb. Along the way they face the Gospel's starkest picture of the afterlife and learn to handle it honestly.

Catholic Touchstone: Stewardship of unrighteous mammon; the particular judgment, which the Catechism teaches from tonight's Lazarus text (CCC 1021); the anti-Pelagian gem of the unworthy servants (CCC 2007); and gratitude as the shape of salvation completed.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The dishonest steward (16:1–13) is the parable that makes every Bible study flinch, so take it head-on. A steward, fired for waste, uses his last hours of signing authority to discount his master's debtors, buying himself a future of open doors; and the master, astonishingly, commends the dishonest steward for his prudence. Read carefully: Jesus commends the shrewdness, never the dishonesty, and his application makes the target plain: the sons of this world are wiser in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. Worldly people plan for their future with everything at their disposal; do the children of the kingdom plan for theirs? The instruction that follows is the parable's cash value: make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations. Money, morally neutral at best and unrighteous in its usual acquisition and grip, can be converted into eternity by one alchemy only, mercy: the poor you befriend with it become your receivers at heaven's door. St. Ambrose preached this conversion constantly: earthly wealth is loaned for mercy's use, and the only riches we keep are the ones we give away. Then the tightening series: faithful in very little, faithful in much (tonight's memory verse); and the flat impossibility, you cannot serve God and mammon, at which the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, scoffed, and Jesus answered that what is exalted among men is an abomination before God. That exchange is the doorway to Lazarus.

The rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31) is the only parable where Jesus gives a name to a character of his own invention, and the naming is the reversal: the beggar at the gate, dogs licking his sores, is Lazarus, God helps, while the rich man in purple and fine linen goes nameless into death. The scene after death, Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, the rich man in torment in Hades, the great chasm fixed, is tonight's steelman ground, and it must be handled with precision. The Catechism teaches the particular judgment from this very text (CCC 1021): each soul receives its eternal retribution at death, no reincarnations, no do-overs, and the parable's finality is real. But the strong Protestant use of the chasm, no one may cross from there to us, therefore purgatory is unbiblical and prayer across death is useless, overreaches the text, and the honest answer is exact: the parable depicts Hades, the intermediate realm of the dead before Christ's resurrection opened heaven, not the final state after judgment; purgatory, in Catholic teaching, is not the far side of that chasm but a purification of the saved on their way to God, a different doctrine with different texts (1 Cor 3:11–15; 2 Macc 12:38–46). The chasm forbids crossing between the damned and the blessed, which the Church affirms as fully as any Reformer. Say what the text teaches,

decline what it does not, and hedge honestly where the Church herself distinguishes. The parable's final blade is apologetic and aimed forward: if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead. Someone will, bearing that very name, and the Sanhedrin's response (Jn 11) will prove the sentence.

Luke 17 gathers sayings: millstones for those who scandalize little ones; the seven-times-a-day forgiveness that makes the apostles beg increase our faith, answered with the mustard seed; and the unworthy servants (17:7–10), which is the study's quiet anti-Pelagian treasure. When you have done all that is commanded, say, we are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty: no creature puts God in debt, and the Catechism cites the Church's whole theology of merit as grace responding to grace, with no strict claim on God arising from our works (CCC 2007). Hold this beside the rewards Luke has promised all along (repaid at the resurrection of the just) and you have Catholic teaching whole: merit is real because God has freely promised to crown his own gifts, never because we have earned wages.

Then the ten lepers (17:11–19), tonight's summit. Between Samaria and Galilee, ten lepers stand at a distance, as the Law required, and cry the Jesus Prayer's ancestor: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. The command is strange until Leviticus is opened: go and show yourselves to the priests. Tonight's live discovery sends the group to Leviticus 14:1–4: the leper's cleansing must be examined and certified by the priest; the rest of the chapter (Leviticus 14:8–10 and following) unfolds the offerings and the eight-day liturgy of restoration to the community and the sanctuary. Jesus, who could heal with a word, deliberately routes the miracle through the ordained mediation his own Law established, and as they went they were cleansed: the healing happens inside the obedience, en route to the priest. The Catholic ear hears the confessional door open: Christ forgives, and Christ has chosen to route the certification and restoration of the healed through priests (Jn 20:23; CCC 1461). Then the tenth turns back, praising God with a loud voice, falls at Jesus' feet,

and Luke writes the participle with a smile: eucharistōn, giving him thanks, the verb of the Eucharist, and now he was a Samaritan. The blessed-outsiders thread reaches its penultimate entry. Jesus' three questions ache: were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? And the tenth receives what the nine did not: rise and go your way; your faith has made you well, sesōken, has saved you. Ten were cleansed; to one alone Jesus says sesōken, a word that means both healed and saved, and what set him apart was the faith that turned back in thanksgiving. Luke's word choice invites the deeper reading; the text passes no sentence on the nine. The nine did nothing wrong: they obeyed, they were healed, they went to the priests. They simply never came back to the Healer, and the Christian life of many a baptized Catholic is nine-tenths of this miracle. The chapter closes with the kingdom in the midst of you and the days of the Son of man, Noah's generation eating and drinking, oblivious, which the Time Note shows how to fold in briefly.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Prov 19:17 He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord: mammon's one conversion — **Lk 16:9**

Amos 6:4–7 Woe to those at ease on beds of ivory, unmoved by ruin at the gate — **Lk 16:19–21**

Deut 24:12–15 The Law's mercy to the poor debtor and the unpaid laborer, whose cry reaches God — **Lk 16:20**

Lev 14:1–4 The priest examines and certifies the cleansed leper — **Lk 17:14**

2 Kgs 5:1-15 Naaman the Syrian: the foreign leper who returned to give thanks — **Lk 17:15-18**

Gen 7:6-23 The days of Noah: the flood comes and sweeps away an unready world; Jesus supplies the eating and drinking — **Lk 17:26-27**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Sermons on Lazarus and the Rich Man (De Lazaro)*)

Chrysostom's seven sermons on tonight's parable shook Antioch: the rich man's sin, he observes, is never named as fraud or violence, only as a gate passed daily without seeing, and not to share our surplus with the poor, Chrysostom insists, is itself a theft from them, for our goods are the Lord's and were entrusted for distribution. Lazarus at the gate was the rich man's daily offer of salvation, declined with every course of every banquet.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the ten lepers*)

Cyril marks the obedience inside the miracle: the lepers were cleansed not where they stood but as they went, faith walking toward the priests before sight had anything to show it. And in the Samaritan's return he finds the sacrifice God prizes: nine carried away their health as a possession; one brought it back as a thanksgiving, and to him alone was it said that faith had saved him, for gratitude is the health of the healed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, on the steward*)

Ambrose refuses to let the shrewd steward scandalize: the Lord commends foresight, not fraud, and instructs us to do with justice what the steward did with cunning, convert what we cannot keep into what we cannot lose. The riches of this world, Ambrose preaches, are alien to us and pass through our hands once; only what is given to the poor travels ahead of us, and the friends mammon makes among them will testify for us at the everlasting doors.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1021-1022 The particular judgment, taught with tonight's Lazarus text: each soul's eternal retribution at death.

CCC 633 Christ's descent to the dead: Abraham's bosom, the abode of the just who awaited the Redeemer.

CCC 2007 No strict merit before God: the unprofitable servants and the theology of grace crowning grace.

CCC 1461 Priests as ministers of reconciliation by Christ's commission; tonight's session hears the Levitical pattern of priestly verification as a fitting foreshadowing.

CCC 1360 The Eucharist as sacrifice of thanksgiving: the tenth leper's verb made the Church's central act.

THREAD WATCH

Blessed outsiders (develops tonight, resolves Session 14): The grateful one was a Samaritan. One entry remains in the tally: a thief, four sessions from now.

Great reversal (develops): Lazarus and the rich man is the Magnificat's starkest illustration: the hungry filled, the rich sent empty away, now with names and eternity attached.

Eucharistic vocabulary (develops, resolves Session 13): Eucharistōn at 17:16 joins take-bless-break-give in the pantry. Name the word tonight; Session 13 spends it.

Today / sēmeron (dormant, develops next session): Next week the title word lands on a tax collector's house. Say nothing.

SESSION GOALS

1. Rescue the dishonest steward from scandal: shrewdness commended, mammon converted by mercy, and the impossibility of two masters.
2. Teach the particular judgment from Lazarus as the Catechism does, and run the chasm steelman with exact honesty about what the text does and does not settle.
3. Bank the unworthy servants as the Church's own grammar of merit and grace.
4. Run the Leviticus 14 discovery: why priests, what the healing en route means, and where the pattern points.
5. Let the tenth leper's eucharistōn name the difference between being cleansed and being saved whole.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If pressed, fold the millstone and mustard-seed material (17:1–6) into leader framing on the way to Q4, and give the days of Noah (17:22–37) one summary sentence inside the Send. Never cut Q2 and Q3 (Lazarus and its steelman), Q5 (the Leviticus discovery), or Q6 (the tenth leper). The steward (Q1) can compress to ten minutes if the group does not flinch at it; budget fifteen if they do.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, ten cried to you for mercy and one came back. Make us the one. Teach us tonight to spend what we cannot keep on what we cannot lose, to see the Lazarus at our own gate, and to return to you with loud thanksgiving, tonight and at every altar, until gratitude becomes our health. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What is the most creative, resourceful thing you have ever done under a deadline? Where does that energy go in your spiritual life?

W2. Think of a gift or a rescue you never properly said thank you for. What kept you from going back?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Two flinch-points tonight: a parable that seems to praise fraud and a parable about hell. Meet both with calm precision; the ANSWER boxes carry the exact distinctions. Then the lepers lift the night: end on gratitude, not on the chasm.

1. Read Luke 16:1–13. Be precise: what exactly does the master commend the steward for, and what does Jesus tell us to imitate? What does make friends by means of unrighteous mammon mean in practice, and who are the they who receive us into eternal habitations?

Leader: *Shrewdness, not dishonesty. The sons of this world plan harder for retirement than the sons of light do for eternity. In the Church's longstanding reading, the friends are the poor; mercy converts mammon. Ambrose in the Voices box.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The commendation is surgical: the master praised the dishonest steward for his **prudence**, his decisive, future-facing shrewdness, never his fraud, and Jesus' application names the shame: the sons of this world out-plan the sons of light. Worldly people mobilize everything for a future that ends; disciples yawn toward a future that does not. The instruction converts the parable to cash: make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, money being unrighteous in its usual grip on us, and the friends, in the tradition's steady reading from Ambrose onward, being the poor, who, received into the eternal habitations ahead of us, become our welcoming committee. Proverbs said it first: he who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord. St. Ambrose's summary is the whole doctrine: convert what you cannot keep into what you cannot lose. Then the ladder tightens to tonight's memory verse, faithful in very little, faithful in much, and snaps shut on the impossibility: you cannot serve God and mammon. Not should not; cannot. Two masters is one too many.

2. Read Luke 16:19–31. Only one character of Jesus' own invention in all his parables has a name (Abraham appears here too, but as a figure of history, not of the story's making). Who gets it, who loses his, and what was the rich man's actual sin? Then map the geography after death: where is each man, what is fixed between them, and what is the rich man's last argument with Abraham about?

***Leader:** Lazarus, God helps, named; the rich man anonymous in death. The sin: the gate, passed daily. Abraham's bosom, Hades, the chasm. The last argument: send someone from the dead to my brothers; they have Moses and the prophets.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The naming is the first reversal: the beggar whom the world stepped over carries a name in heaven, Lazarus, God helps, while purple-and-linen goes into death anonymous. His sin is never named as cruelty; it is the gate: a man at his door, daily, visibly, in need, and a life so upholstered that ruin at the gate never interrupted a single banquet, exactly Amos's woe against those at ease who are not grieved. St. John Chrysostom preached it without anesthesia: the surplus withheld from the poor is theft from them, and Lazarus was the rich man's daily, declined salvation. After death, the geography of Hades: Lazarus carried to Abraham's bosom, the rich man in torment, a great chasm fixed. His pleas descend from water to messengers, and Abraham's last answer is the parable's blade: if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead. A man named Lazarus will rise (Jn 11), and the authorities will plot to kill him; Another will rise, and the guards will be bribed. Evidence was never the shortage. Willingness was.

3. Steelman chain: The strong Protestant argument from this parable: the chasm is fixed, none may cross, therefore purgatory is unbiblical and prayers for the dead are useless. State it at full strength. Then interrogate the text's setting: when does this scene take place relative to Christ's death and resurrection, what realm is it depicting, and what exactly does Catholic teaching claim purgatory is and is not?

***Leader:** Honor the argument; the finality is real and CCC 1021 teaches particular judgment from this text. Then the precision: the scene is Hades before the resurrection opened heaven (CCC 633); purgatory is not the far side of the chasm but the purification of the already-saved; the chasm separates the damned from the blessed, which the Church affirms absolutely. Hedge where the Church hedges.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Grant the steelman its truths first, because they are Catholic truths: death fixes the soul's fundamental state, the Catechism teaches the particular judgment from this very parable (CCC 1021), and no one migrates from damnation to blessedness; the chasm is as fixed for Rome as for Geneva. Where the argument overreaches is in what it makes the chasm separate. The scene is Hades, the realm of the dead before Christ's resurrection, Abraham's bosom being the waiting place of the just to whom Christ descended (CCC 633), not the final heaven and hell after judgment; the parable is a snapshot of the old economy on the eve of its transformation. And purgatory, in the Church's actual teaching, is not the far side of that chasm and never was: it is the purification of those who die in God's friendship, already saved, being made ready for the vision of God, a doctrine resting on other texts (1 Cor 3:11–15; 2 Macc 12:38–46) and on the Church's unbroken practice of praying for her dead. So the honest summary: this parable teaches the finality of judgment and

teaches it hard; it neither mentions nor touches the purification of the saved. We should not claim more, and the steelman should not claim more either. Where Scripture is silent and the Church has spoken, we say so in that order.

DIG DEEPER: UNWORTHY SERVANTS: THE GRAMMAR OF MERIT

Luke 17:7–10 is four verses of anti-Pelagian steel: when you have done all that is commanded, say, we are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty. No creature can put God in debt; obedience pays nothing down, because everything, including the power to obey, was his gift first (CCC 2007). And yet Luke's Jesus keeps promising reward, even, astonishingly, the master who girds himself to serve the watching servants (12:37). Both are true, and together they are the Catholic doctrine of merit: God freely promised to crown his own gifts, so reward is real and debt is never. We are unworthy servants whom the Master, unaccountably, plans to wait on.

