

CATHOLIC ARMORY

You Shall Receive Power

An Inductive Study of Confirmation

Fourteen Sessions for Candidates and Their Parents

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8)

Scripture quotations follow the Revised Standard Version, Second Catholic Edition.

Using This Guide

This is a fourteen-week inductive study of the sacrament of Confirmation, built for candidates and their parents to walk together. It does not summarize doctrine and ask for agreement; it opens the Scriptures in order, from the breath of God over the waters of creation to the chrism on a forehead, and lets the group discover for themselves the biblical pattern the Church has traditionally read in the light of Confirmation. Along the way, the strongest objections to the Catholic understanding are built at full strength and answered from the open text, because candidates who have faced the hard questions in this room will not be ambushed by them elsewhere.

The Shape of Every Session

Each session has three parts. The Leader Preparation Guide is yours alone: the session overview, background, three Voices of the Church, Catechism connections, thread notes, goals, and a time plan with pre-chosen cuts. The Discussion Guide is the session itself: opening prayer, two Win questions answered in parent-candidate pairs, an inductive Build through the texts with shaded ANSWER boxes to be shared only after the group has worked, a live discovery in which the tables hunt down a passage from a clue, a Push-Back in which an objection is built at full strength and answered, Send questions, a household practice for the week, a closing prayer, and a Scripture memory verse. The Leader Reference Card lists every passage used.

The Take-Home Sheets

After each session, every household receives a two-page Take-Home: what was found, the session's three Voices, the week's practice, the memory verse, a Table Talk question for the drive home, and the reading for the next session. Distribute them only at the door, after the session ends; they are recaps, never previews. Take-Home 1 carries two sealed write-in boxes, one for the candidate and one for the parent, which remain sealed at home until Session 14. Guard this; the final session depends on it.

Leading Well

- Never read an ANSWER box aloud before the group has genuinely worked the question. The boxes are the floor under the discussion, not a script over it.
- Never announce a live discovery passage. Read the clue, let the tables hunt, and use the staged hints only when they stall. The passage a group finds is a passage they keep.
- Honor the thread discipline. Several arcs are planted early and resolved weeks later, and the leader notes tell you exactly what to withhold and when to pay it. The study keeps its promises on schedule; that is why groups come to trust it.
- Build every Push-Back at full strength before answering it. A steelman answered honestly, concessions included, does more for a candidate's faith than ten easy victories.
- Keep parents in the room as participants, not chaperones. The paired questions, household practices, and sealed parent box are all load-bearing; this study forms two generations at once, on purpose.
- Watch the clock with the Time Note. Every session lists its pre-chosen cuts; make those and no others.

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Take-Home sheets for Sessions 1 through 14 are provided as separate two-page documents, distributed to households after each session.

SESSION 1

The Breath of God

Genesis 1:1-2 • Genesis 2:7 • Ezekiel 37:1-14

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Participants discover that the Spirit of God is present on the very first page of Scripture as the breath that gives life: hovering over the waters at creation, breathed into the first man, and promised to a dead and hopeless Israel in the valley of dry bones. Confirmation is not a new idea bolted onto the faith; it is the last chapter of a story that begins on the Bible's first page.

Catholic Touchstone

The Hebrew word *ruah* means breath, wind, and spirit all at once. The Church reads Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 2:7 as the first whispers of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life (CCC 691, 703-704). In the sacrament of Confirmation, the same Spirit who hovered over the waters and filled Adam with life is poured out on each candidate personally.

What You Need to Know

Ruah. Hebrew has one word where English needs three. *Ruah* means breath (the air in your lungs), wind (moving air outside you), and spirit (the invisible life of a person, or of God); context selects the sense, and sometimes the text plays on more than one. One honest precision to carry: Genesis 1:2 uses *ruah* for the Spirit over the waters, while Genesis 2:7 uses a second breath-word, *neshamah*, for the breath of life breathed into the man. Two words, one motif: and Job 33:4, tonight's memory verse, sets them side by side in poetic parallel, the *ruah* of God and the *neshamah* of the Almighty, as two names for the same life-giving act. Life, in the Bible, is borrowed breath. Every living thing lives because God is, in a sense, exhaling.

The shape of this session. You will walk the group through three scenes: the Spirit over the waters before there is any life at all, the Spirit breathed into Adam so that dust becomes a living being, and the Spirit breathed into a valley of dry bones so that a dead nation stands up as a great army. The movement is from creation, to a single man, to a whole people. That last scene, Ezekiel 37, is the group's live discovery this week, so do not name it in advance.

Where this is going. At the end of the session you will lift the curtain for one moment on John 20:22, where the risen Jesus breathes on the apostles and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." The gesture is deliberate. Jesus is doing Genesis 2:7 again, on purpose, to launch the new creation. Do not develop this yet; just plant it. It blooms at Pentecost in Session 7.

For the parents in the room. Many parents last thought hard about the Holy Spirit at their own Confirmation, and some will quietly feel they should already know this material. Set them at ease early. Say plainly that this study assumes nothing, and that the goal is for households, not just candidates, to meet the Spirit in Scripture. The paired questions are designed so a parent never has to perform expertise; they only have to tell the truth about their own experience.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

This session lives inside the Old Testament, so the roots are the lesson itself. The fulfillment arc to keep in your own mind as leader (traditional Christian readings, held as such):

- Genesis 1:2 (Spirit over the waters) anticipates the Spirit descending over the waters of the Jordan at the baptism of Jesus (Session 5) and the waters of Baptism itself.
- Genesis 2:7 (God breathes life into the man) anticipates John 20:22, where Jesus breathes on the apostles, and ultimately Pentecost (Session 7).
- Ezekiel 37 (breath makes a dead people live) anticipates the promise of Ezekiel 36:26-27, "a new heart... my Spirit within you," which the group will meet in Session 4, and its fulfillment in the sacraments.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies, Book IV, chapter 20*)

St. Irenaeus taught that the Father was never without His Word and His Wisdom, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are, he says, like the Father's two hands, and with them God freely fashioned all things, including man. From the first page of Scripture, the Spirit is not a latecomer. He is one of the hands that made you.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Basil the Great (*Hexaemeron, Homily 2*)

Preaching on Genesis 1:2, St. Basil passed on an explanation he had received from an older teacher: the Spirit "moving" over the waters is the image of a bird brooding over her eggs, warming them and cherishing them into life. The Spirit does not hover at a cold distance. He broods over what He is about to bring alive.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 16*)

Teaching candidates preparing for the sacraments, St. Cyril compared the Holy Spirit to water. Rain comes down as one and the same thing, yet it becomes one thing in the palm tree and another in the vine, adapting itself to what each living thing needs. So the Spirit, though one and the same, gives Himself to each person as each one needs. He was saying this to people in exactly the position of your candidates.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 691.** "Holy Spirit" is the proper name of the third Person. The word "Spirit" translates the Hebrew *ruah*, which in its primary sense means breath, air, wind.
- **CCC 703.** The Word of God and His Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature.

- **CCC 704.** Quoting St. Irenaeus: God fashioned man with His own hands, that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Thread Watch

Thread A: The Breath. Planted tonight. The pattern "God's breath makes the dead live" will return in Session 4 (Ezekiel 36), surface in Session 5 at the Jordan, and resolve at Session 7 when the Spirit arrives at Pentecost with the sound of a mighty rushing wind, and Jesus' breath in John 20:22 clicks into place. Do not connect these dots for the group. Let them catch the echo themselves when it comes.

Sealed guesses. The Take-Home sheet you distribute at the end of tonight carries two sealed write-in boxes: candidates guess what the bishop will actually say and do at the moment of Confirmation, and parents write what they remember of their own Confirmation. Collect nothing; they keep the sheets sealed at home until Session 14. Mention it with a little drama. It works.

Session Goals

1. Participants can explain that ruah means breath, wind, and spirit, and that Scripture links God's breath with life from its first page.
2. Participants have found and read Ezekiel 37:1-14 themselves and can retell the vision in their own words.
3. Parent and candidate pairs have each answered both Win questions honestly out loud.
4. The group has wrestled with the "mighty wind" translation question and seen how the text itself answers it.
5. Each household leaves with Take-Home 1 and understands the sealed write-in boxes.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 2 (keep question 1), skip the Dig Deeper box, and shorten the steelman chain by presenting the objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the live discovery of Ezekiel 37 or the closing glimpse of John 20:22; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit. Before there was light, You were there. Before we drew our first breath, You were the One who gave it. Tonight we open the first page of Your book. Hover over this room the way You hovered over the waters. Warm what is cold in us. Wake what is asleep in us. And breathe on these candidates, and on their parents, the breath of life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. When you hear the word "spirit," what is the first picture that comes into your head? Be honest, even if it is a ghost or a mascot.
2. Tell your partner about one moment in your life when you felt most fully alive. What made it feel that way?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: Before Anything Lived (Genesis 1:1-2)

Have someone read Genesis 1:1-2 aloud, slowly, twice.