4. Read Luke 17:11–14. Ten lepers, standing far off as the Law required, cry: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Now the strange command: instead of healing them on the spot, where does he send them, still leprous? **Live discovery:** find Leviticus 14:1–4 and read what the priest's role is for a cleansed leper. Then look at exactly when in the journey the healing happens.

Leader: The find: the priest examines and certifies the healed leper and offers the restoration liturgy; only the priest's word reopens community and worship. And 17:14: as they went they were cleansed, healing inside the obedience.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Leviticus 14 answers the strangeness: Israel's priests did not heal leprosy, they **verified** its healing, examined the cleansed man, offered the appointed sacrifices, and by their certification restored him to family, community, and sanctuary. Jesus, who heals with a word, deliberately routes his miracle through the mediation his own Law ordained: go show yourselves to the priests, spoken to ten men still covered in the disease, and as they went they were cleansed, the healing occurring inside the walk of obedience, faith moving before sight had anything to report. St. Cyril loved that detail, and a Catholic cannot miss where the pattern points: the risen Christ, who forgives sins by his own authority, chose to route the certification and restoration of the forgiven through priests: if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven (Jn 20:23; CCC 1461). Catholics have long seen in Leviticus 14 a fitting foreshadowing of the confessional, the appointed place where cleansing is spoken over you out loud and you are handed back to the community whole; the sacrament itself rests on Christ's own commission (Jn 20:23; CCC 1461). He could do it all invisibly. He prefers, as at the Jordan and the rooftop and here on the Samaria road, to work through the visible and the ordained.

5. Read Luke 17:15–19. One of the ten turns back. Walk his actions verb by verb, and catch the word Luke uses for what he does at Jesus' feet. Then weigh the three questions Jesus asks, and the difference between what all ten received and what the tenth alone is told.

Leader: Praising God with a loud voice, fell on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: eucharistōn. And he was a Samaritan. Ten cleansed (katharizō); one told your faith has saved you (sōzō). Gratitude is the gap.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The tenth man's return is a one-man liturgy: he saw that he was healed, turned back, praised God with a loud voice, fell on his face at Jesus' feet, *eucharistōn*, giving him thanks, and Luke adds the thread's next stitch: now he was a Samaritan. The verb is the one the Church would build her central act around; falling at Jesus' feet to give thanks is what the word Eucharist means. Jesus' three questions grieve more than they scold: were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? The nine did nothing wrong: they believed enough to walk, they were cleansed, they presumably reached the priests. They took the gift and never returned to the Giver, and to them Luke gives the word *katharizō*, cleansed. To the tenth alone: rise and go your way; your faith has **saved** you, *sesōken*. Ten received the miracle; one returned to the Giver, and what Jesus credits in him is faith, faith whose whole shape was thanksgiving. Luke's two verbs, *katharizō* for the ten and *sōzō* for the one, invite the deeper reading without pronouncing on the nine. A sacramentally busy life that never turns back in gratitude is nine-tenths of this story, which is why the Church begins her greatest prayer: let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

6. Read Luke 17:20–21. The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. Said to Pharisees, with the King standing in front of them: what were they scanning the horizon for, and what were they missing at arm's length? Where does the same mistake happen now?

Leader: Brief closer. They audited signs while the Kingdom stood in sandals in front of them. Bridge gently to the Eucharistic parallel: the King in the midst, overlooked.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The Pharisees were sign-watchers, auditing the horizon for an apocalypse with a timetable, while the kingdom of God stood in the midst of them wearing sandals, healing their lepers, and eating with their sinners. The mistake is perennial: scanning the distance for a God who is at arm's length. The tenth leper is the alternative in one man: he stopped scanning, turned around, and found the kingdom at the feet he fell before. Ask a Catholic congregation where the King is in the midst of them and the tabernacle lamp answers; the question is only whether we are the nine or the one.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Name your gate: the person or need you pass so regularly you have stopped seeing it. What is one concrete act of unrighteous-mammon conversion you could make there this week?

S2. Where are your nine? Count the mercies of the last year you never went back and thanked God for, out loud, at his feet. What would returning look like this week, concretely?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Make one deliberate act of thanksgiving after Communion this week: stay two extra minutes, on your knees, and name the mercies. Be the tenth.
- Convert some mammon: give to one person or cause where repayment is impossible, in honor of

the man at the gate.

- Before next session, read Luke 18:1–19:27: a persistent widow, a Pharisee and a tax collector at prayer, and a small man in a tree. The title word is waiting in that tree.

Scripture memory: **Luke 16:10**, *He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Cleanse what is leprous in us as we walk in obedience, open our eyes to Lazarus at the gate, and turn us back to your feet with loud thanksgiving. Let us not be found among the nine, Lord; make gratitude our health and Eucharist our habit. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 10

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Leviticus 14 is the load-bearing bookmark.

Passage Used for

Luke 16:1–13 Q1: the shrewd steward; two masters

Proverbs 19:17 Q1: lending to the Lord

Luke 16:19–31 Q2-Q3: Lazarus and the rich man

Amos 6:4–7 Q2: woe to those at ease

1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 2 Maccabees 12:38–46

Q3 steelman: where purgatory's texts actually live

Luke 17:7–10 Dig Deeper: unworthy servants; CCC 2007

Luke 17:11–19 Q4-Q5: the ten lepers

Leviticus 14:1–4 Q4 live discovery: the priest verifies the cleansing

John 20:23 Q4: the pattern fulfilled

2 Kings 5:1–15 Background: Naaman, the first grateful foreign leper

Luke 17:20–21 Q6: the kingdom in the midst

CCC 1021–1022, 633, 2007, 1461, 1360 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 18:1–19:27: prayer, humility, and Zacchaeus. Bookmark Exodus 22:1; a tax collector in a sycamore is about to out-repay the Law of Moses, and the group should do the math themselves.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 11

Today Salvation Has Come

Luke 18:1–19:27

Two men at prayer, a rich ruler, a blind beggar, and a small man in a sycamore

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants watch a tax collector go home justified on nothing but mercy begged from a distance, then climb a sycamore with another tax collector and do the math of Exodus 22 on his fourfold restitution: grace received becomes justice exceeded, and the study's title word lands on his house: today salvation has come.

Catholic Touchstone: Humility as the foundation of prayer, taught by the Catechism from tonight's parable; justification as unmerited grace, where Catholics and Protestants agree more than either side's polemics admit, handled with a careful steelman; spiritual childhood, with St. Thérèse as its Doctor; and restitution as repentance's receipt (CCC 2412).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke brackets tonight's text with prayer parables. The persistent widow (18:1–8) is told, Luke says up front, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart: an unjust judge who fears neither God nor man is worn down by a widow's relentlessness, and the argument runs from lesser to greater: if attrition works on the corrupt, how much more will the just Father vindicate his elect who cry to him day and night. The parable ends on the question that haunts the journey: when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth? Persistence in prayer is that faith's pulse.

The Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9–14) is aimed, Luke tells us, at some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. Read the Pharisee's prayer carefully: it is factually accurate. He does fast twice a week; he does tithe; he is not an extortioner. His prayer fails not by lying but by geometry: standing with himself, he prays to himself about himself, God I thank thee that I am not like other men, and the tax collector supplies his final comparison. The tax collector stands far off, will not lift his eyes, beats his breast (the gesture the Church still makes at the Confiteor), and prays seven words: God, be merciful to me a sinner. Jesus' verdict uses the word on which the Reformation fought: this man went down to his house justified, *dedikaiōmenos*, rather than the other. Tonight's steelman takes the strong Protestant reading at full strength: here is *sola fide* in miniature, a man declared righteous by trusting divine mercy alone, no works in sight, and the Catholic answer must begin with agreement, because the Council of Trent teaches exactly that nothing preceding justification, neither faith nor works, merits its grace: initial justification is utterly unearned, and the tax collector is its icon. What the parable does not adjudicate is what justification is (a bare declaration or a real transformation), whether it grows, and whether it can be lost, the questions on which the sides actually divide; and Luke himself will show tonight what justified mercy does the moment it stands up, in a tax collector named Zacchaeus. The Catechism sets tonight's parable at the head of its teaching on humility in prayer, and prayer's whole foundation is here: man is a beggar before God.

The infants brought for touching (18:15–17) draw the disciples' rebuke and the Lord's counter-rebuke: to such belongs the kingdom of God, and whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it. Receive is the verb to press: a child cannot earn, buy, or achieve; a child can only be given to, which makes spiritual childhood the posture the tax collector just modeled and the rich ruler is about to

fail. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church, built her little way on precisely this text: remaining little means expecting everything from God as a child expects everything from its father, and her doctrine is the parable's finest modern commentary. The rich ruler (18:18–30) arrives with the right question and the wrong ballast: good teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He has kept the commandments from his youth, and Jesus names the one thing lacking (in Mark's parallel, Jesus looks at him and loves him, Mark 10:21): sell all, distribute to the poor, treasure in heaven, come follow me. The man became sad, for he was very rich, and Jesus' camel-through-a-needle's-eye draws the crowd's despairing question, then who can be saved?, answered by the Gospel's whole hope: what is impossible with men is possible with God. Hold that sentence; Zacchaeus is its proof, one chapter later: a camel is about to go through the needle's eye, because God can thread it.

The third passion prediction (18:31–34) falls again on sealed understanding, and then, near Jericho, the blind beggar (18:35–43) cries the prayer the Church never stopped praying: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Rebuked by the crowd, he cries the more, is called, asks plainly (let me receive my sight), and follows, glorifying God. His cry is the root of the Jesus Prayer, and his Son of David is the journey's first public messianic title, shouted at the city gates' approach. Then Jericho, and Zacchaeus (19:1–10): a chief tax collector, rich, small of stature, running ahead like a child and climbing a sycamore, undignified and undeterred, to see who Jesus was. Jesus stops under the tree, calls him by name, and self-invites with the study's word: Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today. The crowd murmurs the meals-thread murmur (he has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner), and Zacchaeus stands and answers with receipts: half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold. Tonight's live discovery sends the group to Exodus 22:1: fourfold restitution is the Law's penalty for a stolen sheep killed or sold (a stolen ox cost fivefold), far beyond the ordinary fraud rule of principal plus a fifth, and Zacchaeus volunteers the sheep-thief's penalty across the board while also halving his fortune for the poor, repentance outbidding the statute. The Catechism cites his pledge in its teaching on restitution (CCC 2412): stolen goods must go back, and mercy received becomes justice performed. Then the title verse: today, sēmeron, salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham; and the journey's thesis: the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost, the shepherd of chapter 15 signing his own parable. The pounds (19:11–27) close the section as Jerusalem nears: a nobleman gone to receive a kingdom, servants trading in his absence, and a warning against burying what was given for increase; supposing the kingdom was to appear immediately was the crowd's mistake, and stewardship in the interval is the correction.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Sir 35:17–22 (Sirach) The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds; the Lord will not delay — **Lk 18:1–8**

Ps 51:1, 17 Have mercy on me, O God; a broken and contrite heart — **Lk 18:13**

Ex 22:1 Fourfold restitution for a stolen sheep killed or sold; fivefold for an ox — **Lk 19:8**

Ezek 34:16 I will seek the lost and bring back the strayed — **Lk 19:10**

2 Sam 7 with Isa 11:1 Son of David: the messianic title cried at Jericho — **Lk 18:38–39**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Sermon 115, on the Pharisee and the tax collector*)

Augustine diagnoses the Pharisee's prayer as a journey that never left home: he went up to pray and preferred to praise himself, and asking nothing, he received nothing. The tax collector stood far off, Augustine preaches, yet God was near; he dared not lift his eyes, and the one who made eyes looked upon him. He kept no merits in view, and so mercy had room to work; for the physician comes to the one who shows the wound, not to the one who hides it under trophies.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (*Story of a Soul; Her Last Conversations*)

Thérèse, Doctor of the little way, made the Gospel's call to become like a child her entire theology: to remain little, she said in her last conversations, is to recognize one's nothingness and expect everything from the good God, as a small child expects everything from its father, worrying about nothing, earning nothing, and glorying in one's poverty because it is precisely the empty hands that the Father delights to fill. Sanctity, she insisted, is not a ladder of achievements but an elevator, the arms of Jesus, for those small enough to be picked up, an image she set down in *Story of a Soul* (Manuscript C).

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on Zacchaeus*)

Cyril delights in the sycamore: the man too small to see over the crowd was not too proud to climb like a boy, and curiosity carried him where dignity never would have. Christ, who calls whom he already sees, summoned him by name and lodged with him before any amends were spoken, and grace so received became munificence: the extortioner turned distributor, restoring fourfold what fraud had taken, so that the house that had been a counting-table of injustice heard salvation pronounced over it in a day.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 2559 Humility as the foundation of prayer: man is a beggar before God, taught with tonight's tax collector in view.

CCC 2613 Luke's three parables of prayer: the friend at midnight, the widow, and the Pharisee and tax collector.

CCC 1987–1992, 2010 Justification: conversion as grace's work from first to last; no one merits the initial grace of forgiveness.

CCC 2412 Restitution: commutative justice requiring return of stolen goods, with Zacchaeus's pledge cited.

CCC 2667 The Jesus Prayer: the blind beggar's cry become the Church's ceaseless breath.

THREAD WATCH

Today / sēmeron (DEVELOPS TONIGHT, resolves Session 14): 19:5 and 19:9: I must stay at your house today; today salvation has come to this house. Have the group say the tally aloud: 2:11, 4:21, 19:5, 19:9. One more remains, and it will be spoken from a cross.

Lost and found (RESOLVES TONIGHT): 19:10 is the shepherd of chapter 15 signing his work: the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost. Close the loop from Session 9 out loud.

Meals with sinners (develops): The murmur at 19:7 is 15:2 verbatim in spirit. One table remains after this one.

Exalted and humbled (develops): 18:14 repeats 14:11 word for word. Luke says nothing twice by accident.

SESSION GOALS

1. Ground perseverance in prayer with the widow, and humility in prayer with the tax collector, as the Catechism does.
2. Run the justification steelman with genuine charity: agree where Trent agrees, locate the real disputes precisely, and let Zacchaeus embody what justified mercy does.
3. Set spiritual childhood between the infants and the rich ruler, with St. Thérèse as guide.
4. Pray the blind beggar's cry and name it as the Jesus Prayer's root.
5. Run the Exodus 22 discovery on Zacchaeus's fourfold pledge, and let the title word land on his house with full weight.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If pressed, take the widow (Q1) in five brisk minutes, fold the third passion prediction into your framing of Q5, and let the pounds live in the Dig Deeper box alone. Never cut Q2 and Q3 (the tax collector and the steelman) or Q6 (Zacchaeus and the discovery); tonight exists to put those two tax collectors side by side.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *God, be merciful to us sinners. Teach us tonight to pray without losing heart, to stand in the back with empty hands, and to climb whatever we must climb to see Jesus. And if you should stop under our tree and call our name, give us Zacchaeus's haste, and his joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What is something you kept asking for, long past the point of reasonableness, that you eventually received? What kept you asking?

W2. When you pray, honestly: do you come with a case to present, or with empty hands? What built that habit?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight's architecture is two tax collectors: one justified in the temple at Q2, one transformed in Jericho at Q6, and the road between them runs through children, a rich man, and a blind beggar. Keep pointing forward: the man in the temple shows what grace receives; the man in the tree shows what grace does.

1. Read Luke 18:1–8. Luke gives away the moral before the story: always pray, never lose heart. How does the argument from the unjust judge actually work, and what makes verse 8's closing question so unsettling after such an encouraging parable?

Leader: *Lesser to greater: if attrition moves the corrupt, how much more the just Father. Verse 8 flips the lens: the question is not whether God will answer but whether persistent faith will still exist to be found.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The argument is a fortiori, from lesser to greater: if a judge who fears neither God nor man finally vindicates a widow just to stop the pounding, how much more will the just Father vindicate his elect who cry to him day and night? God is not the unjust judge but his opposite; the widow's only leverage was persistence, while ours is a Father's love. Sirach promised it long before: the prayer of the humble pierces the clouds. But verse 8 turns the parable around to face us: when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth? Heaven's willingness was never in question; earth's perseverance is. The widow is not a technique for moving God. She is a portrait of the faith he hopes to find still knocking when he returns.

2. Read Luke 18:9–14 slowly. Fact-check the Pharisee's prayer: is anything he says false? Then where does it fail? Now the tax collector: his posture, his gesture, his seven words. And weigh the verdict's exact wording: this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

***Leader:** The Pharisee's resume is accurate; the failure is the geometry (prays with himself, thanks God he is not like other men, needs the tax collector as a foil). The gesture at the breast survives in the Confiteor. Justified, *dedikaiōmenos*: hold the word for Q3.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Nothing the Pharisee says is false, and that is the trap: he really does fast and tithe, and he is genuinely not an extortioner. His prayer fails by direction, not by data. Luke says he prayed thus with himself, a closed circuit: five sentences, one thank-you whose content is comparison, and a tax collector conscripted as the measuring stick. He asks for nothing, so, as St. Augustine preached, he receives nothing; the physician passes by the man hiding his wound under trophies. The tax collector's whole liturgy is distance, downcast eyes, a fist on the breast (the Church still makes his gesture at the Confiteor: through my fault), and seven words that echo the Miserere: God, be merciful to me a sinner. And the verdict lands on the Reformation's own word: this man went down to his house **justified**, *dedikaiōmenos*, rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted, 14:11 repeated to the letter. Hold that word justified with both hands; the next question is about it.

3. Steelman chain: The strong Protestant reading of this parable: here is justification by faith alone in one scene, a sinner declared righteous by casting himself on mercy, with no works, no sacraments, no cooperation in sight, and Catholic theology complicates what Jesus made simple. Give that reading its full force. Then test it: what does the Council of Trent actually teach about how justification begins? And what does this parable leave unsettled about what justification is and what it does next?

***Leader:** Begin with agreement: Trent teaches initial justification is utterly unmerited; the tax collector is common ground, not contested ground. The real disputes: is justification declaration only or transformation; does it grow; can it be lost. The parable does not adjudicate those. Zacchaeus, three questions from now, shows justified mercy in motion.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Begin where honesty begins: the steelman's central claim is one the Catholic Church teaches. The Council of Trent is explicit that nothing preceding justification, neither faith nor works, merits the grace of justification; it is given freely, and the sinner's part at the threshold is exactly this man's: empty hands and a plea for mercy, a plea Trent describes as itself grace-enabled, the free assent and cooperation of a heart already moved by prevenient grace (Session VI, ch. 5), meriting nothing. So the tax collector is not Protestant property; he is common ground, and Catholics should say so gladly. What the parable does not settle are the questions on which the traditions actually divide: whether justification is itself a forensic declaration of righteousness, with real inner renewal assigned to a distinct and inseparable work of sanctification (the classical Protestant view), or an infused grace that itself transforms, God's love poured into the heart making the sinner truly just (the Catholic view); whether it grows through a life of faith working in love; whether it can be forfeited by grave sin and restored in penance. On those, tonight's text is silent, and forcing it to speak either way abuses it. But Luke is not silent for long: in half a chapter another tax collector will receive mercy at his own table, and we will get to watch what justification does when it stands up, half to the poor, fourfold to the defrauded. Grace that is real grows hands (CCC 1987–1992, 2010).

4. Read Luke 18:15–30. Two receptions of the kingdom, side by side: infants who can only receive, and a ruler who has kept everything and owns everything. What does receive the kingdom like a child actually mean, what one thing does the rich ruler lack, and what is the crowd's despairing question answered with?

Leader: Receive is the verb: children cannot earn. St. Thérèse in the Voices box is the commentary. The ruler lacks lack itself. And 18:27 is the hinge Zacchaeus will prove: what is impossible with men is possible with God.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke has set a deliberate diptych. On one panel, infants, brought, carried, capable of nothing but being given to, and Jesus rules: to such belongs the kingdom, and whoever does not receive it like a child shall not enter. The verb is the theology: children do not earn, negotiate, or achieve; they receive, which is what the tax collector just did and what St. Thérèse turned into a doctrine, expecting everything from the good God as a child from its father, glorying in the empty hands he delights to fill. On the other panel, a ruler with full hands: commandments kept from youth, wealth secured, and one thing lacking, the lack itself. Sell all, give to the poor, come follow me is not a universal tariff but this man's one door, and he went away sad, for he was very rich: the only person in the Gospel who leaves Jesus sad, sadness being what unfollowed vocation feels like. The camel and the needle's eye wring from the crowd the right despair, then who can be saved?, and receive the Gospel's whole answer: what is impossible with men is possible with God. Keep that sentence loaded. In the next chapter, God threads the needle, and the camel's name is Zacchaeus.

5. Read Luke 18:35–43. The blind beggar at Jericho: what does he cry, what does the crowd do, and what does he do about the crowd? What title does he give Jesus, and why does that matter this close to Jerusalem? The Church never stopped praying his prayer; where does it live now?

Leader: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me: the first public messianic title of the journey, shouted louder under rebuke. The Jesus Prayer (CCC 2667). He follows, glorifying God.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The beggar cannot see Jesus, but he has heard enough to name him better than the seeing crowd: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me, the covenant title of 2 Samuel 7 shouted in public for the first time on this journey, at Jericho, the last stop before Jerusalem. The crowd's rebuke is a hinge: silenced, he cried out all the more, persistence (Q1's widow) and humility (Q2's tax collector) fused in one voice. Jesus stops, has him called, asks the question he asks every one of us, what do you want me to do for you?, and the man wastes no syllables: Lord, let me receive my sight. Healed, he follows him, glorifying God, sight's first use being discipleship. And his prayer outlived him: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me became the Jesus Prayer of the Church's unceasing breath, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner (CCC 2667). The beggar of Jericho taught the Church how to pray without ceasing: one sentence, all beggary, all faith.

6. Read Luke 19:1–10. Gather Zacchaeus's file: his job, his wealth, his height, and what he is willing to look like to see Jesus. Then the two todays (19:5, 19:9). **Live discovery:** when Zacchaeus pledges fourfold restitution, he is quoting a statute. Find Exodus 22:1 and do the math: what did the Law require, for

what crime, and what has Zacchaeus volunteered on top of it? Then weigh 19:10 against the parable of the lost sheep.

***Leader:** Chief tax collector, rich, small, running ahead and climbing like a boy: dignity spent for sight. Ex 22:1: fourfold for a stolen sheep killed or sold (fivefold for an ox); Zacchaeus applies the sheep-thief's penalty across the board and halves his goods besides. CCC 2412 cites him. 19:10 signs chapter 15.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Zacchaeus is the rich ruler's mirror image: also wealthy, also seeking, but small enough, in every sense, to run ahead and climb a tree like a boy, spending his dignity to buy a sightline, receiving the kingdom like a child in the most literal posture in the Gospels. Jesus stops, calls him by name, and self-invites with the study's own word: make haste and come down, for I must stay at your house **today**. The murmur of 15:2 rises on cue, and Zacchaeus answers it standing, with receipts: half of my goods to the poor, and fourfold to anyone defrauded. The group's math tells the story: Exodus 22:1 sets fourfold restitution as the penalty for stealing a sheep and killing or selling it, theft with no way back (a stolen ox cost fivefold); ordinary fraud owed the principal plus a fifth (Lev 6:5). Zacchaeus volunteers the sheep-thief's full tariff across his whole ledger and liquidates half his fortune besides: repentance outbidding the statute, mercy received becoming justice exceeded, the exact transformation Q3 said to watch for, and the Catechism's own example of restitution (CCC 2412). Then the two verdicts: **today** salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham, sēmeron's fourth landing (2:11, 4:21, 19:5, 19:9, one remains); and the journey's thesis, the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost: the shepherd of chapter 15, signing his own parable under a sycamore. The camel is through the needle. God threaded it.

DIG DEEPER: THE POUNDS AND THE INTERVAL

Luke appends the parable of the pounds (19:11–27) because they supposed the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. A nobleman departs to receive a kingdom; servants trade with his pounds in the interval; and the reckoning honors increase and condemns the napkin burial of a gift. The correction aims at every generation's apocalyptic impatience: between the sycamore and the Second Coming stretches the age of stewardship, and the question at the audit will not be did you predict the timing but what did you do with what you were handed. Trade with these till I come (19:13) is the Church's whole job description in six words.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Whose prayer is yours this season, honestly: the Pharisee's inventory or the tax collector's seven words? Try praying only God, be merciful to me a sinner for two minutes tonight and notice what it costs you to ask for nothing else.

S2. Zacchaeus's repentance had receipts. Is there anything in your life, money, reputation, time, a relationship, that conversion would require you to actually pay back? What would fourfold look like?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray the Jesus Prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner, on your

commute or in line, until the beggar's cry becomes your breath.

- Make one act of restitution this week: a debt repaid, an apology owed, something returned. Let repentance write a receipt.
- Before next session, read Luke 19:28–21:38: the entry into Jerusalem. Watch what the crowd shouts at the gates, and remember Session 8's closing verse.

Scripture memory: **Luke 18:13**, *God, be merciful to me a sinner!* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us. Find us in whatever tree we have climbed to see you, call us by name, and stay in our house today. Make our repentance concrete, our hands empty, and our hearts small enough for your kingdom, for you came to seek and to save the lost, and we are they. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 11

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Exodus 22:1 is the discovery bookmark; Psalm 51 stands behind the tax collector.

Passage Used for

Luke 18:1–8 Q1: the persistent widow

Sirach 35:17–22 Q1: the humble prayer that pierces clouds

Luke 18:9–14 Q2-Q3: Pharisee and tax collector; dedikaiōmenos

Psalm 51:1, 17 Q2: the Miserere behind the seven words

Luke 18:15–30 Q4: the children and the rich ruler

Luke 18:35–43 Q5: the blind beggar; the Jesus Prayer

Luke 19:1–10 Q6: Zacchaeus; sēmeron twice

Exodus 22:1 Q6 live discovery: fourfold restitution

Leviticus 6:1–5 Q6: the ordinary fraud tariff, for contrast

Luke 19:11–27 Dig Deeper: the pounds

CCC 2559, 2613, 1987–1992, 2010, 2412, 2667 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 19:28–21:38: the entry, the temple, and the Olivet discourse. Bookmark Psalm 118:26 and keep Session 8's lament in mind; also flag Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11 together, for a discovery inside the temple.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 12

The Stones Would Cry Out

Luke 19:28-21:38

The King at the gates, tears over the city, fire in the temple, and two copper coins

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants hear the crowd shout the very verse Session 8 planted (blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the Gospels' rendering of Ps 118:26), watch Jesus weep over the city that missed its visitation, and discover inside the temple cleansing that Jesus has fused two prophets in one sentence: Isaiah's house of prayer and Jeremiah's den of robbers, the second carrying Jeremiah's whole warning of the temple's destruction.

Catholic Touchstone: The kingship of Christ entering in meekness (Zech 9:9); the time of our own visitation (CCC 558 grieves with tonight's lament); the God of the living from the burning bush; the widow's two coins as the Gospel's economics; and an honest, careful answer to the sharpest skeptical attack on Jesus' credibility: this generation will not pass away.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The entry (19:28-40) is deliberate prophecy theater. Jesus, who has walked ten chapters, now commandeers a colt on which no one has ever sat and rides the last two miles, because Zechariah 9:9 says the king comes to Zion humble and riding on a colt, and he intends to be seen fulfilling it. The multitude of disciples spreads garments on the road (the gesture made for Jehu's coronation, 2 Kgs 9:13) and shouts the pilgrim psalm with one loaded addition: blessed is the KING who comes in the name of the Lord. That is Psalm 118:26, and your group heard Jesus quote it at the end of Session 8: you will not see me until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Let them make that connection themselves; it is the night's first payoff. When Pharisees demand he silence the acclamation, his answer gives tonight its title: if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. Creation itself is pregnant with this announcement; Habakkuk 2:11, the stone crying from the wall, is the nearest Old Testament echo of the image, though Luke does not name it.