Question 1. Make a list together: what exists in verse 2, and what does not exist yet? Where is the Spirit of God in this picture?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

What exists: the earth, without form and void; darkness; the deep; the waters. What does not exist yet: light, land, plants, animals, people, any life at all. And yet the Spirit of God is already there, moving over the face of the waters. Before there is a single living thing, the Giver of life is on the scene, like a builder standing on empty ground. The Spirit is not a decoration added to creation at the end. He is there before the beginning of everything else.

Question 2. The Hebrew word here is *ruah*, which means breath, wind, and spirit all at once. English has to pick one. What do those three meanings have in common?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

All three are invisible, and all three are known only by what they move. You cannot see wind, only the trees bending. You cannot see breath, only the chest rising. You cannot see a spirit, only a life being lived. Scripture is teaching us from its opening page how the Spirit works: unseen Himself, unmistakable in His effects. Keep this in your pocket; it returns at Pentecost.

Scene Two: Dust Starts Breathing (Genesis 2:7)

Have a different reader read Genesis 2:7 aloud.

Question 3. Two ingredients go into the first man. What are they? Which one turns a body into a living being?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Dust from the ground, and the breath of life (Hebrew neshamah) from God's own mouth. The dust supplies the material; the breath supplies the life. The man does not become a living being when he is formed. He becomes a living being when God breathes into him. In the Bible's picture of the world, your life is not a possession. It is a gift that stays a gift, borrowed breath, sustained every second by the God who first exhaled it.

Question 4. God could have simply spoken the man into existence the way He spoke light into existence. Instead the text gives us this strangely intimate picture, forming by hand and breathing mouth to nostrils. Why do you think Scripture wants us to see it this way?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Let the group speculate; there is no single required answer. Draw out this much: the picture is deliberately personal. Light is commanded from a distance; man is handled and breathed into at zero distance. Human beings are the one creature in the story that God gets this close to. The Fathers loved this detail. St. Irenaeus said God made man with His own two hands, the Son and the Spirit. Confirmation, at the end of this study, will turn out to be exactly this close: a hand laid on your head, words spoken over you in particular.

Scene Three: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue below to the tables and let them hunt. First table to find it stands and reads it. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in the prophets, then that the prophet was a priest in exile.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A prophet is picked up and set down in a valley. The valley is full of something dry. God asks the prophet a question the prophet is too careful to answer. Then God tells him to preach to the wind. Find the chapter."*

When found, have the discovering table read Ezekiel 37:1-14 aloud.

Question 5. God asks, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Ezekiel answers, "O Lord GOD, you know." Is that faith, dodging the question, or something else?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Arguably both, and that is what makes it honest. Ezekiel will not say no, because nothing is impossible for God. He cannot bring himself to say yes, because he is standing in a valley of very dry bones. So he hands the question back to the only One who knows. This is a perfectly good prayer for a Confirmation candidate, or a Confirmation parent, who is not sure how alive their own faith is: Lord, You know.

Question 6. The bones come together, flesh and skin cover them, "but there was no breath in them" (verse 8). Why does the vision happen in two stages? What is God teaching by making the breath a separate, second gift?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

A body can be complete and still be a corpse. Structure is not the same as life. The two-stage vision teaches Israel, and us, that being assembled correctly, having all the right parts in the right places, is not enough; the ruah has to come from outside, summoned from the four winds, before the host stands on its feet. Hold this thought lightly tonight and do not press it further: Christians have long seen in this pattern a picture of how God gives the Spirit in His own order and His own time. The group will meet the two-stage pattern again in the Acts of the Apostles, and when they do, some of them will remember this valley.

Question 7. Verse 11 decodes the vision: "these bones are the whole house of Israel." So this is not about individual resurrection first of all; it is about a people. What was dead about Israel, and what would coming alive look like for a whole people?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Israel in Ezekiel's day was in exile: temple burned, land lost, hope dried up. "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost." God promises to open the graves of the exile, put His Spirit within them, and place them in their own land. Coming alive looks like a restored, gathered, worshiping people, not just revived individuals. This matters for where our study is going: the Holy Spirit's great work is not private inspiration here and there. It is raising up a people. Keep that word "people" in view; it will matter enormously in a few weeks.

The Push-Back: Just a Mighty Wind?

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Some modern translations render Genesis 1:2 not as "the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" but as "a mighty wind swept over the waters." The case for that reading is serious: *ruah* really does mean wind; Hebrew sometimes uses "of God" simply to mean "mighty" or "enormous"; and other ancient creation stories feature great winds over primeval waters. On this reading, Genesis 1:2 has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. It is just weather. Christians, the objection goes, are reading their doctrine of the Trinity back into a text that knows nothing about it.

Question 8. Take the objection seriously. If you only had the rest of tonight's passages, Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37, how would you answer it from the text itself?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Three moves, all from the text. First, the verb: the ruah in Genesis 1:2 is "moving" or "hovering" (*merachephet*), a word used almost nowhere else in the Bible; its clearest other use is Deuteronomy 32:11, an eagle fluttering over her young. Winds do not brood over anything; living beings do. Second, the pattern: Job 33:4 puts God's ruah in poetic parallel with His life-giving breath, and Ezekiel 37, playing deliberately on every sense of the word, ends with God saying "I will put my

Spirit within you" (37:14): in Scripture's own usage, God's ruah is personal and life-giving, not weather. Scripture interprets Scripture, and the pattern points one way. Third, be honest about the remainder: the human author of Genesis did not have the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Church does not claim he did. What the Church claims is that the Holy Spirit who inspired the text planted a seed there whose full meaning God always intended, and which the rest of revelation unfolds. That is not reading something in; it is watching something grow.

DIG DEEPER

Deuteronomy 32:11. Look it up together if time allows. The same rare verb from Genesis 1:2 describes an eagle stirring her nest and fluttering over her young. St. Basil's image of the brooding bird was not sentimentality. It was word study.

One Last Glimpse

Read John 20:21-22 aloud yourself, without introduction.

The risen Jesus stands among His apostles behind shut doors, breathes on them, and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Say only this, and then stop: the only other time Scripture shows God breathing life into a human being, dust became a living man. Now He breathes on men again. Something new is being created. What it is, and what it has to do with the sacrament these candidates are preparing for, is where this study is going.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Where in your life right now do you feel more like the bodies in verse 8, assembled but not yet breathing?
2. Ezekiel was told to prophesy to the breath, to actually ask for it out loud. What would it look like for you to ask for the Holy Spirit this week, in plain words?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Each morning this week, before leaving the house, pray one sentence together out loud: "Come, Holy Spirit, breathe life into this day." That is the whole practice. Seven mornings, one breath of a prayer. If a morning is missed, no penance and no quitting; just pray it the next morning.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, You breathed into dust and it became a living man. You breathed into a valley of dry bones and it became a great army. Breathe into these families. Where our faith is assembled but not yet alive, send Your ruah from the four winds. We are not too dry for You. Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"The spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life." (Job 33:4)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 1, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Genesis 1:1-2** (Build, Scene One: the Spirit over the waters)
- **Genesis 2:7** (Build, Scene Two: the breath of life)
- **Ezekiel 37:1-14** (Build, Scene Three: live discovery, the dry bones)
- **Deuteronomy 32:11** (Dig Deeper: the hovering eagle, same verb as Genesis 1:2)
- **Job 33:4** (Memory verse)
- **John 20:21-22** (One Last Glimpse: Jesus breathes on the apostles)

Catechism: CCC 691, 703, 704.

Voices: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (Against Heresies IV, 20); St. Basil the Great (Hexaemeron, Homily 2); St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures, 16).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 1, one per household. Point out the two sealed boxes. Sheets stay sealed at home until Session 14.

SESSION 2

The Spirit on the Few

Numbers 11 • Judges 6 • 1 Samuel 16

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Participants discover the Old Testament pattern of the Spirit: given to a few, given suddenly, given for a task, and capable of departing. Inside that pattern they find Moses saying out loud the thing the whole Old Testament is aching for: "Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" Confirmation stands inside the new covenant's answer to that ache, strengthening for mission the universal gift that Christ's Passover and Pentecost poured out.

Catholic Touchstone

Before Pentecost, the Spirit's mission was real but hidden, at work in judges, kings, and prophets for the sake of the whole people (CCC 702). The fullness of the Spirit was never meant to remain the possession of a few; it was to be communicated to the whole messianic people (CCC 1287). Tonight the group watches the "few" stage of that story, and hears Moses wish for the "all" stage.

What You Need to Know

The verbs are violent. The Old Testament almost never says the Spirit gently "filled" someone. He "came upon" the elders, "took possession of" Gideon (the Hebrew says the Spirit *clothed Himself* with Gideon, put him on like a coat), and "rushed upon" Samson and David. These are verbs of sudden seizure from outside. The Spirit in this era is an event that happens to a person, not a resident who lives in one.

The gift is task-shaped. In every case tonight, the Spirit comes so that someone can do a job for the people: help Moses govern, deliver Israel from Midian, shepherd the kingdom. Nobody receives the Spirit as a trophy or a private experience. This corrects, gently, the way many teens and adults imagine spiritual gifts, as personal upgrades. In Scripture the Spirit is given to you mostly for everyone else.

The gift can leave. The same chapter that says the Spirit rushed on David from that day forward says the Spirit departed from Saul. Do not soften this; the steelman chain tonight depends on facing it squarely. One precision to hold: tonight's pattern concerns the conspicuous task-endowments, prophetic, royal, military; it is not a claim that God's grace never truly dwelt in the righteous of the old covenant. Those charismatic givings could be withdrawn, and the Old Testament itself knows this is not good enough, which is exactly why its prophets start promising something permanent.

The oil rule. In 1 Samuel 16:13, Samuel anoints David with oil and the Spirit rushes on him. You must not develop the oil tonight. If anyone in the group notices it and asks, smile and say, word for word, "Hold that thought until next week." Session 3 opens on that very verse. Letting a participant's own question hang in the air for a week is worth more than any answer you could give tonight.

For the parents in the room. The fairness question ("Why would God give the Spirit to some and not others?") tends to come from parents as often as teens, sometimes wearing grown-up clothes: why does faith seem easy for some people and dry for me? Do not treat it as a distraction. The session's honest answer, that the selective era was temporary and aimed at a universal gift, lands hardest on the adult who quietly feels passed over.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Numbers 11 (seventy elders receive Moses' Spirit) anticipates Luke 10:1, where Jesus, the new Moses, appoints seventy and sends them ahead of Him. Tonight's closing glimpse.
- Moses' wish in Numbers 11:29 anticipates Joel's prophecy that God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Session 4) and Peter's "this is what was spoken" at Pentecost (Session 7).
- Gideon's fleece (Judges 6:36-40, adjacent to tonight's discovery) was read by St. Ambrose as an image of the Spirit: dew first on the fleece alone, then on all the ground. The few, then the all.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*On the Holy Spirit, Book I, prologue*)

St. Ambrose read Gideon's fleece as a picture of the Spirit's story. First the dew fell on the fleece alone while all the ground stayed dry: the Spirit's dew resting on the one people, Israel. Then the dew fell on all the ground: the grace poured out on all the nations. The movement from the one to the all that the group discovers tonight as a pattern, Ambrose saw as a promise.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 171*)

St. Thomas taught that the light of prophecy was given to the prophets as a passing impression, not a permanent possession. A prophet could not prophesy whenever he wished; the gift came when God sent it and not otherwise. This is the precise, careful way of describing tonight's charismatic pattern: the prophetic and task-gifts of the old covenant came when God sent them, not at the prophet's disposal. Thomas is speaking of prophecy, not denying that God's grace truly dwelt in the holy ones of the old covenant.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 16*)

Instructing his candidates, St. Cyril walked through the Spirit's work in the Old Testament and lingered on Numbers 11: the Spirit that rested on Moses was shared with the seventy elders, and even reached Eldad and Medad in the camp. Cyril's point to his hearers was that the Spirit they were preparing to receive was not a novelty; He had been at work among God's people for a very long time.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 687.** No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God, who has spoken through the prophets.
- **CCC 702.** From the beginning until the fullness of time, the joint mission of the Word and the Spirit remains hidden, but it is at work; tonight's figures belong to that hidden preparatory era.
- **CCC 1287.** The fullness of the Spirit was not to remain uniquely the Messiah's, but was to be communicated to the whole messianic people.

Thread Watch

Thread B: From the Few to the All. Planted tonight in Moses' wish (Numbers 11:29) and watered by Ambrose's fleece. It develops in Session 4 (Joel: "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh") and resolves in Session 7 when Peter stands up at Pentecost and declares Joel's prophecy fulfilled, with Moses' wish granted in the same stroke on the Church's long-standing reading. Do not connect it forward; just make sure Numbers 11:29 gets read aloud twice and memorized.

Thread C: The Oil. Pre-seeded only. Samuel's horn of oil appears in 1 Samuel 16:13 and you say nothing about it. Session 3 opens there. If asked: "Hold that thought until next week."

Session Goals

1. Participants can describe the Old Testament pattern of the Spirit in their own words: on the few, suddenly, for a task, revocably.
2. Participants have found Judges 6 themselves and can explain what it means that the Spirit "clothed" Gideon.
3. Numbers 11:29 has been read aloud at least twice and every household leaves with it as the memory verse.
4. The group has faced the "Spirit who leaves" objection at full strength and seen how the Old Testament itself answers it by promising something better.
5. Nobody has discussed the oil. Truly. Not even you.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on Samson, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the live discovery of Judges 6, the double reading of Numbers 11:29, or the Luke 10 glimpse.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit. You rested on seventy elders in the wilderness, You clothed a frightened farmer like a coat, You rushed upon a shepherd boy in front of his brothers. Nothing about our ordinariness discourages You. Rest on this room tonight. Give us the honesty to ask for what Moses asked for, and the patience to watch You answer it. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. Who is someone you know personally who has a gift you wish you had? What is the gift?
2. Tell your partner about a time you were handed a job you felt completely unqualified for. What happened?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Seventy (Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30)

Households read this at home this week. Have two readers take it in turns aloud now: verses 16-17, then 24-30.

Question 1. What problem is God actually solving by taking some of the Spirit that is on Moses and putting it on the seventy? What is the Spirit for, in this scene?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Moses is collapsing under the weight of the people; he has just told God he would rather die than carry them alone (verses 11-15, worth glancing at). The Spirit is God's answer to a leadership crisis. He is given so that seventy men can share a burden, which means the Spirit here is fuel for service, not a badge of honor. Notice that the elders prophesy once, as a sign, "but they did so no more" (verse 25). Even this gift is for the task, not for the thrill.

Question 2. Eldad and Medad missed the meeting, and the Spirit found them anyway, in the camp. Joshua wants them stopped. Read Moses' answer in verse 29 aloud, twice. What does Moses want, and why is it a surprising thing for him, of all people, to want?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Moses wants the exact opposite of what Joshua wants. Joshua wants the gift fenced, controlled, kept close to headquarters; he is jealous for Moses' status. Moses wants the fence torn down entirely: all the LORD's people, every last one, carrying the Spirit. It is surprising because Moses is the one man with the most to lose if the gift goes universal; his uniqueness is his authority. Instead the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3) wishes his own privilege onto everybody. Hold this question for the group: is verse 29 just a wish, or is it a prophecy? Do not answer it tonight. The study will.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in the book named for what its heroes were, then that the man's story starts with wheat.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. "A farmer is threshing wheat in a winepress, which is a strange place to do it, because he is hiding. An angel calls this frightened man a mighty warrior, which sounds almost like a joke. But later the Spirit of the LORD puts him on like a coat, and he picks up a trumpet. Find him."

When found, have the discovering table read Judges 6:33-35 aloud, and let someone summarize verses 11-16 for context.

Question 3. Your translation likely says the Spirit "took possession of" Gideon. The Hebrew underneath says the Spirit of the LORD *clothed Himself* with Gideon, wore him like a garment. Sit with that picture a moment. What does it suggest about who is doing the work when a Spirit-filled person acts?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The picture reverses our instincts. We would say Gideon "had" the Spirit, as if the Spirit were Gideon's equipment. The Hebrew says the Spirit had Gideon; Gideon was the equipment. When the trumpet sounds and the tribes rally, the power at work is not a farmer's courage upgraded a little; it is God acting, wearing a human life. The man who was hiding in a winepress in verse 11 is mustering an army by verse 35, and the only thing that changed in between is the Spirit.

Question 4. Put tonight's cases side by side: seventy exhausted elders, one frightened farmer. What do these Spirit-comings have in common? Build the list together on paper.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Draw out at least these: the Spirit comes suddenly, from outside, as God's sovereign provision, often answering a need someone has cried out about, as Moses did in verses 11-15, but never on human schedule or demand. He comes on people who are not obviously qualified, and the text goes out of its way to show us their weakness first. He comes for a task that serves the whole people. And he comes to a few, while everyone else watches. That last item should feel slightly uncomfortable. Let it. The discomfort is the Old Testament doing its job.

Scene Three: The Shepherd and the King (1 Samuel 16:13-14)

Read both verses aloud, and stop exactly at the end of verse 14.

Question 5. These two verses are a hinge. What happens to David, and what happens to Saul? What is different about the way the text describes the Spirit's coming on David compared to everything else we have seen tonight?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The Spirit rushes on David "from that day forward," the first hint in the whole pattern of something that stays rather than visits. And in the very next breath, the Spirit departs from Saul. One verse of promise, one verse of warning, welded together on purpose. If the group notices the oil Samuel uses, say only, "Hold that thought until next week," and move on. Do not explain it, do not wink at it more than that.

The Push-Back: The Spirit Who Leaves

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Tonight's own texts prove that the Spirit's presence is conditional and revocable. The Spirit departed from Saul. David himself, after his great sin, begged, "Take not thy holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11), which only makes sense if the Spirit can be taken. So the biblical picture is of a Spirit who comes and goes as God pleases and as our faithfulness holds. Any claim that a ceremony performed on a teenager confers the Holy Spirit as a permanent, unlosable possession contradicts the Bible's own evidence. You cannot seal the wind.