Then Luke alone gives us the King in tears (19:41-44). Cresting the ridge where the city spreads out golden across the valley, Jesus wept over it: would that even today you knew the things that make for peace. He sees forty years ahead with terrible precision, a bank thrown up, encirclement, children dashed within the walls, not one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation. The word is *episkopē*, God's own coming-to-look-after, and the Catechism grieves with this scene: Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (CCC 558 territory). Keep the word visitation glowing; it is the tragic inverse of everything Zechariah sang in Session 1 (he has visited and redeemed his people, 1:68) and the hinge of tonight's application: every soul has its hour of visitation, and it can be missed.

The cleansing (19:45-46) is brief in Luke and surgical: he drove out the sellers, and his one-sentence homily is tonight's live discovery. My house shall be a house of prayer is Isaiah 56:7, from an oracle promising that foreigners and eunuchs, the excluded, will one day pray in God's house, for all peoples. But you have made it a den of robbers is Jeremiah 7:11, and the group must read Jeremiah 7 in context to feel the blade: it is the temple sermon, where Jeremiah stands at the gate and warns that trusting the temple of the Lord as a talisman while practicing injustice will end with the house destroyed like Shiloh.

A den of robbers is not where robbery happens; it is where robbers run to feel safe. By splicing these two texts, Jesus both indicts the temple's present and prophesies its future in seven words, which is why the authorities immediately seek to destroy him and why the Olivet discourse two chapters later is the same sentence expanded. The controversies that follow (20:1-47) are a gauntlet of traps he reverses one by one: the question of authority answered with a question about John; the wicked tenants ending in Psalm 118:22, the very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner (the entry psalm again, now aimed at his rejecters); the tribute coin, whose image and inscription has this? render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's, the unasked question being whose image is on you; and the Sadducees' resurrection riddle answered from the books of Moses, an authority they could not evade, at the burning bush: God said I AM the God of Abraham, present tense, of dead men, therefore he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him. He closes by putting his own riddle from Psalm 110 (David's Lord) and warning against the scribes who devour widows' houses, which cues Luke's cut to an actual widow.

The widow's mite (21:1-4) is two verses and an abyss: rich gifts poured in out of abundance, and two lepta, the smallest coins in circulation in Judea, out of her poverty; she put in all the living that she had. Jesus does not romanticize her poverty; he re-prices the treasury: heaven audits gifts by what remains after, not by what was given, and by that arithmetic she out-gave everyone. St. Bede's comment carries the tradition: her two coins have been read as love of God and love of neighbor, the whole Law dropped into the box by the person the scribes were devouring. Then Olivet (21:5-36), and prepare carefully, because tonight's steelman is the sharpest skeptical attack on Jesus in print: this generation will not pass away till all has taken place (21:32), which Bertrand Russell and many since have read as a failed end-of-the-world prediction. Give the objection full strength, then work the text: the disciples' question was about the temple (when will this be, 21:7), and the discourse's core prophecy, Jerusalem surrounded by armies, its desolation, the days of vengeance, not one stone upon another, was fulfilled to the letter in AD 70, almost exactly forty years, one biblical generation, after the words were spoken. Luke's Jesus even separates the horizons explicitly: Jerusalem trodden down until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (21:24) opens an unmeasured age between the temple's fall and the Son of man's coming. The honest answer, then: the this-generation prophecy attached to the temple was kept, spectacularly and datably; the cosmic consummation is given no date at all, indeed but of that day nothing is scheduled, and the Church reads the fall of Jerusalem as itself a sign and type of the end (prophetic foreshortening, near and far horizons in one vista), while the Magisterium has defined no timetable, and neither should we. The discourse ends where Session 8's Passover posture pointed: watch at all times, praying for strength, and the chapter closes with Jesus teaching daily in the temple, the people rising early to hear him, the calm before chapter 22.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Zech 9:9 Your king comes to you, humble and riding on a colt — **Lk 19:28-38**

Ps 118:26 The blessing on the one who comes in the name of the Lord, quoted in its Gospel wording (planted Session 8) — **Lk 19:38**

2 Kgs 9:13 Garments spread for a king's acclamation — **Lk 19:36**

Hab 2:11 The stone will cry out from the wall (a likely echo) — **Lk 19:40**

Isa 56:7 My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples — **Lk 19:46**

Jer 7:1-15 The den of robbers and the temple's Shiloh warning — **Lk 19:46**

Ps 118:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner — **Lk 20:17**

Ex 3:6 I AM the God of Abraham: the bush and the living — **Lk 20:37-38**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book IX*)

Ambrose lingers where Luke lingers, on the tears: the Lord weeps over Jerusalem because Jerusalem would not weep for herself, and his tears, Ambrose says, are the tears of the whole Christ, grieving for every soul that fortifies itself against its own peace. He wept for the city that stoned the prophets; he weeps still, Ambrose insists, wherever the day of visitation passes a barred gate, for what he foresaw in her he forewarns in us.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable (*Commentary on Luke, on the widow's two coins*)

Bede weighs the treasury as heaven does: the rich cast in from their overflow, but the widow's two small coins were her whole substance, and therefore the greater gift, since God measures the hand by the heart and the offering by what it leaves behind. In her two coins the tradition Bede carries sees the two loves, of God and of neighbor, the whole Law given at once; whoever offers God his entire living, however small it rings in the box, has out-given the wealthy.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the entry and the discourse*)

Cyril hears in the colt never ridden the untamed nations now bearing the King in meekness, and in the crowd's psalm the Church's own unending acclamation. Of the discourse he counsels the balance the Lord himself struck: the doom of the temple was spoken plainly and history performed it, but of the final day the Master gave watchfulness instead of a calendar, for he would have his servants found working, not calculating.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 557-560 The ascent to Jerusalem and the messianic entry: the King received by children and the humble, the time of visitation.

CCC 583-586 Jesus and the Temple: honored, cleansed, identified with his own body, its ruin foretold.

CCC 671-675 The time of the Church between Ascension and return: the times of the Gentiles, the final trial, no date given.

CCC 992-996 The resurrection of the dead: God of the living, revealed to Moses at the bush and confirmed by Christ.

CCC 2612 Watch and pray: vigilance as the discourse's abiding command.

THREAD WATCH

Blessed is he who comes (RESOLVES TONIGHT): Ps 118:26 shouted at the gates fulfills 13:35 exactly. Let the group find it; if no one does, read 13:35 aloud and wait.

Temple bookends (develops, resolves Session 14): The Gospel that opened at the altar of incense now fills the temple courts with its Lord teaching daily. One temple scene remains, at 24:53.

The stone (develops tonight): Stones that would cry out (19:40), the rejected cornerstone (20:17), not one stone upon another (21:6). Luke is building in stone; name the motif.

Visitation (tonight's ache): Episkopē at 19:44 is Zechariah's Benedictus verb (1:68) in tragic reverse. Connect them if the group has energy; it is the study's saddest rhyme.

Passover posture and the master who serves (dormant, resolve NEXT session): Session 13 is the upper room. Remind them to reread 12:35-37 before coming.

SESSION GOALS

1. Stage the entry as fulfilled prophecy: Zechariah's colt, Jehu's garments, and the Session 8 payoff of Psalm 118:26.
2. Sit with the weeping King and the word visitation until its personal edge is felt.
3. Run the Isaiah 56 / Jeremiah 7 discovery and let the group find the destruction warning hidden in den of robbers.
4. Work the burning bush argument and the widow's arithmetic as two miniatures of Luke's God: of the living, and of the poor.
5. Give the this-generation steelman its full force and answer it with dates, texts, and honest hedging where the Church herself gives no timetable.

Time Note (75-90 minutes)

Three chapters tonight; the controversies must be triaged. If pressed, take the authority question and the tenants (20:1-19) in leader framing with Ps 118:22 read aloud, and give the tribute coin one exchange rather than a full question. Never cut Q1-Q2 (entry and tears), Q3 (the temple discovery), or Q6 (the steelman); and keep five minutes for the widow, who must not be squeezed out by the apocalypse, since that would repeat the scribes' crime by scheduling.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, King who comes in the name of the Lord, ride into every gate we have barred against you. Give us eyes for the time of our visitation, hearts that make your house a house of prayer, and hands like the widow's, that hold nothing back. Blessed are you, now and at the hour of your coming. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. Have you ever recognized only afterward that a moment was once-in-a-lifetime while it was happening? What did missing it, or catching it, teach you?

W2. What is the smallest gift you have ever received that turned out to be the largest? What made its size deceptive?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50-60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight opens with a payoff (let them find Ps 118:26 themselves) and closes with the study's most delicate steelman. Keep the middle brisk; the controversies reward summary better than any other section of Luke. And do not let the evening end on AD 70: end on the widow and on watch and pray.

1. Read Luke 19:28-40. Everything here is staged: the colt no one has ridden, the garments on the road, the psalm. Find Zechariah 9:9 and 2 Kings 9:13 for the props. Then the shout itself, verse 38: where has this study heard blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord before, and from whose mouth?

Leader: *Zechariah's meek king on a colt; Jehu's coronation garments. Then let them dig: Lk 13:35, Session 8's closing verse, you will not see me until you say... The crowd is saying it. If no one remembers, read 13:35 and watch the room.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Jesus choreographs his own arrival: the untamed colt is Zechariah 9:9's mount for the humble king, the garments on the road are Jehu's coronation carpet, and the pilgrim crowd sings Psalm 118:26 with an addition Luke alone records: blessed is the **King** who comes in the name of the Lord. And the study has been waiting for this sentence since Session 8: you will not see me, he said over the city, until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (13:35). The condition is being fulfilled at the gates, out loud, by the disciples if not yet by the city's rulers, which is exactly the tension of the scene. When the Pharisees demand silence, the answer is tonight's title: if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. The announcement is not optional; creation itself is loaded with it, as Habakkuk heard the stone cry out from the wall. Kingship this humble can be refused, but it cannot be hushed.

2. Read Luke 19:41-44 slowly; only Luke records it. The King, mid-parade, weeps. What does he see coming, with what detail, and what reason does he give in verse 44? Then set the word visitation beside Zechariah's song in 1:68. What has Jerusalem missed?

Leader: The siege foreseen: bank, encirclement, children, no stone on stone. Because you did not know the time of your visitation, episkopē. Benedictus: he has visited and redeemed his people. The visitation came in person and was not recognized.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

At the summit of his own triumphal entry, Jesus breaks down over the city: would that even today you knew the things that make for peace. He describes the future with a war correspondent's detail, a bank thrown up, encirclement on every side, children dashed within the walls, not one stone upon another, the siege of AD 70 four decades early, and gives the reason in one clause: because you did not know the time of your **visitation**, *episkopē*, God's own coming-to-look-after. The study's saddest rhyme sounds here: Zechariah opened this Gospel singing blessed be the Lord, for he has **visited** and redeemed his people (1:68), and now the Visitation rides through the gate in person, weeping, unrecognized by the city built to receive him. St. Ambrose would not let his hearers stand safely outside the scene: the Lord weeps wherever the day of visitation passes a barred gate. Every life gets its Palm Sunday; the only question the tears ask is whether we will know ours when it crests the hill.

3. **Live discovery:** Read Luke 19:45-46. Jesus' one-sentence homily splices two prophets. Find Isaiah 56:6-7 and read who that house of prayer was promised to. Then find Jeremiah 7:1-15, the temple sermon, and read what den of robbers meant in its own context, and what Jeremiah said would happen to the house. What has Jesus said in seven words?

Leader: Isaiah: the excluded, foreigners and eunuchs, welcomed to a house of prayer for all peoples. Jeremiah: robbers' den = the hideout where the unjust feel safe; the warning: I will do to this house as I did to Shiloh, destruction. Jesus has indicted the present and prophesied the end in one sentence.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The splice is the sermon. My house shall be a house of prayer is Isaiah 56:7, and its context is an open door: foreigners and eunuchs, the categorically excluded, promised joy in God's house, for all peoples, and by the usual reconstruction of the temple courts (compare Mark 11:17, a house of prayer for all the nations), the commerce Jesus overturns had set up in the court of the Gentiles, the one space the nations had. But you have made it a den of robbers detonates Jeremiah 7: in the temple sermon, a den of robbers is not where crime occurs but where criminals **retreat to feel safe**, and Jeremiah's verdict on a temple used as a talisman over an unjust life was Shiloh: I will destroy this house. So in seven words Jesus has done two things at once: indicted the temple's present (exclusion and false security where Isaiah promised welcome and prayer) and invoked the sentence hanging over its future, the same sentence his tears just pronounced on the ridge, and the same one the Olivet discourse will expand: not one stone upon another. The authorities heard both perfectly, which is why 19:47 says they sought to destroy him. Prophets who quote Jeremiah 7 inside the temple do not die of old age.

4. Read Luke 20:27-40. The Sadducees, who deny resurrection and give the books of Moses pride of place, bring their seven-husbands riddle. Watch how Jesus answers: first about the age to come, then from Moses, the authority they could not evade. What does he draw out of the burning bush, and what does for all live to him mean?

Leader: He corrects their premise (resurrection life is not marriage resumed) and then argues from Ex 3:6's present tense: I AM the God of Abraham, spoken centuries after Abraham died. God is not God of the dead. Even the scribes applaud.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The riddle assumes the resurrection is this life extended, so Jesus corrects the premise first: those accounted worthy of that age neither marry nor die, being sons of God, sons of the resurrection; marriage, ordered to an age where death makes new generations necessary, is fulfilled rather than resumed. Then he meets the Sadducees inside their own canon, at the bush: God said to Moses, I AM the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, present tense, spoken centuries after their funerals. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him. If the covenant God still introduces himself by the patriarchs' names, the patriarchs are not gone; they are his, and what is his, lives. The Catechism carries the argument forward into our creed (CCC 992-996): resurrection faith rests not on speculation about souls but on who God is, the living God who does not sign his name to corpses. Even the scribes said teacher, you have spoken well, the gauntlet's only applause.

5. Read Luke 20:45-21:4 as one scene: the scribes who devour widows' houses, then the widow at the treasury. What is Luke doing with that cut? Do the arithmetic of verse 4: how does heaven price the two lepta above the large gifts, and what did the gift cost her?