Question 6. The objection is built from tonight's passages, so it deserves an answer from tonight's passages. Take it seriously: what does the Old Testament itself do with the fact that the Spirit's presence in this era is unstable?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede the evidence first, because it is real: in the old covenant the Spirit's coming truly is selective, task-bound, and revocable, and Scripture never pretends otherwise. But watch what the Old Testament does with its own instability: it groans about it. Moses wishes the gift were universal. David, terrified of losing the Spirit, prays in the same psalm for a clean heart and a new and right spirit within him; read canonically, the Church has heard in that prayer a reaching toward the interior gift the prophets would soon promise. And the prophets, whom the group meets in Session 4, will promise exactly that: a new heart, and "my Spirit within you," put there by God to stay. In other words, the revocable era is not the Bible's final position; it is the Bible's setup. The honest remainder: how the permanent gift works, and what "sealed" means, cannot be settled from the Old Testament, and we will not pretend to settle it tonight. The New Testament texts that answer it are coming, and the objection deserves to be held open until they arrive.

DIG DEEPER

Judges 14:5-6. If time allows, look up Samson. The Spirit of the LORD rushes on the least saintly of all the judges, a man of appetite and revenge, whom God had nonetheless appointed to begin delivering Israel (Judges 13:5; 14:4). The Spirit's coming in this era is not a merit badge, and Scripture is almost aggressive about proving it. That should unsettle any candidate who thinks Confirmation is a reward for the well-behaved, and comfort any candidate who is sure they are not holy enough for it.

One Last Glimpse

Read Luke 10:1 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Jesus appoints seventy others and sends them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town where he himself is about to come. Say only this, and then stop: the last time somebody put the Spirit of one leader onto seventy helpers, we were in the wilderness with Moses. Somebody in this story is acting like a new Moses. And a new Moses might have something to say about Moses' old wish.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Every Spirit-coming tonight was for a task that served other people. If God gave you the Spirit's power for one task in the next year, what do you honestly suspect it would be?
2. Moses wished the Spirit onto everybody. Do you actually want that for yourself? What, honestly, makes you hesitate?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Once a day, each of you prays Moses' wish over the other, by name and out loud: "Lord, put Your Spirit on N." Six seconds, once a day, in the car or the kitchen or the doorway. Praying it for the other person, rather than for yourself, is the point; that is what Moses did.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, You are not stingy with Your Spirit; You are patient with Your story. Thank You for the elders, the farmer, and the shepherd, and for the wish of Moses that You have not forgotten. Make us a people who want what Moses wanted. We ask it through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 2, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30** (Build, Scene One: the seventy elders; verses 11-15 for context)
- **Judges 6:33-35** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, the Spirit clothes Gideon; verses 11-16 for context)
- **1 Samuel 16:13-14** (Build, Scene Three: the Spirit rushes on David, departs from Saul)
- **Psalms 51:10-11** (Push-Back: "take not thy holy Spirit from me")
- **Judges 14:5-6** (Dig Deeper: Samson)
- **Luke 10:1** (One Last Glimpse: Jesus appoints seventy)

Catechism: CCC 687, 702, 1287.

Voices: St. Ambrose of Milan (On the Holy Spirit, Book I, prologue); St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae II-II, q. 171); St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures, 16).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 2, one per household.

Standing rule tonight: nobody discusses the oil. If asked: "Hold that thought until next week."

SESSION 3

Oil and Anointing

1 Samuel 16 • Exodus 30 • Isaiah 11:1-3

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Participants discover why Israel poured oil on people: anointing marked a person as chosen, set apart, and claimed by God for one of three offices, priest, prophet, or king. They then discover that "Messiah" and "Christ" both simply mean "the Anointed One," and that Isaiah promised an Anointed One on whom the Spirit would not merely rush, but rest, carrying gifts. Saying "Jesus Christ" turns out to be a claim, not a name. And the word "Confirmation candidate" turns out to sit closer to that claim than anyone in the room suspected.

Catholic Touchstone

The title "Christ" means the one anointed by God's Spirit (CCC 436). Anointing with oil is the great biblical sign of the Spirit: it soaks in, it heals, it strengthens, it marks (CCC 695). The Spirit who rested on the promised Anointed One brings the sevenfold gifts the Church still names: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (CCC 1831).

What You Need to Know

The question you planted last week walks in the door with them. Households were assigned to reread 1 Samuel 16:1-13 and notice what Samuel carries. Open the session by collecting the answer from them, not by announcing it. The week of waiting was the setup; tonight is the payoff. Whoever asked about the oil last week should be publicly thanked for asking the exact right question.

Mashiach. The Hebrew *mashiach* means "anointed one," a person who has had the oil poured on them. Greek translates it *christos*. So "Messiah" and "Christ" are the same word in two languages, and neither one is a surname. When the first Christians said "Jesus Christ," they were making Israel's biggest claim: this man is THE Anointed One, the priest, prophet, and king all the oil was pointing at. Most teens, and a fair number of parents, have never once heard this. Watch their faces when it lands.

Three offices, one oil. Israel anointed priests (Exodus 29:7), kings (1 Samuel 16:13), and, at least once by explicit command, a prophet (1 Kings 19:16). All three jobs stand between God and the people and act in God's name. The oil marks a person as no longer merely their own.

Six or seven gifts. Be ready for the sharp-eyed reader. The Hebrew of Isaiah 11:2-3 names six gifts, with "fear of the LORD" appearing twice. The ancient Greek and Latin translations render one occurrence as "piety," giving seven, and the Church's traditional list of seven gifts follows that older liturgical tradition (CCC 1831). Do not hide this; the answer box for Question 7 handles it honestly, and honesty here buys you credibility everywhere else.

The verb changed. Last week the Spirit "rushed" and "clothed" and "came upon." Isaiah 11:2 says the Spirit shall *rest* upon him. One quiet verb announces a new era: not a visit but an abiding. Let the group find this contrast themselves in Question 6; it is the hinge of the night.

For the parents in the room. Parents often carry a vague unease that Catholic ritual objects, oil among them, are superstition with a blessing on top. Tonight quietly answers it: in Scripture the oil never works as magic. In 1 Samuel 16:13 the oil is poured and the Spirit rushes, one event, sign and gift together. God attaches His actions to physical signs because He is dealing with creatures who have bodies. A parent who sees that pattern in the Old Testament will recognize it without argument when their child is anointed.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- The anointing of David (1 Samuel 16:13) anticipates the anointing of the Son of David, not with oil but with the Spirit Himself at the Jordan (Session 5; Acts 10:38 is tonight's glimpse).
- Isaiah 11:1-3 (the Spirit resting on the shoot of Jesse with His gifts) anticipates Luke 4:18, where Jesus announces "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me," and the Church's prayer over every candidate for the sevenfold gift.
- The consecrated oil of Exodus 30, holy and not for ordinary use, anticipates sacred chrism. Do not develop this forward connection with the group; it belongs to Session 14.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies, Book III, chapter 18*)

St. Irenaeus taught that the very name "Christ" contains the whole Trinity: it implies the One who anoints, the One who is anointed, and the Anointing itself with which He is anointed. The Father anoints, the Son is anointed, and the anointing is the Holy Spirit. Every time the group says "Jesus Christ" from tonight on, they are naming that whole event.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 68*)

St. Thomas taught that the gifts of the Holy Spirit named in Isaiah 11 are not passing jolts of inspiration but abiding dispositions: they perfect a person so as to be readily and promptly moved by the Holy Spirit, the way a well-trained crew responds instantly to the helmsman. The gifts, in other words, make a soul easy for God to steer.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Speaking to the newly initiated, St. Cyril told them plainly: having received the anointing, you have become "christs," anointed ones, and the word "Christian" means exactly that. What Israel gave to a few priests, prophets, and kings, God now gives to His whole people. Cyril said this out loud to the newly initiated of Jerusalem, sixteen centuries ago, and it belongs to your candidates' future.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 436.** "Christ" comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew "Messiah," meaning "anointed." Jesus is the Anointed One because the Spirit consecrates Him for His mission as priest, prophet, and king.
- **CCC 695.** Anointing with oil is a chief symbol of the Holy Spirit; its full meaning appears in Christ, the one anointed by the Spirit of God.
- **CCC 1831.** The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David.

Thread Watch

Thread C: The Oil. Officially planted tonight, in front of everyone, by paying off last week's held question. It develops in Session 5 (Jesus anointed with the Spirit at the Jordan, Acts 10:38) and Session 10 (God "has anointed us," 2 Corinthians 1:21), and resolves at Session 14 when the group meets sacred chrism and the bishop's anointing. Tonight, keep every forward reference sealed. The oil in this room stays Old Testament oil.

Thread A and B check. The verb "rest" in Isaiah 11:2 quietly advances both prior threads: the Breath that visited now promises to abide (A), and the gifts carried by the Anointed One are the ones destined for the whole people (B, via CCC 1287, which you know and they do not yet). Say none of this. If a participant spots the visiting-versus-resting shift on their own, that is Thread A working exactly as designed; praise the observation and move on.