Leader: The juxtaposition is the point: the devoured widow out-gives the devourers' patrons. Heaven audits by remainder: they gave out of abundance; she, out of poverty, gave all the living she had. Bede's two loves in the Voices box.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke's editing preaches: one verse after Jesus condemns scribes who devour widows' houses, a widow appears with two lepta, the smallest coins in circulation, and Luke's placement invites us to see in her the very kind of house the devourers empty. The rich give out of their abundance, gifts that change the treasury and cost the giver nothing; she, out of her poverty, put in all the living that she had, and Jesus re-prices the whole box: this poor widow has put in more than all of them. Heaven audits by remainder, not by amount: the question at the ledger is never how much went in but how much was held back, by which arithmetic the smallest gift in the temple's history was also the largest. St. Bede hands on the tradition's tenderness: her two coins are the two loves, of God and of neighbor, the entire Law dropped into the box by the person the establishment was consuming. She is the Magnificat's last cameo before the Passion, and something more: within days, Someone else will put in all the living that he has.

6. **Steelman chain:** Read Luke 21:5-9, 20-24, and 32-33. The skeptic's strongest attack, made famous by Bertrand Russell: Jesus said this generation will not pass away till all has taken place, the world did not

end, therefore he was a failed apocalyptic prophet and Christianity rests on an error. Give the objection its full weight. Then interrogate the discourse: what question was actually asked in 21:7, what did Jesus predict about Jerusalem in 21:20-24, when was it fulfilled, and what does 21:24's until the times of the Gentiles do to the timeline?

***Leader:** Full strength first; this objection has shipwrecked real faith. Then: the question was about the temple; the core prophecy (armies, desolation, no stone on stone) was fulfilled in AD 70, one generation later, datably; acknowledge that the scope of all in 21:32 is debated and present this as the argued Catholic reading; 21:24 explicitly opens an unmeasured age before the cosmic signs; the fall of Jerusalem is itself a type of the end. Hedge honestly: no date is given for the consummation, and the Church has defined no timetable.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Let the steelman stand at full height: if Jesus scheduled the end of the world within his hearers' lifetime, he was wrong, and everything built on his authority shakes. Now read what was asked and what was answered. The disciples' question (21:7) is about the temple: teacher, when will *this* be, these stones just admired, just sentenced. And the discourse's datable core answers exactly that: when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation has come near... they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations. In AD 70, forty years, one biblical generation, after the words were spoken, Titus's legions did precisely this, and the temple has never been rebuilt: this generation will not pass away was kept, publicly, datably, to the stone. Luke's Jesus then explicitly uncouples the horizons: Jerusalem will be trodden down *until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled* (21:24), an unmeasured age, the age we live in, standing between the temple's fall and the Son of man's coming on the clouds. One knot must be named honestly: verses 25-28 set cosmic signs and the Son of man before verse 32, so interpreters dispute how much all has taken place covers. The reading offered here, that this generation answers the temple question of 21:7 while the cosmic verses telescope the far horizon into the near one, is a longstanding and well-argued Catholic reading, not a knockdown proof; grant the skeptic that, and the reading's strength grows, because it takes every verse seriously instead of explaining any away. For that final day he gives no date whatsoever, only watch at all times; the prophets' near and far horizons stand in one vista, the judgment on Jerusalem serving as sign and type of the last judgment, which is how the Church has long read it (CCC 671-675), while defining no timetable, and neither may we. So the honest verdict, on this reading, runs opposite to Russell's: the prediction that could be checked came true on schedule; the consummation was left undated on purpose; and the only failed prophets in the story are the ones, ancient and modern, who keep printing calendars the Master refused to issue. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away, and the temple's rubble is their receipt.

DIG DEEPER: WHOSE IMAGE? THE TRIBUTE COIN'S HIDDEN QUESTION

Show me a coin. Whose likeness and inscription has it? Caesar's coin bears Caesar's image; let Caesar have his metal. But the answer's second clause, render to God the things that are God's, carries an unasked question every Jewish hearer could finish: and what bears God's image? Genesis 1:27 answers. Caesar may tax the coin; he may not own the man. The saying founds the Christian limits of the state in eleven words: give the emperor his currency, never your soul, which bears another Sovereign's likeness and inscription.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. The city missed the time of its visitation. Where might God be visiting your life right now, in an opportunity, a person, a nagging pull, that busyness or fear is keeping you from recognizing? What would knowing the time look like this week?

S2. The widow's gift was priced by what it left behind. Where in your giving, of money, time, or self, are you offering abundance's leftovers, and what would two-lepta generosity cost you?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Make one widow's-mite gift this week: sized by what remains after, not by what goes in. Tell no one its amount.
- Pray Psalm 118 once through, and stop at verses 22 and 26: the rejected stone and the blessed King, both fulfilled inside one week of his life.
- Before next session, read Luke 22:1-38 and reread Exodus 12:1-14 and Luke 12:35-37. Come hungry; Session 13 is the upper room.

Scripture memory: **Luke 21:33**, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, you wept over the city that would not know you; do not let us miss the day of our visitation. Make your Church a house of prayer for all peoples, teach us the widow's arithmetic, and keep us watching, not calculating, until you come. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 12

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7 must be flagged together; Psalm 118 works twice.

Passage Used for

Luke 19:28-40 Q1: the entry; stones would cry out

Zechariah 9:9; 2 Kings 9:13 Q1: the colt and the garments

Psalm 118:26 with Luke 13:35 Q1: the Session 8 payoff

Luke 19:41-44 Q2: the tears; visitation

Luke 1:68 Q2: the Benedictus rhyme

Luke 19:45-48 Q3: the cleansing

Isaiah 56:6-7; Jeremiah 7:1-15 Q3 live discovery: the spliced sermon

Luke 20:9-19 Framing: the tenants; Ps 118:22

Luke 20:20-26 Dig Deeper: the tribute coin

Luke 20:27-40 Q4: the burning bush; Ex 3:6

Luke 20:45-21:4 Q5: the scribes and the widow

Luke 21:5-36 Q6 steelman: Olivet; this generation; times of the Gentiles

CCC 557-560, 583-586, 671-675, 992-996, 2612 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 22:1-38, the upper room. Every banked thread comes due: the Passover posture, the master who serves, the four verbs, the opportune time. Have Exodus 12 flagged, and prepare the steelman on do this in remembrance with special care; it is the study's most important.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 13

Do This in Remembrance

Luke 22:1-38

The upper room: Passover fulfilled, the Eucharist instituted, and every banked thread come due

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants read Exodus 12 beside Luke 22 and discover that Passover was never a mere memory but a memorial that makes the exodus present to every generation, so that when Jesus says do this in remembrance of me over bread he has just called his body, he is founding not a nostalgia but a sacrifice made present: the Eucharist. Four threads banked across twelve sessions resolve in this one room.

Catholic Touchstone: The institution of the Eucharist and of the priesthood in one command (CCC 1337–1340, 611); anamnesis against bare memorialism, tonight's central steelman; and the Petrine commission hidden in Simon, Simon: I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; strengthen your brethren.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The chapter opens with the trap closing: the feast of Unleavened Bread draws near, the chief priests seek how to kill him away from the crowd, and then Luke writes the sentence Session 3 has been waiting for: Satan entered into Judas. The devil departed until an opportune time (4:13), and the opportune time has a date now, and a fee: they engaged to give him money. The betrayal will come from inside the Twelve, at a table, with a kiss, and Luke wants the horror of that geometry felt. Meanwhile Jesus sends Peter and John to prepare the Passover with the strange spy-craft of the man carrying a jar of water, and says over the prepared table a sentence of shocking tenderness: I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. The Greek doubles the verb, with desire I have desired: every table in this Gospel, Levi's banquet, Simon's house, the fish and loaves, Zacchaeus's hall, has been the long approach to this one, and the host has been longing for it more than anyone at it.

The Passover frame is tonight's live discovery, and it carries the steelman, so prepare Exodus 12 with care. Israel's founding night ordered a lamb without blemish, its blood a sign of deliverance, its flesh eaten, and then this: this day shall be for you a memorial day (zikkarōn, Ex 12:14), and you shall keep it as an ordinance for ever. Deuteronomy 16:3 adds the astonishing pronoun: you came forth out of Egypt, spoken to a generation largely born after the sea closed, and, as an ordinance kept for ever, placed on the lips of every generation since; centuries later the Mishnah made the logic explicit. In Israel's own self-understanding, ratified in the Mishnah's rule that in every generation a man must regard himself as if he came forth out of Egypt, the Passover memorial does not merely recall the exodus; it makes each generation present to it, participants and not spectators. Biblical remembrance, zikkarōn, is God-charged re-presentation, not mental review. (The Septuagint renders this memorial vocabulary with mnēmosynon at Exodus 12:14 and with anamnēsis in sacrificial settings such as Leviticus 24:7 and Numbers 10:10; anamnēsis is the word Jesus chooses at the table.) That is the loaded word Jesus picks up when, at the Passover table, he takes bread (and the four-verb pattern of 9:16 returns: took, blessed, broke, gave; only now the second slot has changed, where 9:16 says blessed, eulogēsen, 22:19 says having given thanks, eucharistēsas), and says: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me, eis tēn emēn anamnēsin. And over the cup: this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood, Jeremiah 31's promised new covenant, sealed the way Sinai's was, in blood (Ex

24:8), but the blood is his. Given for you, poured out for you: sacrificial vocabulary, the lamb's language, spoken by the Lamb.

Tonight's steelman is the study's most important, and it deserves your best preparation. The Zwinglian memorialist reading, held sincerely by many evangelical friends, argues at full strength: remembrance in plain language means calling to mind; the bread and cup are symbols Jesus chose precisely for their power to represent his body and blood; is often means represents in biblical idiom (I am the door); and the Mass's claim to make Christ's sacrifice present adds what the text never says. Present that honestly, then press with what the group has just discovered: the remembrance Jesus invoked is not the modern word but the Passover's own zikkārōn, which in Israel's practice made the saving event present to the celebrants; he said do this, and this was a memorial sacrifice, not a moment of silence; touto poieite can carry cultic weight (the Septuagint uses poiein for offering sacrifice); and St. Paul, our earliest written witness, cashes it out exactly as participation: the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation (koinōnia) in the blood of Christ? ... whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor 10:16, 11:27), a warning that presses hard against a merely symbolic reading. And the generation taught by the apostles read it one way: St. Ignatius of Antioch, on the road to martyrdom around AD 107, defines the heterodox as those who abstain from the Eucharist because they do not confess that it is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ. Where the text alone underdetermines, the Church the text came from does not, and the Catechism gathers it all: at the Last Supper Jesus instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of his Body and Blood, to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until he should come again (CCC 1323, 1337–1344, 1362–1367: the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but makes them in a certain way present).

Do this is also an ordination. Someone must be commissioned for a command to perpetuate a sacrifice, and the Church has always heard in these words, spoken to the apostles alone at the table, the institution of the New Covenant priesthood (CCC 1337; the Council of Trent says it explicitly): every priest at every altar since is inside this sentence. Then the threads cash out in a rush. A dispute arises, obscenely timed, over which of them is greatest, and Jesus answers with Session 8's banked promise made flesh: let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? But I am among you as one who serves (22:26–27): the master who girds himself (12:37), at the table, doing it. He confers on them the kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes: Isaiah's banquet and the Church's structure in one breath. Then the sentence every Catholic should know by heart: Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you (plural, all of you) that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you (singular, Peter alone) that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren (22:31–32). Knowing Peter will fall this very night, Jesus prays for Peter singularly and commissions him to be the strengthener of the rest after his restoration: the Petrine office, in Luke's Gospel, is founded not on Peter's strength but on Christ's prayer, which is exactly why it holds. The chapter's last exchange, the two swords and it is enough, closes the supper on the disciples still misunderstanding, and the road bends toward the olive grove where Session 14 begins.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Ex 12:1-14 The Passover lamb: without blemish, blood, eaten; a memorial day for ever (zikkarōn) — **Lk 22:7-19**

Deut 16:3 That you may remember the day YOU came forth out of Egypt: every generation present — **Lk 22:19**

Ex 24:8 Behold the blood of the covenant: Sinai sealed in blood — **Lk 22:20**

Jer 31:31-34 Behold, the days are coming when I will make a new covenant — **Lk 22:20**

Isa 53:12 He was numbered with the transgressors: quoted by Jesus at table — **Lk 22:37**

Ps 41:9 My own familiar friend, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me — **Lk 22:21**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 7.1 (c. AD 107))

Ignatius, by early tradition a disciple of the apostle John, writing on the road to the lions, marks the boundary of the faith at the altar: they abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, he says of the docetists, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father in his goodness raised up. Within one lifetime of the upper room, the test of believing in Christ's real body was believing in the Eucharist.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Mystagogical Catecheses*, 4)

Instructing the newly baptized of the fourth century, Cyril hands on the Church's plain confidence: since Christ himself has declared of the bread, this is my body, who shall dare to doubt any longer? And since he has affirmed of the cup, this is my blood, who shall ever hesitate? Do not judge by taste, Cyril counsels, but by faith be fully assured that you have been counted worthy of the Body and Blood of Christ, for what appears bread is not bread, though bread by taste.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 75; q. 65, a. 3; q. 73)

Aquinas teaches that Christ's true body and blood are in this sacrament in a way sense cannot detect and faith alone grasps, resting on the authority of God who said this is my body; the whole substance of the bread is converted into the substance of Christ's body, a change the Church fittingly names transubstantiation, while the appearances remain. It is, he says, the greatest of the sacraments, for the others contain grace, but this contains Christ himself, the author of grace, and in it his Passion's fruit is made ours.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1337–1344 The institution of the Eucharist at the Passover meal: do this in remembrance as command and ordination.

CCC 1362–1367 The Eucharist as memorial (anamnēsis) that makes present: the sacrifice of the cross, one single sacrifice with the altar's.

CCC 611 At the supper Jesus instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his sacrifice and instituted his apostles as priests of the New Covenant.

CCC 1323-1324 **The Eucharistic sacrifice perpetuated through the ages (1323); the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Christian life (1324).**

CCC 552, 641–642 (preview) Peter's singular place: prayed for, restored, strengthening the brethren.

THREAD WATCH

Opportune time (RESOLVES TONIGHT): 22:3, Satan entered into Judas. Read 4:13 aloud first and let the group hear the door that has been ajar since the desert click shut.

Take, bless, break, give (RESOLVES TONIGHT): The four-verb pattern of 9:16 returns at 22:19 with the second slot transformed: 9:16's blessed (eulogēsen) becomes gave thanks (

eucharistēsas, Session 10's word). Have the group recite the sequence from memory before reading the verse.

The master who serves (RESOLVES TONIGHT): 22:27 fulfills 12:37 at the table. If anyone reread 12:35–37 as assigned, give them the floor.

Passover posture (RESOLVES TONIGHT): Session 8's girded loins were dress rehearsal for this meal: the true Passover, eaten on the eve of the true Exodus.

Meals with sinners (penultimate entry): The host who ate with sinners now feeds the men who will deny, doubt, and flee him by morning, one of whom has already sold him. The table thread has one scene left, at Emmaus.

Sēmeron (dormant tonight, RESOLVES NEXT SESSION): Say nothing. The fifth today is twenty hours away in narrative time.

SESSION GOALS

1. Resolve the opportune-time thread and feel the betrayal's geometry: from inside, at the table.
2. Run the Exodus 12 discovery until zikkarōn is understood as making-present, not mental recall; this discovery IS the steelman's answer, so do not rush it.
3. Walk the institution narrative verb by verb: the four verbs, given for you, new covenant in my blood.
4. Present the memorialist steelman at full strength and answer it from the Passover, from Paul, and from Ignatius, with the Catechism gathering the threads.
5. Hear do this as ordination, the greatest-as-servant as 12:37 fulfilled, and Simon, Simon as the Petrine commission founded on Christ's own prayer.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

Tonight is the study's theological summit; protect it. If pressed, take the preparations (22:7–13) in one sentence of framing and fold the two swords (22:35–38) into the closing prayer's approach. Never cut Q2 (the Exodus discovery), Q3-Q4 (institution and steelman), or Q6 (Simon, Simon). If discussion of the Eucharist runs long and hot, let it; there is no better way for this group to spend an extra twenty minutes this year.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, with desire you desired to eat this Passover with us. Gather us tonight into your upper room: take us, bless us, break what is proud in us, and give us to one another. Let us never again hear do this in remembrance of me as a small thing, and keep us at your table until we drink it new in the kingdom. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What meal in your life do you most wish you could eat again, exactly as it was, with exactly who was there? What made it that meal?

W2. Is there a family ritual, a meal, a toast, a tradition, that makes past people or events feel genuinely present when you keep it? How does that work?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight the study's discipline pays: the group arrives owning the four verbs, the girded loins, the serving master, the opportune time, and eucharistōn. Let them cash each thread themselves; your job is to slow the institution narrative down to a walk and to give the steelman your most generous, most precise half hour.

1. Read Luke 22:1–6, then read Luke 4:13 aloud. What door is closing? And weigh the details Luke chooses: who Judas is, what enters him, what he is paid, and what the money makes this betrayal.

Leader: *The opportune time arrives: Satan, repulsed in the desert, re-enters through a friend. One of the Twelve; money engaged; Ps 41:9 in the background. Let the thread resolution land before moving on.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Session 3 left a door ajar: the devil departed from him *until an opportune time* (4:13). Tonight it swings shut: Satan entered into Judas, who was of the number of the twelve. The adversary who could not breach Jesus in the desert comes back through a friend at his table, the psalmist's oldest wound: my own familiar friend, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me (Ps 41:9). And Luke notes the fee, they engaged to give him money, filing the betrayal of the Messiah under this Gospel's long ledger on mammon: the man who kept the purse sold the Pearl. The horror is the geometry: not a Roman blade or a Pharisee's plot from outside, but a kiss from inside the circle. Every scandal the Church has ever suffered was prefigured at this table, and so was the Lord's response: he washed that betrayer's feet in John's telling, and in Luke's, fed him.

2. Live discovery: Before touching Luke's table, build the table it fulfills. Read Exodus 12:1–14 and Deuteronomy 16:3 as a group. Gather: what did the lamb have to be, what did the blood do, what was done with the flesh, and, the key question, what kind of thing does Exodus 12:14 say this day must be for

ever? Then the pronoun puzzle: who does Deuteronomy 16:3 say came out of Egypt, and to whom is it speaking?

Leader: *The finds: lamb without blemish; blood as the sign of deliverance; flesh eaten, not just offered; and a memorial day, zikkarōn, kept for ever. Deut 16:3 says YOU came forth, to generations born centuries later. Draw the conclusion together: Passover remembrance makes each generation present to the exodus. Do not say the word Eucharist yet; let Q3 do it.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Passover's anatomy: a lamb **without blemish**; its **blood** marking those whom death passes over; its **flesh eaten**, because this sacrifice is a communion, consumed and not merely offered; and the whole kept as **a memorial day, zikkarōn**, an ordinance for ever. Then Deuteronomy's impossible pronoun: that you may remember the day when **you** came forth out of the land of Egypt, spoken to a generation that mostly never saw the sea part, and recited ever after by children of children who certainly did not. Israel understood her own feast exactly so, and said it in so many words: in every generation a man must regard himself as if he himself came forth out of Egypt. Biblical remembrance is not nostalgia; it is a God-charged making-present, in which the saving event steps out of the past and the celebrants step into it, participants and not spectators. Hold that definition of remembrance with both hands. In about five minutes, at a Passover table, Someone is going to use the word.

3. Read Luke 22:14–20 slowly, twice. First the longing of verse 15 (the Greek doubles the verb: with desire I have desired). Then the bread: recite the four verbs of 9:16 from memory before reading verse 19, and catch which Session 10 word sits in the second slot. Then weigh every phrase: this is my body, GIVEN FOR YOU, do this, in remembrance of me. And the cup: what two Old Testament texts are fused in the new covenant in my blood?

Leader: *Let the verbs land: took, gave thanks (eucharistēsas), broke, gave. Given for you and poured out for you are sacrificial, the lamb's grammar. New covenant = Jer 31:31; in my blood = Ex 24:8. In remembrance = anamnēsin = the zikkarōn they just defined.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you: every table since Levi's has been the approach to this one, and the host wanted it most. Then the verbs the group has carried since the grass of Bethsaida: having **taken** bread, having **given thanks** (*eucharistēsas*, the tenth leper's verb, now naming the sacrament), he **broke** and **gave**, and said what no Passover host had ever said over the bread: This is my body **which is given for you**. Given-for is the lamb's grammar, sacrificial to the bone, as is the cup's: poured out for you. And the cup fuses two mountains: the **new covenant** Jeremiah promised (31:31) is sealed the way Sinai's was, in blood (behold the blood of the covenant, Ex 24:8), except the blood is **his**. Then the command that built the Church: do this **in**

remembrance of me, *eis tēn emēn anamnēsin*, and the group already knows what remembrance means at a Passover table, because they just spent ten minutes discovering it: not a moment of mental recall but a memorial that makes the saving event present to every generation that keeps it. He is the Lamb; the exodus is his (9:31, the mountain said so); and do this is the ordinance-for-ever clause of the new Passover. Say it plainly and let it sit: this is where the Mass comes from.

4. Steelman chain: Now the reading held by many sincere Christians, at full strength: remembrance means calling to mind; Jesus, present in the room in his body, could only have meant the bread as symbol; is often means represents (I am the door, I am the vine); and the Mass's claim to make a past sacrifice present adds what no text states. Give that case its complete force; someone you love holds it. Then prosecute it with what tonight has established, and with two witnesses outside Luke: read 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 11:27–29, and hear St. Ignatius from the Voices box. Where does the evidence settle?

Leader: Honor the steelman fully; the symbolic reading is coherent English. Then press: (1) the remembrance invoked is Passover's zikkārōn, participation not recollection, established by the group's own discovery; (2) Paul: koinōnia in the blood, guilt of profaning the body, discerning the body, senseless for a symbol; (3) Ignatius, one lifetime out, defines heresy as denying the Eucharist is Christ's flesh; (4) CCC 1362–1367 gathers it. Be warm; the goal is a group that can defend the Real Presence without sneering.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The steelman deserves its full day in court: in modern English, remembrance is recollection; Jesus stood there in his body holding bread; and Scripture's metaphors (door, vine, light) prove it can carry represents. If tonight's text were the only evidence and modern English its language, the memorialist reading would be reasonable. But the evidence will not stay inside those walls. First, the group's own discovery: the remembrance Jesus invoked is not our word but Passover's, *zikkārōn, the memorial that makes present, the concept Jesus names with anamnēsis*, spoken at the one meal in Israel's calendar where every participant became a contemporary of the saving event; do this attaches to a sacrifice eaten, not to a topic for reflection. Second, the earliest written commentary we possess: St. Paul calls the cup a *koinōnia*, a participation in the blood of Christ, and warns that unworthy eating makes one guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord, eating judgment by not discerning the body (1 Cor 10:16, 11:27–29), warnings a memorialist can honestly read as contempt for the covenant the sign represents, the way trampling a flag dishonors a nation; but Paul's charge outruns that account: the unworthy eater is guilty of the body and blood themselves, and eats judgment for failing to discern the body, language whose weight falls on a reality received, not only a meaning signified. Third, the men taught by the apostles: St. Ignatius, remembered by early tradition as John's disciple, marks the heretics precisely as those who do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior, within one lifetime of this table, and the ancient witnesses, east and west, speak of the Eucharist in realist terms; a merely subjective symbolism is nowhere taught as the faith of any ancient church. And note what the door and vine metaphors lack that tonight's words have: no one was commanded to perpetuate the door as an ordinance for ever, and Jesus never said this door is given for you. The Catechism gathers the whole case (CCC 1362–1367): the Eucharist is the memorial that does not merely recall but makes present the one sacrifice of the cross, which is also why do this, spoken to the Twelve, ordained them: a perpetual sacrifice requires priests (CCC 611, 1337), and every altar since stands inside this sentence. Hold all of it with charity: the friends who see a symbol love the same Lord. But the Lord's own words, in their own Passover grammar, with Paul and the apostolic Church as witnesses, say more, and Catholics should be able to show exactly where and why, gently, from the text.

DIG DEEPER: UNTIL IT IS FULFILLED IN THE KINGDOM

Twice Jesus vows abstinence at his own feast: I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God; I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes (22:16, 18). The Passover he is instituting points beyond itself: every Mass is eaten between his table and the wedding supper of the Lamb, which is why the Church cries after the consecration, until you come again. Some scholars, Dr. Brant Pitre notable among them, have traced the Passover cups through the Passion and asked when this vow finds its completion; wherever one lands on that fascinating question, which the Church has not defined, the direction is certain: the Eucharist is the pledge of a banquet still coming, Isaiah's mountain feast, where he will drink it new with us.

5. Read Luke 22:24–30. A dispute over greatness, at this table, tonight. Before reading Jesus' answer, have someone recite Luke 12:37 from Session 8. Then read 22:26–27. What promise is being kept in the room, and what does I am among you as one who serves establish forever about authority in the Church he is founding?

Leader: The banked verse pays: the master who girds himself and serves. Greatness = the youngest, the leader = the servant. And he confers a kingdom, table and thrones: structure and service in one breath.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The timing is obscene, a rank dispute during the first Mass, and the answer is the study's longest-banked promise standing up at last. Session 8 read it and filed it: blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake... he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them (12:37). Tonight the Master, at table, says: which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? **But I am among you as one who serves** (22:27). The impossible reversal of 12:37 was autobiography. And with it he legislates for his Church forever: let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves; authority in the kingdom he then confers, table, thrones, the twelve tribes, is real, structured, and judicial, and it kneels. Every bishop's motto should be 22:27; the ones the Church calls greatest, she calls servus servorum Dei, servant of the servants of God, because of this sentence at this table.

6. Read Luke 22:31–34 with a magnifying glass on the pronouns: Satan demanded to have YOU (plural), but I have prayed for YOU (singular) that YOUR (singular) faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren. Who is under attack, who alone is prayed for, what is he told to do after his fall, and what does Jesus know (v. 34) even as he commissions him? What does this establish about where the Church's stability actually rests?

Leader: The grammar is the theology: all sifted, one prayed for, and that one commissioned to strengthen the rest after restoration. Jesus commissions Peter knowing the denial is hours away: the office rests on Christ's prayer, not Peter's performance. CCC 552 territory; the risen Lord will renew it (24:34, and Jn 21).

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke's grammar carries the doctrine. Satan demanded to have *you* (plural: all of you, the whole apostolic band) to sift like wheat; **but I have prayed for you** (singular: Simon alone) **that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.** Against an assault on all, Jesus secures one, and makes that one the strengthener of the others, and he issues

the commission **knowing**, verse 34, that this very man will deny him three times before the rooster crows. So the office is founded, with eyes open, on the worst night of Peter's life, which means it is founded not on Peter's virtue but on Christ's prayer, the one variable in the sentence that cannot fail. When you have turned again: the fall is factored in, the restoration is scheduled (the risen Lord appears to Simon first, 24:34), and the mandate survives its holder's collapse. That is Luke's quiet contribution to the Petrine ministry the Church still lives under: popes have fallen and turned again for twenty centuries, and the brethren are still being strengthened, because the office never did rest on the man. It rests on the prayer of the one who, hours from his own arrest, was interceding for his interceder.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. You have heard do this in remembrance of me hundreds of times. After tonight's Passover discovery, what will be different, concretely, in how you enter the next Mass you attend?

S2. Jesus commissioned Peter for after his fall: when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren. Is there a failure in your past that God might be commissioning rather than shelving? Who could your turned-again self strengthen?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Go to Mass this week with Exodus 12 and Luke 22 fresh: at the consecration, hear the four verbs and the word remembrance as the upper room hears them. Arrive early; leave last.
- If you have been away from the Eucharist because of unconfessed grave sin, let 1 Corinthians 11 and the Sacrament of Reconciliation restore you to the table properly; that is what both are for.
- Before next session, read Luke 22:39–24:53, the whole Passion and Resurrection, in one sitting if you can. Bring your sēmeron tally, complete.