Session Goals

1. Participants can name the three anointed offices of Israel and what anointing marked a person as.
2. Every person in the room can say what "Christ" and "Messiah" literally mean, and knows that "Christ" is a title and a claim, not a surname.
3. Participants have found Isaiah 11 themselves, noticed that the Spirit "rests" rather than "rushes," and met the seven gifts by name.
4. The group has faced the "oil is Old Covenant shadow" objection at full strength, with the honest remainder left open until the Acts sessions.
5. Each household leaves with the seven-gifts, seven-days prayer plan and knows which gift goes with which day.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 2 (keep question 1), skip the Dig Deeper box on Psalm 45, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the opening payoff of the oil question, the live discovery of Isaiah 11, or the mashiach word study; those three carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit. You marked priests and prophets and kings with oil, and every drop of it was a promise. Teach us tonight what Your anointing means, and what it costs, and Whose it makes us. Rest on this room the way Isaiah said You would rest. Through Christ, Your Anointed One, our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. Tell your partner about a time you were picked for something: a team, a part, a job, a responsibility. How did being chosen change how you acted?
2. If you could be given one of these, fully and permanently, which would you take: wisdom, courage, or understanding? Why that one?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Horn of Oil (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

Households reread this at home. Do not summarize it for them; collect it from them. Ask the room: what did Samuel carry to Bethlehem, and who noticed it last week before you were asked to?

Question 1. Verse 13 puts two things in one sentence: Samuel pours the oil, and the Spirit rushes on David. What is the relationship between the oil and the Spirit here? Is the oil doing anything, or is it just decoration?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The text welds them into a single event: "Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him... and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward." The oil is not magic; it has no power of its own, and Scripture never says it does. But neither is it decoration; the narrative joins the visible anointing and the Spirit's coming as closely as words can join two things. Sign and gift arrive together, because God is dealing with people who have bodies and learn through what they can see and touch. File this pattern away. It is how God works with humans from one end of the Bible to the other.

Question 2. Have someone read Exodus 30:25, 29, and 31-32 aloud. This is the recipe and the rules for Israel's anointing oil. What makes this oil different from the oil in your kitchen? What do the rules tell you anointing means?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

It is called "sacred anointing oil," and verse 29 adds that the consecrated things "shall be most holy; whatever touches them will become holy"; the oil must never be poured on an ordinary person or duplicated for everyday use. The oil is set apart, which is what "holy" means, and it consecrates what it touches. To be anointed is to be marked as claimed: this person now belongs to God for a purpose, and is no longer merely their own. The rules exist to protect the meaning. If everybody could wear the mark for any reason, the mark would say nothing.

Scene Two: Three Jobs, One Oil

Question 3. Build the list on paper together. Look up Exodus 29:7 (whose head gets the oil?), then 1 Kings 19:16 (who is Elisha anointed to be?), and recall 1 Samuel 16. Which three jobs in Israel get the oil, and what do those three jobs have in common?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Priest (Aaron), prophet (Elisha, the one prophet Scripture explicitly commands to be anointed), king (David): priests and kings regularly, and the prophetic office by that command completing the traditional threefold pattern. All three stand in the gap between God and the people: the priest carries the people's worship up to God, the prophet carries God's word down to the people, the king governs the people in God's name. Each one acts on behalf of Someone greater than himself, which is exactly why the mark of not-your-own belongs on all three.

Question 4. Word study, and let it land slowly. The Hebrew for "anointed one" is *mashiach*. Say it out loud as a room. Now the Greek translation of that same word: *christos*. Say that out loud too. So: what are we actually claiming every time we say "Jesus Christ"?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Christ" is not a last name; Joseph and Mary were not Mr. and Mrs. Christ. It is *mashiach* in Greek clothing: THE Anointed One. To say "Jesus Christ" is to make Israel's whole ancient claim in two words: this Jesus is the promised one on whom all the oil converges, the final priest, the final prophet, the final king in one person. Many people in the room have said the word "Christ" thousands of times without knowing they were saying "the Anointed One." Give them a moment with that. Then, if the room is ready, one step further and no more: the word "Christian" is built from the same root. What that means for them is a question this study will spend eleven more weeks answering.

Scene Three: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in the longest of the prophets, then that it is very near the front of him.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. "A royal family tree has been chopped down to a stump. Out of the dead stump, one green shoot grows. And on that single twig, the Spirit of the LORD comes down and stays, named gift by gift. Find the stump."

When found, have the discovering table read Isaiah 11:1-3a aloud, slowly.

Question 5. Jesse is David's father, so "the stump of Jesse" is David's family tree. What does it mean that the prophet pictures it as a stump? And what is God promising with the shoot?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

A stump is a tree that has been cut down: the prophetic image pictures David's royal house brought low, humbled to apparent deadness, an image later history filled out in the exile. Isaiah looks at the humbled royal line and promises that out of it, when everyone has stopped watching, a new shoot will grow: a new David, a true Anointed One, coming from a family everyone had written off. Worth saying gently in a room of teenagers and tired parents: God's favorite growing medium, on the evidence of Scripture, is the stump everyone gave up on.

Question 6. Listen to the verb in verse 2. Last week the Spirit "rushed upon" people and "clothed" them and "came upon" them. What does the Spirit do here, and why is that one word a big deal?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The Spirit shall REST upon him. Not rush, not seize, not visit: rest, the way a dove settles, the way someone comes home. Be precise, because a sharp reader may recall that Numbers 11:25 also says the Spirit "rested" on the elders, and it did, for a moment: they prophesied, "but they did so no more." What Isaiah promises is different in scale: a resting that abides, on one figure, as his permanent endowment. Within the passages this study has walked, this is the promise of an abiding. On this one person, the Spirit will not be an event but a residence. If someone in the group connects this back to "from that day forward" over David, or forward to anything else, do not confirm or deny; smile and say that is worth remembering.

Question 7. Count the gifts in verses 2-3 as your Bible prints them. You will likely count six, with "fear of the LORD" twice. The Church's traditional list has seven: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord. What happened, and does the difference bother you?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

An honest answer, because the group has earned one: the Hebrew text names six gifts, repeating "fear of the LORD." The ancient Greek translation (the Septuagint), and the Latin after it, rendered the first occurrence as "piety," giving seven, and the Church's liturgy and catechesis follow that ancient list (CCC 1831). This is not a cover-up; the Church has always known both readings, and seven, the Bible's number of fullness, expresses exactly what Isaiah means: the complete equipment of the Spirit resting on the Anointed One. The Church has always read the list less as an arithmetic inventory than as a portrait of a person completely possessed by the Spirit of God, and she consistently names seven. Say plainly: the Church did not invent a gift; she received a translation older than Christmas.

The Push-Back: Shadows and Substance

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Oil belongs to the Old Covenant, the age of shadows and symbols. In the New Testament, the "anointing" believers receive is explicitly spiritual: "you have been anointed by the Holy One" and "the anointing which you received from him abides in you" (1 John 2:20, 27), and no oil is anywhere in

sight; the anointing IS the Holy Spirit. So when the Catholic Church anoints teenagers with perfumed oil and calls it the gift of the Spirit, she has traded the substance back for the shadow, returning to the props of a covenant that is over. The Spirit needs no oil.

Question 8. Take it seriously; 1 John really does say that. What can you answer from the texts we have seen tonight, and from the New Testament itself?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede the center: in 1 John, the abiding anointing is commonly and rightly understood as the Holy Spirit Himself, not a substance, and any Catholic account that forgot this would deserve the objection. But the argument proves too much. First, the New Testament church did not retire oil: the Twelve "anointed with oil many that were sick" (Mark 6:13), and James commands the presbyters to pray over the sick, "anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:14). Shadows do not survive into apostolic practice; signs do. Second, tonight's own pattern: in 1 Samuel 16 the oil never worked by magic; sign and Spirit came as one event, because God gives invisible gifts through visible means to creatures with bodies. The New Covenant does not abolish that pattern; it fills it. The honest remainder, left open on purpose: nowhere does the New Testament command oil for the giving of the Spirit to the baptized, and the group should not let anyone pretend it does. What the apostles actually did to give the Spirit, and how the Church's chrism grew from it, is exactly what Sessions 8 and 9 exist to examine. Hold the objection; it will be paid in full.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 45:6-7. If time allows, look it up: a royal wedding song where God anoints the king "with the oil of gladness above your fellows." The Letter to the Hebrews (1:8-9) takes this verse and applies it directly to the Son. The New Testament read the anointing psalms in their fullest sense and saw the Son; the psalm was carrying more than its first singers could know.