Scripture memory: **Luke 22:19b**, *This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, Lamb without blemish, with desire you desired this supper, and with desire you desire us at your altar. Never let us hear this is my body as a small thing. Serve us, though it should be the other way; pray for us as you prayed for Simon; and when we have turned again from our failures, make even those into strength for our brethren. Until you drink it new with us in the kingdom. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 13

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16:3 are the load-bearing bookmarks; 1 Corinthians 10–11 arms the steelman's answer.

Passage Used for

Luke 22:1–6 Q1: Satan enters Judas

Luke 4:13 Q1: the opportune time, resolved

Psalm 41:9 Q1: the familiar friend

Exodus 12:1–14 Q2 live discovery: the Passover; zikkarōn at 12:14

Deuteronomy 16:3 Q2: the pronoun that makes present

Luke 22:14–20 Q3: the institution; the four verbs

Exodus 24:8; Jeremiah 31:31–34 Q3: blood of the covenant; new covenant

1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:27–29 Q4 steelman: koinōnia; profaning the body

Luke 22:24–30 Q5: greatness; 12:37 fulfilled at 22:27

Luke 22:31–34 Q6: Simon, Simon; the prayed-for office

Isaiah 53:12 Framing: numbered with transgressors (22:37)

CCC 1337–1344, 1362–1367, 611, 1323–1324 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 22:39–24:53, the final session: the Passion, the fifth and final today, Emmaus, and the Gospel's last verse, which the group has been waiting for since Session 1 without knowing it. Bring every tally, and have Genesis 3:7 flagged where no one can see it.

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 14

Did Not Our Hearts Burn

Luke 22:39–24:53

The Passion, the fifth today, the road to Emmaus, and the Gospel's last verse

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants hear the study's title word spoken for the last time from the cross (truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise), discover on the Emmaus road that Luke has written the Mass into his resurrection narrative and reversed Genesis 3:7 in a single clause (their eyes were opened), and close the Gospel where it opened, in the temple, blessing God: every thread of fourteen weeks resolved.

Catholic Touchstone: The Passion as the exodus the mountain announced; the good thief and baptism of desire, handled with a careful steelman (CCC 1258–1260); Emmaus as the structure of the Mass, the Catechism's own reading (CCC 1347); and the Ascension as the passage of what was visible in our Redeemer into the sacraments (St. Leo).

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Gethsemane in Luke (22:39–46) is the physician's account: Jesus kneels (Luke alone), prays Father, if you are willing, remove this chalice from me; nevertheless not my will, but yours, be done, and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. Luke alone records the strengthening angel and the sweat like blood, and the disciples, as on the Transfiguration mountain, are sleeping, for sorrow. The arrest comes with a kiss; the sword takes an ear that Jesus, in his last free act before binding, heals; and Luke gives the terrible sentence to the arresting party: this is your hour, and the power of darkness. The opportune time is fully open.

Peter's denial (22:54–62) ends with a detail found only in Luke, and it should be read in complete silence: and the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Between the third denial and the rooster's echo, across a courtyard, the prayed-for man meets the eyes of the one who prayed for him, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. It is the look that made when you have turned again possible: not contempt, or Peter would have gone the way of Judas; the Lord's glance carried last night's intercession in it. The trials pass Jesus between Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Herod (Luke alone reports the Herod audience, and notes acidly that Herod and Pilate became friends that day, enemies reconciled over the condemnation of God); Pilate three times declares him innocent, Luke drumming the verdict the centurion will repeat, and releases Barabbas, a murderer, in exchange, the first sinner whose place Christ literally takes. On the way of the cross, Simon of Cyrene carries the beam behind Jesus, an accidental icon of 9:23, and Jesus turns to the wailing daughters of Jerusalem with the lament's last echo: weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children, the green wood and the dry.

Luke's crucifixion scene (23:32–49) is built of prayers. The first word from the cross is intercession for the executioners: Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do, Isaiah 53:12 (he made intercession for the transgressors) performed while the nails are still warm. Then, between two criminals, the study's final thread resolves. One thief rails; the other rebukes him with the Gospel's most unexpected act of faith: due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong, and then, to a dying man wearing a mocking placard, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom, addressing a crucified rabbi as a king with a kingdom on the far side of death. The answer is the last

sēmeron of the Gospel, and the fifth in the study's chain of salvation-todays: Truly, I say to you, TODAY you will be with me in Paradise. Born this day (2:11); today this scripture is fulfilled (4:21); I must stay at your house today (19:5); today salvation has come (19:9); and now, from the cross, to a thief, the word's last and greatest landing: salvation in Luke was never a someday, and its final beneficiary in this Gospel is an outsider with a criminal record and no time left to reform, the blessed-outsiders thread crowned. Luke uses the word elsewhere in passing (5:26; 12:28; 13:32-33; 22:34, 61); these five are the ones that announce salvation, which is why the study counts them. Tonight's steelman lives here and must be handled with precision: the thief was never baptized, never received a sacrament, and went straight to Paradise, therefore (the argument runs) baptism and sacraments are unnecessary and deathbed faith alone suffices. Prepare the honest answer: the Church herself teaches that God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments (CCC 1257), and the Church teaches baptism of desire (CCC 1258-1260), and Catholic tradition has long held up the thief as its living illustration; the Catechism itself does not name him, so present the connection as the tradition's reading of the scene; also, Christian baptism as the Church practices it flows from the completed Paschal mystery the thief was dying inside of. What the thief proves is God's freedom and the sufficiency of Christ's mercy; what he does not prove is that the ordinary means Christ instituted are optional for those who can receive them, any more than one battlefield field-promotion abolishes the academy. Jesus dies with Psalm 31:5 on his lips, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit, a verse Jewish tradition took into its night prayers, prayed at the end as at day's end; the centurion, a Gentile, pronounces the Gospel's verdict, certainly this man was innocent; and the sword Simeon promised (2:35) has fallen: Luke does not place Mary at Calvary by name as John does, so say honestly that her Golgotha station comes to us from John, but Luke shows us the sword's aftermath: she is with the praying Church in the upper room at Acts 1:14, the pondering heart still keeping, now, the whole Paschal mystery.

Easter morning (24:1-12) belongs to the women of 8:1-3, named again: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James; they find the stone rolled, the body gone, and two men in dazzling apparel asking the question of the age: why do you seek the living among the dead? Their testimony strikes the apostles as an idle tale, Luke's honesty about his own heroes, but Peter runs. Then Emmaus (24:13-35), Luke's masterpiece and tonight's summit. Two disciples walk away from Jerusalem inside their broken hope (we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel), and the risen Jesus, unrecognized (their eyes were kept from recognizing him), walks them through the whole Old Testament: beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself, and their hearts burn. At table, the guest becomes host: the four verbs return one last time, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. Two discoveries live here. First, the Catechism's own: Luke has written the Mass, Scripture opened on the road, then the breaking of the bread at table, Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist, the shape of every Sunday since (CCC 1347), and the vanishing teaches the lesson gently: he withdraws his familiar appearance at the exact moment the Church learns where he will now be found, in the breaking of the bread, their own name for the Eucharist (24:35, Acts 2:42). Second, the Genesis reversal: their eyes were opened echoes Genesis 3:7 nearly word for word (the same verb, the same opened eyes, in the Greek of both), the eating that opened Adam and Eve's eyes to shame answered by the eating that opens the disciples' eyes to the risen Christ; the first meal broke the world and this meal begins its mending. In Jerusalem, he appears to the gathered Church (a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have; he eats broiled fish, the meals thread's last course), opens their minds to understand the scriptures, repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all

nations, beginning from Jerusalem, and leads them out to Bethany. The Ascension (24:50–53) closes both the Gospel and the study's oldest thread: lifting up his hands he blessed them, the priestly blessing Zechariah could not give in chapter 1, a reading the Church's commentators have loved: the mute priest's unfinished liturgy completed by the eternal High Priest, and while he blessed them, he parted from them. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. The Gospel that opened with a priest at the incense altar closes with the Church in the temple, blessing God: the bookends meet, and Luke's second volume waits one page away.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Isa 53:12 He made intercession for the transgressors – **Lk 23:34**

Ps 22:18 with Ps 69:21 They divided his garments; vinegar to drink – **Lk 23:34–36**

Ps 31:5 Into your hands I commit my spirit – **Lk 23:46**

Gen 3:7 Their eyes were opened: Eden's wound, reversed at a table – **Lk 24:31** **Isa 50:7** echoed **The face set like flint (Lk 9:51), the journey now arrived at its Jerusalem – Lk 9:51 with 23:33**

Sir 50:20–21 with Num 6:24–26 The high priest lifting his hands over the people in blessing – **Lk 24:50**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Sermon on the Cross and the Thief (De cruce et latrone)*)

Chrysostom never tired of the thief: a robber, he preaches, broke into Paradise before apostle or martyr, stealing heaven with a single sentence of faith, confessing as King a man nailed beside him whom the world had just voted worthless. No merit preceded him and no time remained to him; mercy asked only that he ask. Let no sinner despair, Chrysostom concludes, when the first canonization was performed from a cross, by the condemned, for the condemned.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Sermon 235, on Emmaus*)

Augustine presses the Easter mystery of the inn: the disciples knew the scriptures and did not know their companion, and only when he broke the bread were their eyes opened. So it is with us, he preaches: if you would recognize the Lord now that he has ascended, you know where to seek him; he allowed himself to be known in the breaking of the bread, and whoever receives that bread with faith recognizes what the travelers recognized. They walked with him unseeing; we, unseeing, hold him.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Leo the Great (*Sermon 74, on the Ascension*)

Leo gives the Ascension its Catholic grammar: what was visible in our Redeemer has passed over into the sacraments. The Lord withdrew his bodily presence not to be absent but to be present in a

new mode, so that faith, nobler than sight, might find him where he promised to remain: in his word, in his Church, at his altar. The Ascension, Leo insists, did not end the Emmaus road; it made every altar its inn.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1347 Emmaus as the Mass: the risen Jesus opening the Scriptures, then taking, blessing, breaking, giving; the Church's two-table liturgy.

CCC 1257–1260 God bound salvation to Baptism but is not bound by his sacraments; baptism of desire, which tradition has long illustrated with the good thief.

CCC 2605 The prayers of the dying Christ: forgiveness for executioners, Paradise for the thief, the psalm of committal.

CCC 641–643 The women first at the tomb; the apostles' testimony founded on encounters with the Risen One.

CCC 659–660 The Ascension: Christ's humanity entering divine glory, hidden now from our eyes.

CCC 1115 St. Leo's principle: what was visible in our Redeemer has passed over into the sacraments; the mysteries of Christ's life dispensed now in the Church's sacraments.

THREAD WATCH

Sēmeron (RESOLVES TONIGHT): 23:43 is the last today in the Gospel, the fifth of the study's salvation-todays. Have the group recite the tally before reading it: 2:11, 4:21, 19:5, 19:9, and now, from the cross. The title of the study lands here.

Temple bookends (RESOLVES TONIGHT): 24:53 ends the Gospel in the temple, blessing God, where 1:9 began it. Let the group discover the symmetry at Q6; it is the study's final gift.

Exodos (RESOLVES TONIGHT): The departure the mountain announced (9:31) is accomplished at Jerusalem: cross, resurrection, ascension, the new and greater Exodus.

Meals with sinners (RESOLVES TONIGHT): Emmaus and the broiled fish are the table thread's last courses, and the Church is left holding the breaking of the bread as his abiding address.

Blessed outsiders (RESOLVES TONIGHT): The tally's final entry: a crucified thief, first into Paradise. Read the whole list aloud at Q3: Zarephath's widow, Naaman, the centurion, the Samaritans, the tenth leper, Zacchaeus, the thief.

The sword (RESOLVES TONIGHT, with honesty): Simeon's sword (2:35) falls in the Passion. Note honestly: Mary's station at the cross is John's account (Jn 19:25–27); Luke shows her after, with the praying Church (Acts 1:14), the pondering heart keeping the whole mystery.

SESSION GOALS

1. Walk the Passion by its prayers: the cup, the look, Father forgive them, and Psalm 31 at the end.
2. Resolve the sēmeron thread at 23:43 with the full tally, and give the thief steelman a precise, charitable answer from CCC 1257–1260.

3. Run the Emmaus discovery twice over: the Mass's structure (CCC 1347) and the Genesis 3:7 reversal at 24:31.
4. Hear the Ascension with St. Leo: the visible passing into the sacraments, and the priestly blessing completing Zechariah's mute liturgy.
5. Close the temple bookends at 24:53 and send the group out with Luke's own commission: witnesses of these things.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

The final session must not run out of road before Emmaus. If pressed, take the trials (22:63–23:25) in two minutes of leader framing, fold the burial and the empty tomb's details into Q4's setup, and trust the group's fourteen weeks: they can move fast now. Never cut Q2-Q3 (the cross and the thief), Q4-Q5 (Emmaus), or Q6 (Ascension and bookends). Consider ending fifteen minutes early and walking together to your parish's tabernacle; after tonight's texts, no closing activity says it better.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, into your hands we commit this last evening together. Walk with us on the road as you walked to Emmaus; open the Scriptures until our hearts burn, and open our eyes in the breaking of the bread. Remember each of us, Lord Jesus, now that you have come into your kingdom. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. Fourteen weeks ago you wrote a sealed guess and answered who is Jesus in one sentence. Tonight, before we finish: what has this Gospel changed in how you would answer, or in how you pray?

W2. Have you ever recognized someone's identity or significance only at the last moment, or just after they left? What finally opened your eyes?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight is harvest: nearly every question resolves a thread the group planted themselves. Read the Passion texts slowly and resist commentary during them; Luke's restraint is the sermon. Save real energy for Emmaus, and end the evening on 24:50–53 with the study's first session open beside it.

1. Read Luke 22:39–46 and 22:54–62. Luke the physician gives us two details no one else records: the sweat like drops of blood, and, after the third denial, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Sit with both. What does the agony tell us about what the cup cost, and what must have been in that look, given what Jesus prayed in 22:32?