One Last Glimpse

Read Acts 10:38 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Peter, preaching, says that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Say only this, and then stop: search the Gospels and you will find no horn of oil, no Samuel, no pouring, anywhere near Jesus' head. And yet Peter says he was anointed. So somewhere in the story there is an anointing scene we have all read without recognizing it. Next time we go looking for it.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Anointing means you are claimed, no longer merely your own. What is one area of your life where being claimed by God would actually change something this month?
2. Of the seven gifts named tonight, which one do you most need right now, honestly, and what would having it look like on an ordinary Tuesday?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together: seven gifts, seven days. Each day this week, pray one sentence together for that day's gift: "Come, Holy Spirit, give us the gift of N." Monday wisdom, Tuesday understanding, Wednesday counsel, Thursday fortitude, Friday knowledge, Saturday piety,

Sunday fear of the Lord. One sentence, one gift, once a day. By Sunday you will have prayed the whole sevenfold gift over your house.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, You promised a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and on Him Your Spirit resting: wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and fear of the LORD. We are done treating "Christ" as a last name. Anoint our eyes to see what we have been saying all along, and prepare these candidates for the day the claim reaches them. Through Jesus, the Anointed One, our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD." (Isaiah 11:2)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 3, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **1 Samuel 16:1-13** (Build, Scene One: the horn of oil, reread at home this week)
- **Exodus 30:25, 29, 31-32** (Build, Scene One: the sacred anointing oil)
- **Exodus 29:7** (Build, Scene Two: anointing of the priest)
- **1 Kings 19:16** (Build, Scene Two: anointing of the prophet)
- **Isaiah 11:1-3** (Build, Scene Three: live discovery, the shoot of Jesse and the resting Spirit)
- **1 John 2:20, 27** (Push-Back: the anointing that abides)
- **Mark 6:13; James 5:14** (Push-Back answer: oil in apostolic practice)
- **Psalms 45:6-7; Hebrews 1:8-9** (Dig Deeper: the oil of gladness)
- **Acts 10:38** (One Last Glimpse: God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit)

Catechism: CCC 436, 695, 1831.

Voices: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (Against Heresies III, 18); St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 68); St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Mystagogical Catecheses, 3).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 3, one per household, with the seven-gifts, seven-days plan.

SESSION 4

The Promise of Outpouring

Ezekiel 36 • Jeremiah 31 • Joel 2

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Participants discover that the prophets did not just describe the old pattern of the Spirit; they promised its end. Three prophecies stack up tonight: a new heart with God's Spirit put **WITHIN** you (Ezekiel), a covenant written on hearts instead of stone (Jeremiah), and the Spirit poured out on **ALL** flesh, sons and daughters, old and young, servants included (Joel). Moses' wish from Session 2 stops being a wish tonight and becomes a promissory note with God's signature on it.

Catholic Touchstone

The prophetic texts concerning the sending of the Holy Spirit announce a new covenant in which God will give His people a new heart and His own Spirit within them (CCC 715). The New Law of the Gospel is, first and foremost, not a text but the very grace of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful, the law written on hearts that Jeremiah promised (CCC 1965-1966). Confirmation stands inside that promise.

What You Need to Know

Track the prepositions. Sessions 1-3 gave the group the Spirit's task-gifts **UPON** the few, rushing and departing. Tonight the prophets change the prepositions, and, as a teaching frame for these particular texts, the prepositions are the theology. Ezekiel: "I will put my Spirit **WITHIN** you." Joel: "I will pour out my Spirit **ON ALL FLESH**." From upon to within; from the few to all. If the group leaves knowing only those two shifts, the session succeeded.

The setting is rock bottom. Jeremiah spoke on the edge of catastrophe and Ezekiel inside the exile itself; Joel's date is debated, but his book opens on a nation devastated by locusts. In each case the promise lands at a low point: God makes His biggest promises to His people in their ruins, not their strength. Say this plainly; there are households in your room at their own low points, and this is their session.

"All flesh" means what it says. Joel's list deliberately crosses every social boundary: sons **AND** daughters, old men **AND** young men, and even the male and female servants. Prophecy, the rare gift of Session 2, is promised across the whole people, down to the least credentialed. The idiom announces breadth, not a mechanical guarantee to every individual; let the group feel how radical the crossing is before anyone spiritualizes it.

Do not fire Thread B early. You know Peter quotes Joel at Pentecost. The group must not hear this from you tonight. If a participant already knows and says so, honor it briefly ("You've read ahead in the story, and you're right to smell it") and move on without opening Acts. The detonation belongs to Session 7.

For the parents in the room. Jeremiah's "law written on hearts" can sound to adults like religion without rules, and to teens like rules without escape. It is neither. The promise is not that God lowers the standard but that God moves the standard inside, supplying the desire and the power He commands. Augustine's line below is the tool for this. Parents who have spent years enforcing faith from the outside

should hear tonight that God's own plan was always an inside job, and that Confirmation is part of how He does it.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Ezekiel 36:26-27 (a new heart, my Spirit within you) reaches back to the dry bones of Session 1 (Ezekiel 37 follows it immediately) and forward to the sacraments of the new covenant, where the Church hears this promise kept, above all in the washing and Spirit-gift of Christian initiation.
- Jeremiah 31:31-34 (the new covenant) is the only place the Old Testament uses the phrase "new covenant"; Jesus takes those exact words at the Last Supper. Do not develop this tonight beyond noticing it if the group does.
- Joel 2:28-29 (poured out on all flesh) powerfully develops Moses' wish in Numbers 11:29 and awaits its "this is that" moment in Session 7.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*On the Spirit and the Letter*)

St. Augustine, in *On the Spirit and the Letter*, taught that the letter of the law, standing outside a person, commands what it cannot give, and kills; but the Spirit of the new covenant writes God's law inwardly and gives the love that fulfills it. His famous prayer from the Confessions distills it: give what You command, and command what You will.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 106*)

St. Thomas asked what the New Law actually is (I-II, q. 106, a. 1), and answered: chiefly, it is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given inwardly to believers; the written teachings of the Gospel are its secondary, normative expression, guiding the life that grace gives. Jeremiah's promise of a law written on hearts is, for Thomas, a plain description of what the Holy Spirit does to a person.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory Nazianzen (*Oration 41, On Pentecost*)

St. Gregory Nazianzen (*Oration 41, 11*) observed that God gives the Spirit by stages, accustoming us to His gifts by degrees: the Spirit worked in the prophets, was breathed on the apostles by the risen Christ, and was manifested with new fullness at Pentecost. The promises the group reads tonight are the middle of that staircase: the Spirit announcing, through the prophets, the fullness He intends to give.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 715.** The prophetic texts that directly concern the sending of the Holy Spirit announce a time when God will renew His people inwardly, writing His law on their hearts; Ezekiel 36 supplies tonight's "my Spirit within you" in Scripture's own words.

- **CCC 1965.** The New Law of the Gospel fulfills, refines, surpasses, and brings the Old Law to perfection; in it the promise of interiority that Jeremiah voiced comes to fulfillment.
- **CCC 1966.** The New Law is the grace of the Holy Spirit given to the faithful through faith in Christ.

Thread Watch

Thread B: From the Few to the All. Develops decisively tonight. Moses' wish (memorized two weeks ago) meets Joel's promise in the group's own hands during live discovery. Your job is to make sure someone in the room says out loud that Joel sounds like Moses; if nobody does, ask innocently what tonight's discovery reminds them of. Resolution: Session 7.

Thread A: The Breath. Develops quietly: "within you" advances the arc from visiting to indwelling. Ezekiel 36 sits one page before the dry bones of Session 1; if a participant flips and notices, that is the thread working. Confirm nothing.

Session Goals

1. Participants can state the two prophetic shifts in their own words: from upon to within, and from the few to all.
2. Participants have found Joel 2:28-29 themselves and at least one participant has connected it to Numbers 11:29 aloud.
3. Participants can explain what is new about the new covenant of Jeremiah 31: not a lower standard, but an inside job.
4. The group has faced the "this is just about the return from exile" objection at full strength.
5. Each household leaves with the heart-of-stone evening practice.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on Isaiah 44, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the live discovery of Joel or the prepositions teaching; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit. You made promises through the prophets to a people at rock bottom: a new heart, Your own Spirit within, an outpouring on everyone. You have never once broken a promise, and You have not forgotten these. Read them with us tonight, and make us a people who dare to hold You to Your word. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. What is a promise someone made you that took a long time to keep? Was it worth the wait?
2. Parents especially: tell your partner about something you waited years for, and what the waiting did to you.

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Inside Job (Ezekiel 36:24-28)

Households read this twice at home and underlined the sentence that sounds least like the old pattern. Collect the underlinings first: go around and ask what people marked, before any questions.

Question 1. What exactly does God promise to do in verses 26-27? List every verb with God as the subject. Then answer: what is Israel's job in this promise?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

God's verbs: I will give a new heart, I will put a new spirit within you, I will take out the heart of stone, I will give a heart of flesh, I will put MY Spirit within you, I will cause you to walk in my statutes. Israel's verbs: almost none; the people receive. This is a one-sided promise, all grace, made to a nation that had just proven it could not keep the two-sided kind. And catch the escalation the group may miss: verse 26 promises "a new spirit," often understood as a renewed human disposition; verse 27 goes unmistakably further: "my Spirit," God's own. God does not merely repair the engine; He moves in.