Leader: *Luke writes a simile, sweat like great drops of blood, not a diagnosis; some readers see hematidrosis, a rare stress phenomenon, but the text's point is the measurable weight of the agony, told with a physician's precision of image. The look: not contempt (Peter weeps and returns; Judas despairs). The look carried the intercession of 22:32: I have prayed for you.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke's clinical detail measures the cup: being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood. The dread is real; the obedience is realer: not my will, but yours, be done, the Garden of Eden's not your will but mine finally reversed in a garden at night, by the new Adam, kneeling. And the courtyard's silent climax: at the third denial, with the cock crowing, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Everything hangs on what was in that look, and 22:32 tells us: the man being denied had already prayed for the denier's faith not to fail, and had already scheduled the restoration, when you have turned again. So the look was the prayer, arriving through the eyes; it broke Peter into bitter weeping rather than despair, which is precisely the difference between Peter and Judas: both fell that night, but only one believed he was still being looked at with love. Some fourteen weeks ago we learned Luke's word for what Mary did with mysteries: kept them in her heart. Tonight we learn what the Lord keeps in his: us, mid-denial.

2. Read Luke 23:32–46. Luke builds Calvary out of prayers: find all three from Jesus' lips. What does the first accomplish while the nails are still new (check Isaiah 53:12)? And identify the third (check Psalm 31:5): what kind of prayer is it, and what does praying it here mean?

***Leader:** Father forgive them (Isa 53:12: intercession for transgressors, performed); the word to the thief (held for Q3); Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (Ps 31:5, a verse long associated in Jewish tradition with nighttime entrustment to God): he dies praying a night psalm, entrusting, not despairing.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke's crucifixion is a liturgy of three prayers. The first is intercession from inside the pain: Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do, Isaiah 53:12 (he made intercession for the transgressors) enacted at the moment of transgression, and the charter for Stephen's dying prayer in Luke's second volume and for every martyr since. The second, to the thief, is the next question's treasure. The third is Psalm 31:5, Father, into your hands I commit my spirit, a verse later Jewish tradition prayed at bedtime, and the choice tells everything: he does not die screaming into the void but entrusting himself to a Father whose hands he knows, the loud voice of a Son going home. Luke frames the three with the innocence verdicts piling up, Pilate's three acquittals, the thief's this man has done nothing wrong, the centurion's certainly this man was innocent, so that the reader cannot miss it: the sinless one is dying the death of the guilty, on the day the true Passover Lamb, without blemish, is given for you. The exodus of 9:31 is being accomplished at Jerusalem, exactly as Moses and Elijah said.

3. Read Luke 23:39–43 slowly. First the tally: recite the study's four today's. Then the thief's act of faith: list everything he confesses and asks, given his circumstances. Then the fifth today. **Steelman chain:** the strong argument from this text: the thief received no baptism and no sacrament and was promised Paradise on faith alone, therefore sacraments are unnecessary and deathbed faith suffices. Give it full force, then answer with precision: what does the Church actually teach about God and his sacraments (CCC 1257–1260), and what does the thief prove and not prove?

***Leader:** Tally: 2:11, 4:21, 19:5, 19:9. The thief: confesses his guilt, Jesus' innocence, and, to a dying man, a coming kingdom: staggering faith. Then TODAY, the last in the Gospel, the fifth of the study's chain. Steelman answer: God bound salvation to Baptism but is not bound by his sacraments (CCC 1257); the thief is the icon of baptism of desire; he also died before Christian baptism's promulgation, inside the very Paschal mystery baptism applies. He proves God's freedom and mercy's sufficiency, not the optionality of the means Christ commanded for those who can receive them.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The tally first, out loud: unto you is born *this day* a Savior (2:11); *today* this scripture has been fulfilled (4:21); I must stay at your house *today* (19:5); *today* salvation has come to this house (19:9). Now weigh the thief's faith: pinned to his own cross, he confesses his guilt (we justly; the tax collector's posture), Christ's innocence (this man has done nothing wrong), and, most staggering, a kingdom on the far side of a Roman execution, addressing its dying King by name: Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. St. John Chrysostom marveled that a robber broke into Paradise ahead of the apostles, stealing heaven with one sentence. And the answer is the study's title spoken for the last time: Truly, I say to you, **today** you will be with me in Paradise. Salvation in

Luke was never a someday, and its last recipient in this Gospel is the outsiders' thread crowned: a criminal with no time left to reform, canonized from the cross. Now the steelman, honestly: he had no baptism, no Eucharist, no church membership, and Paradise was promised him, and the Church's answer begins with agreement, because it is her own doctrine: God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, **but he himself is not bound by his sacraments** (CCC 1257), and Catholic tradition has long seen in the thief an illustration of what the Catechism teaches as baptism of desire (CCC 1258-1260): the explicit longing for Christ, with repentance and charity, assures what the water assures, when the water cannot be had. Note too that he died before Pentecost, inside the unrepeatable hour whose grace all baptism afterward applies. So the thief proves the two things the Church preaches at every deathbed: that mercy is sufficient and God is free, and that no one, ever, is out of time while breath remains. What he does not prove is that the means Christ instituted and commanded (go, baptize, do this) are optional for those who can receive them: one field-commission on a battlefield does not close the academy; it reveals the General's heart. Preach the thief to the despairing, never to the procrastinating, and preach him constantly: the first canonized saint was a thief, and the ceremony was one sentence long.

4. Read Luke 24:13–27. Two disciples walking the wrong direction, inside a dead hope: we had hoped. The stranger's response is not sympathy but a Bible study: beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Why the Scriptures first, before the unveiling? And what does verse 32 say that walk felt like from inside?

Leader: He rebuilds their hope on the necessity (was it not necessary, dei) written across the whole canon, so that recognition, when it comes, lands on foundations. Hearts burning: Scripture read with Christ as key ignites.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The risen Lord's first catechesis is a seven-mile Old Testament survey, and the order is deliberate: before he shows them his face, he shows them the pattern, O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not **necessary** (*dei*, the divine must of 2:49 and 9:22) that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he re-reads them their own Bible with himself as the key, everything this study has practiced for fourteen weeks, the lamb, the exodus, the servant, the rejected stone, until the cross stops looking like the death of their hope and starts looking like its grammar. Recognition built on emotion alone evaporates; recognition built on the Scriptures survives his vanishing, which he knows is coming. And verse 32 reports the interior weather of such reading: did not our hearts **burn** within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures? That burn is not nostalgia; it is the ordinary flame of the Word rightly opened, available every time the Church reads Moses and the prophets with Christ as the key, which she does, aloud, at every single Mass. Which is exactly where this scene is headed.

5. **Live discovery, twofold:** Read Luke 24:28–35. At the table, the guest becomes host: watch the four verbs one final time. First: assemble the whole Emmaus episode's structure, road then table, and name what weekly Catholic experience has exactly this shape (CCC 1347 agrees). Second: the clause their eyes

were opened is a quotation. Find Genesis 3:7. What is Luke telling us one meal has begun to undo? And why does he vanish at the moment of recognition?

***Leader:** First find: Scriptures opened on the road + breaking of the bread at table = Liturgy of the Word + Liturgy of the Eucharist: the Mass. Second find: Gen 3:7, and the eyes of both were opened, the fall's eating reversed by this eating. The vanishing: his familiar form withdraws as the Church learns his new address: the breaking of the bread (24:35).*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

At table the stranger takes over the host's role, and Luke writes the four verbs for the last time: he **took** the bread and **blessed**, and **broke** it, and **gave** it to them. First discovery: step back and look at the episode's architecture, an assembly of downcast disciples; the Scriptures opened and interpreted with Christ as their center, hearts burning; then the table, and the taking, blessing, breaking, giving in which he is known. That is the Mass, part for part, Liturgy of the Word then Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Catechism says so in as many words: the Sunday Eucharist keeps the very shape of the risen Lord's Easter meal (CCC 1347). Luke has written the Church's liturgy into his resurrection narrative because that is where the risen Christ intended to be met. Second discovery: their eyes were opened is an unmistakable, nearly word-for-word echo of Genesis 3:7, then the eyes of both were opened, the sentence that reported the fall's first fruit, shame from forbidden eating. Luke answers Eden's meal with Emmaus's: the eating that closed man's eyes to God is reversed by the eating that opens them to the risen Christ; the first table broke the world, this table begins its mending. And the vanishing, at the exact instant of recognition, is not abandonment but forwarding address: he withdraws the familiar appearance precisely as the Church learns the new mode of his presence, and the two disciples name it on arrival in Jerusalem: he was known to them **in the breaking of the bread** (24:35), the infant Church's own name for the Eucharist (Acts 2:42). St. Augustine drew the conclusion for every generation since: they walked with him unseeing; we, unseeing, hold him.

6. Read Luke 24:36–53, and then, one last time, Luke 1:8–10 and 1:21–22 from Session 1. Gather the finale: what does the risen Lord insist about his body (24:39–43), what commission does he give (24:46–49), and what is he doing with his hands as he ascends (24:50, with Sirach 50:20 and Numbers 6:24–26 in view)? Then set the Gospel's last verse beside its first scene. What has Luke done, and what unfinished thing from chapter 1 does the Ascension finish?

***Leader:** Flesh and bones, broiled fish: bodily resurrection, the meals thread's last course. The commission: repentance and forgiveness to all nations, you are witnesses, the promise of the Father. The hands: the priestly blessing (Sir 50:20; Num 6), which Zechariah, struck mute, could not have given in chapter 1. Then the bookends: 1:9, the temple, an interrupted liturgy; 24:53, the temple, the Church blessing God. The mute priest's blessing is completed by the eternal High Priest; the Gospel ends where it began, with the liturgy now unbreakable.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The Jerusalem appearance nails the resurrection into matter: see my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not **flesh and bones** as you see that I have, and then, the meals thread's final course, he ate broiled fish before them: the Gospel that ate its way from Levi's house to Emmaus ends with the risen Lord at table one more time, because the resurrection is

not a metaphor and grace has never despised food. The commission scales the study's whole map: repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name **to all nations**, beginning from Jerusalem, Simeon's light to the Gentiles and the seventy's math cashed out; you are witnesses; and stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high, the Spirit whose book begins on Luke's next page. Then Bethany, and the detail that closes a fourteen-week circle: **lifting up his hands he blessed them**, the high-priestly gesture of Sirach 50 and Numbers 6, and while he blessed them, he parted from them, ascending mid-blessing, a blessing therefore never concluded and so never ended. Now open Session 1 beside it. This Gospel began in the temple with a priest, Zechariah, whose liturgy was interrupted: struck mute at the incense altar, he came out to the waiting people unable to speak (1:22); a mute priest could not pronounce the blessing that customarily closed the incense liturgy (Sir 50:20-21), and Luke, though he never says so outright, seems to have built his ending to answer that silence. Luke's last scene supplies the suspended blessing: the eternal High Priest raises his hands and blesses his people as he passes through the true veil, and they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, **and were continually in the temple blessing God** (24:53). The Gospel opens at 1:9 in the temple with an incomplete liturgy and one mute priest; it closes at 24:53 in the temple with the whole Church blessing God and nothing mute at all. The bookends meet; the interrupted worship of the old covenant has become the unending worship of the new; and St. Leo names what fills the space between the raised hands and our own day: what was visible in our Redeemer has passed over into the sacraments. He is not gone.

He changed address, and you have it: the word opened, the bread broken, today.

DIG DEEPER: THE SWORD, AND THE WOMAN WHO KEPT ON KEEPING

Simeon told Mary a sword would pierce her own soul also (2:35), and the Passion is where it fell. Honesty about our sources: it is John, not Luke, who places her by name at the cross (Jn 19:25-27); Luke, her Gospel's great portraitist, shows us instead the aftermath: when his second volume opens, she is there, with the Eleven, devoting herself to prayer with the infant Church (Acts 1:14). The one who kept all these things, pondering them in her heart, is keeping, now, the greatest of all these things, and her last recorded posture in Scripture is the one Luke gave her first: in the middle of God's people, saying yes. The study's first discovery was that she is the Ark; its quiet last one is that the Ark abides in the Church.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. The Emmaus disciples returned that same hour, seven miles in the dark, because good news outruns fatigue. Fourteen weeks of this Gospel is a lot of burning heart: who, concretely and by name, needs you to walk back and tell them?

S2. The study ends; the breaking of the bread does not. What is one permanent change, in your Mass, your prayer, your table, your mercy toward outsiders, that you will carry from this Gospel? Say it aloud; let the group be your witnesses.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- This Sunday, live Emmaus consciously: let your heart be set on fire at the Liturgy of the Word, and recognize him in the breaking of the bread. Then, like the two, go tell someone what happened.
- Pray Psalm 31:5 tonight and every night this week, Into your hands I commit my spirit, a bedtime entrustment, prayed once by a dying God, available to you at every bedtime.
- Keep reading: Luke wrote a sequel. Open the Acts of the Apostles this month and watch everything this Gospel planted (the Spirit, the witnesses, the nations, the breaking of the bread) grow into the Church you stand in.

Scripture memory: **Luke 24:32**, *Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, you walked with us these fourteen weeks as you walked to Emmaus, and our hearts burned. Stay with us, for it is toward evening. Be known to us always in the breaking of the bread; remember each of us, now that you have come into your kingdom; and keep us continually blessing God, until the today you spoke from the cross is spoken over us. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 14

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Genesis 3:7 stays hidden until the Emmaus table; Session 1's temple texts return at the end.

Passage Used for

Luke 22:39–46 Q1: the agony; the sweat like blood

Luke 22:54–62 Q1: the denial and the look

Luke 23:32–46 Q2: the three prayers of Calvary

Isaiah 53:12 Q2: intercession for transgressors

Psalms 31:5 Q2: into your hands

Luke 23:39–43 Q3: the thief; the last sēmeron

Luke 24:1–12 Framing: the women and the empty tomb

Luke 24:13–27 Q4: the road; Moses and all the prophets

Luke 24:28–35 Q5: the table; the four verbs; eyes opened

Genesis 3:7 Q5 live discovery: Eden's eyes, reversed

Luke 24:36–53 Q6: flesh and bones; the commission; the blessing

Luke 1:8–10, 21–22 Q6: the bookend; the mute priest's unfinished blessing

Sirach 50:20–21; Numbers 6:24–26 Q6: the high-priestly blessing

CCC 1347, 1257–1260, 2605, 641– 643, 659–660, 1115 Catechism Connection

After the study: Consider a fifteenth gathering that is not a session: Mass together, and a meal after, with no discussion guide at all. The Gospel of Luke ends at a table and in the temple; so should its study. And when the group asks what to read next, the answer is on Luke's next page: Acts.