Question 2. Compare this with everything from Session 2. The Spirit "upon" Gideon, rushing and departing. Now: "within you." Why does the location matter so much?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

What is upon you can lift off; what is within you has become part of how you live. The old pattern empowered actions from outside; the promise transforms the actor from inside. A costume changes what you look like; a heart changes what you want. The prophets are promising the end of the visiting era. Whether and when God kept this promise is exactly the question the group should be leaving with tonight, unanswered.

Scene Two: Written on Hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Have someone read it aloud.

Question 3. God says the new covenant will NOT be like the covenant made at Sinai. What is the actual difference? Be precise: is God lowering the standard, changing the law, or doing something else?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Start with what Jeremiah says: not a lower standard but interiorization; the law once written on stone tablets outside the people, commanding what it could not supply, will be written on their hearts, so that knowing God and wanting what He wants comes from inside. And the New Testament adds what Jeremiah could not yet see: in Christ the New Law does not merely relocate the old but fulfills, refines, and perfects it, because the New Law is first of all the grace of the Holy Spirit Himself. St. Augustine prayed the difference in one line of the Confessions: give what You command, and command what You will. For a teenager, the difference between rules taped to the fridge and actually caring is the whole difference. God promises the caring.

Scene Three: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is one of the twelve short prophets near the end of the Old Testament, then that his book begins with an insect disaster.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. "A prophet has just watched locusts eat everything his nation had. And then God makes the biggest promise yet: afterward, I will pour something out. Not on prophets. Not on kings. On everyone: sons and daughters, the old and the young, even the servants. Find the pouring."

When found, have the discovering table read Joel 2:28-29 aloud, twice.

Question 4. Walk through Joel's list slowly. Sons and daughters. Old men and young men. Menservants and maidservants. In the world Joel lived in, who on that list would never, ever have been expected to receive the Spirit of prophecy?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Most of them, and be exact about it: Israel knew women prophets, Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, so the scandal is not that a daughter COULD prophesy, but that prophecy had been the exception, the rare and remarkable case. Joel promises the exception as the rule: sons and daughters, old and young, and even the servants, the least-credentialed of all. The list is engineered to cross every boundary his hearers assumed: sex, age, and status. The Spirit that once rested on seventy screened and summoned elders is promised across the whole people. If your room includes a fifteen-year-old who suspects Confirmation is for the holy kids, Joel disagrees, by name.

Question 5. Does this promise remind anyone of something we memorized two weeks ago? Say it from memory if you can.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29). Moses wished it; Joel promises it, developing the wish into an oracle: the Spirit poured out across every boundary of sex, age, and status, and prophecy no longer fenced to the few. A wish made in the wilderness has become, centuries later, a signed promise. Let the group sit in that for a moment. Then say only: a wish becoming a promise still leaves one question open, which is when the promise gets kept. Do not answer it. If someone answers it for you, smile and keep walking.

The Push-Back: A Promise Already Spent?

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Read these prophecies in context and they are not about Christian sacraments at all. Ezekiel 36 is explicitly about God gathering Israel "from all the countries" back to their own land: the return from Babylonian exile, which happened in the 500s BC. Joel is consoling a nation after a locust plague. These promises had their fulfillment within Israel's own history, and reading Confirmation, or anything Christian, into them is anachronism: hijacking another nation's mail. The prophecies are spent.

Question 6. The context claim is accurate, so do not dodge it. Judah really did return from exile. Here is the test question: when the exiles came back, did they get what Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2 describe? How would you find out?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede the near horizon: these oracles really do address the exile and the return, and honest reading starts there. But run the test. The exiles returned, rebuilt the temple, and the last prophets of the Old Testament, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, describe the result: a people still half-hearted, priests offering polluted sacrifices, and no universal outpouring in sight. On the evidence of those books, the return did not exhaust the promise, and the strands of later Jewish hope that we can trace kept looking forward; the texts read as still open. The promises overshot their first horizon on purpose, the way a father promising a homesick child "we are going home, and home will be better than you remember" means more than the address. The honest remainder: nothing in the Old Testament by itself tells you when or how the promise lands. Someone with authority would have to stand up in public and say, of a specific event, "this is what was spoken by the prophet." Whether anyone ever did is a question for another night.

DIG DEEPER

Isaiah 44:3. If time allows, look it up: "I will pour water on the thirsty land... I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants." A third prophet, same verb, same direction: downward, abundant, and onto the next generation, which in your room means the candidates.

One Last Glimpse

Read John 7:37-39 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Jesus stands up at a festival and shouts that anyone who thirsts should come to him and drink, and rivers of living water will flow. Then the narrator leans in and explains: he said this about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Say only this, and then stop: the tap has been promised, and the plumbing is in. Something still has to happen to Jesus first. Then the pouring starts.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Where in your life are you still running on rules taped to the fridge, doing the right thing without wanting it? What would it mean to ask God for the wanting?
2. God made His biggest promises to His people at rock bottom. If God made you one promise this year at your lowest point, what do you most need it to be?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Each evening, each of you names one "stone moment" from the day, one moment your heart went hard: impatience, a grudge, a cold shoulder. No commentary and no fixing each other. Then pray one line together: "Take our hearts of stone, and give us hearts of flesh." Name it, pray it, done.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, You promised a new heart and Your own Spirit within us. You promised an outpouring on sons and daughters, the old and the young, the overlooked and the unqualified. We are holding Your promises tonight with both hands. Keep them in us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 4, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Ezekiel 36:24-28** (Build, Scene One: new heart, my Spirit within you; read at home this week)
- **Jeremiah 31:31-34** (Build, Scene Two: the new covenant written on hearts)
- **Joel 2:28-29** (Build, Scene Three: live discovery, poured out on all flesh)
- **Numbers 11:29** (recalled from memory: Moses' wish)
- **Isaiah 44:3** (Dig Deeper: Spirit poured on your descendants)
- **John 7:37-39** (One Last Glimpse: rivers of living water, the Spirit not yet given)

Catechism: CCC 715, 1965, 1966.

Voices: St. Augustine of Hippo (On the Spirit and the Letter); St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 106); St. Gregory Nazianzen (Oration 41, On Pentecost).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 4, one per household.

SESSION 5

The Anointed One

Luke 3:21-22 • John 1:32-34 • Luke 4:16-21

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Last session ended with Peter's riddle: God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, yet no oil appears anywhere in the Gospels. Tonight participants solve it themselves. They find the anointing at the Jordan: the heavens opened, the Spirit descending in bodily form and, in John's crucial verb, REMAINING on him, the Father's voice claiming him. Then, in the Nazareth synagogue, they hear Jesus read Isaiah's anointing text and declare it fulfilled, today, in himself. The Christ turns out to have an anointing scene, and its shape, water, Spirit, and a word spoken over a beloved son, prefigures what God would do over every Christian.

Catholic Touchstone

The baptism of Jesus is his acceptance and inauguration of his mission; on him the Spirit whom he will pour out on the whole Church comes to rest (CCC 536). What took place over Christ in the Jordan reveals what happens in Christian initiation: the Spirit descends and the Father's voice declares a beloved child (CCC 537). The descent of the Spirit and its remaining on Jesus is the sign that he is the Messiah, the Anointed (CCC 1286).

What You Need to Know

Guard against one wrong turn. Jesus did not become the Son of God at the Jordan, and he did not become holy there; he is the eternal Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, holy from the womb. The ancient error that God adopted a mere man at the baptism is called adoptionism, and a bright candidate can wander into it innocently by asking "so he got the Spirit here?" The careful answer: the Jordan is not where Jesus acquires the Spirit; it is where the Spirit's resting on him is revealed, and where Jesus publicly accepts and begins his mission as Messiah (CCC 535-536). The anointing is his commissioning, not his upgrade. Have this distinction ready in your pocket; do not lecture it unless the question comes.

Why baptized at all? John's baptism was for repentant sinners, and Jesus had nothing to repent. He gets in the sinners' line anyway, on purpose, putting himself where the guilty stand. The Fathers loved the reversal: he goes into the water not to be cleansed by it but to sanctify it, blessing the waters for all who would follow him in. Expect a parent to ask this; it is the most common adult question about the passage.

The verb again. Session 3's hinge was Isaiah's promise that the Spirit would REST on the shoot of Jesse. John the Baptist reports that promise landing: "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him" (John 1:32), and adds that this remaining was the sign he had been told to watch for. Be precise if asked: Isaiah's Hebrew verb (*nuach*, rest) and John's Greek verb (*meno*, remain) are different words in different languages saying one thing: the promised abiding arrives. On this man, the Spirit stays.

The dove. Scripture never explains the dove, so hold interpretations loosely and say so. Two echoes are old and strong: the Spirit hovering like a bird over the waters of creation (Genesis 1:2, with St. Basil's

brooding image from Session 1), and Noah's dove over the flood waters, announcing that judgment is ending and a renewed world is beginning (Genesis 8). If a participant surfaces either echo unprompted, Thread A is paying interest; receive it warmly and confirm nothing beyond "that echo is really there."

For the parents in the room. Tonight's Live It practice asks parents to tell their child the story of the child's own baptism. For some parents this will be effortless and delightful. For some it will surface complications: they cannot remember, the photos are lost, the family situation then was painful, or the candidate was baptized late amid some difficulty. Frame the practice gently and give an out: what matters is not producing a perfect story but the candidate hearing "we brought you, and God claimed you." A parent who can only say that one sentence has done the whole assignment.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Isaiah 11:2 ("the Spirit shall rest upon him") is fulfilled in John 1:32-33 ("it remained on him"). The group memorized the promise two weeks ago; tonight they watch it land.
- Isaiah 61:1-2 ("the Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me") is the scroll Jesus unrolls at Nazareth and applies to himself: tonight's live discovery.
- Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 8:8-12 (Spirit and dove over the waters) echo underneath the Jordan scene: creation and new creation both begin with the Spirit over water.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies, Book III, chapter 17*)

St. Irenaeus taught that at the Jordan the Spirit descended on the Son of God made Son of man, and in him began growing accustomed to dwelling in the human race. What the Spirit practiced on Christ, Irenaeus says, he intended for us: having learned to rest on one man, he would come to rest on mankind, renewing us from our old ways into the newness of Christ.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Hilary of Poitiers (*Commentary on Matthew*)

St. Hilary taught that everything that took place over Christ at his baptism was a lesson about ourselves: after the washing with water, the Holy Spirit comes down upon us from the gate of heaven, and we are bathed in the Father's voice declaring us his children. What happened over the Jordan, Hilary says, is the pattern of what happens over every Christian.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Preaching on the baptism of the Lord, St. Gregory Nazianzen said that Christ comes up out of the water carrying the world up with him, and he urged his hearers: Christ is bathed in light; let us also be bathed; let us go down with him, that we may also rise with him. The feast, for Gregory, was never only about what happened to Jesus; it was an invitation with our names on it.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 536.** At his baptism Jesus accepts and inaugurates his mission; he allows himself to be numbered among sinners, and the Spirit whom he will give to the Church rests on him.
- **CCC 537.** Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Christ in the Jordan: the Spirit descends, and we become sons and daughters in the Son.
- **CCC 1286.** The descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus, and the Spirit's remaining on him, was the sign that he was the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Thread Watch

Thread C: The Oil. Develops decisively tonight: the group discovers that the Messiah's anointing was not with oil but with the Spirit himself, at the Jordan, with water and a word. The messianic and liturgical anointings of the old covenant foreshadow this. Do not say where the oil re-enters the story; chrism belongs to Session 14.

Thread A: The Breath. The dove over the water is Genesis 1:2 harmonics; if the group hears them, celebrate briefly and move on. "Remained" also closes the loop on Session 3's verb hinge; make sure Isaiah 11:2 gets recited from memory tonight when John 1:32 is read.

Session Goals

1. Participants have solved Peter's riddle themselves: Jesus' anointing is the Jordan, with the Spirit rather than oil.
2. Participants can say why Jesus, sinless, stood in the sinners' line to be baptized.
3. Isaiah 11:2 has been recited from memory alongside John 1:32-33, and the group has registered that "remained" fulfills "rest."
4. Participants have found the Nazareth scene themselves and can say what Jesus claimed by reading Isaiah 61 and saying "today."
5. Each household has taken home the tell-the-baptism-story practice, with its gentle framing.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 2 (keep question 1), skip the Dig Deeper box on Noah's dove, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the Jordan scene questions, the Isaiah 11 recitation, or the Nazareth discovery; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit. You hovered over the waters at the beginning, and You descended over the waters of the Jordan when the Beloved Son stood in them. Open the heavens over this room tonight. Show us the anointing we have been hunting for, and let us hear the Voice that calls sons and daughters beloved. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. Has anyone ever spoken words over you that stuck with you for years, good or bad? What were they?
2. Tell your partner about a moment you knew, without being told, that you belonged to your family.

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Sinners' Line (Luke 3:15-22)

Households read this at home. Have it read aloud now, verses 15-16 and 21-22.

Question 1. Start with the awkward part. John's baptism was for people repenting of their sins. Jesus has no sins. Why is he standing in that line?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Let the group work before helping. The direction: Jesus gets into the sinners' line on purpose, shoulder to shoulder with the guilty, because his whole mission is to stand where we stand and carry what we carry. He is not cleansed by the water; the Fathers loved to say it the other way around: he goes down into the water to bless it, sanctifying the waters for everyone who would ever follow him in. The sinless one begins his public life by refusing to stand apart from sinners. That is the Messiah the rest of the Gospel delivers.

Question 2. Luke gives us three things happening as Jesus prays: name them. Now think like Session 3: an anointing marked someone as claimed for an office, with a sign and a word. What is the sign here, and what is the word?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The heavens opened; the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, as a dove; and a voice came from heaven: "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." The sign is the Spirit himself, visibly descending; the word is the Father's own voice, claiming him. Samuel poured oil and spoke over David; here the Father speaks and the Spirit descends. This is an anointing scene with the oil upgraded to the Reality the oil always stood for. Do not yet say the word "anointing" for the group if they have not; the discovery is theirs to finish at Nazareth.

Question 3. Have someone read John 1:32-34, the Baptist's own account. John says he was told to watch for one specific detail as the identifying sign. What is it? And can anyone recite what we memorized in Session 3?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The sign is not the descent but the staying: "He on whom you see the Spirit descend AND REMAIN, this is he." Then the memory verse: "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him" (Isaiah 11:2). Rest; remain: two languages, seven centuries apart, one promise landing. Every Spirit-coming this study has walked until now rushed and left; the Baptist was told to look for the one man on whom the Spirit would land and stay. The era Isaiah promised opens here. Give this its moment of quiet; it is the hinge of five weeks of work.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in the same Gospel we have been reading tonight, one chapter later.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A man comes home to the town where he grew up and goes to the synagogue, as usual. They hand him the scroll. He does not read whatever comes next; he FINDS one particular paragraph, about the Spirit and an anointing. He reads it, rolls up the scroll, hands it back, sits down, and with every eye on him says one word that changes everything: today. Find the scene."*

When found, have the discovering table read Luke 4:16-21 aloud.

Question 4. Jesus deliberately finds and reads Isaiah 61: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me..." Then: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Put the pieces together across two sessions: Peter said God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit, and no oil appears in the Gospels. What has the group just solved?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The missing anointing scene is the Jordan. Jesus reads "he has anointed me" and says "today" because it has already happened: the Spirit descended and remained on him at his baptism, and Nazareth is where he says so out loud. Peter's sentence in Acts 10:38 is simply the apostolic summary of what the group has now assembled from the sources: God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Mashiach, christos, the Anointed One: anointed not with the sign but with the Thing Signified. The group did not get told this; they found it. Say so, and congratulate them.

Question 5. Look at what the anointing is FOR in Isaiah's text as Jesus reads it: good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, liberty for the oppressed (Luke's reading weaves Isaiah 61:1-2 with a clause of Isaiah 58:6). Compare Session 2's rule: the Spirit is given for a task that serves others. Does the rule still hold at the top?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Perfectly. Even the Messiah's own anointing is not for his private glory; every clause of the job description spends the Spirit's power on someone else: the poor, the captive, the blind, the crushed. The pattern from the seventy elders to Gideon to David holds all the way up to the Anointed One

himself, which means it will hold all the way down to every anointed Christian. Nobody in this story, including Christ, receives the Spirit as a decoration.

The Push-Back: One Bath, No Second Step

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Look at the pattern tonight proves: for Jesus, water and Spirit came together, in one event, at one river. Baptism and the gift of the Spirit are a single package. So the Christian pattern should match: when a person believes and is baptized, they receive the Holy Spirit, fully, then and there. Scripture even says so: "you have heard the word of truth... and have believed in him," and so "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 1:13); no second ceremony in sight. A separate, later ceremony to "give" what Baptism already gave divides what Christ's own baptism holds together. Confirmation splits the Jordan in half.

Question 6. Careful: a lot of this objection is true, and Catholic teaching agrees with more of it than people expect. Sort it out: what should we concede, and what does tonight's text actually show about the structure of the Jordan event?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede the biggest piece first, loudly: Baptism truly gives the Holy Spirit. The Catholic Church teaches exactly this; a baptized baby is not Spirit-less, and Confirmation is not the Spirit's first arrival. Any version of Confirmation prep that says otherwise deserves this objection. But now look at the structure of the Jordan event itself: Luke says that when Jesus had been baptized and was praying, the heaven opened AND the Spirit descended as a distinct, visible act with its own sign and its own word (Matthew and Mark add that he came up from the water). One event, yes; but an event with distinguishable moments: bath, then anointing, then voice. The ancient Church's initiation had the same shape: the washing, and with it the anointing and the hand and the word, distinct gestures of one whole. Whether those distinguishable moments amount to distinct sacraments cannot be settled from the Jordan alone, and we will not pretend it can. The question that settles it is what the APOSTLES did when they gave the Spirit, and that evidence is exactly where this study goes in three weeks. Hold the objection open; it is owed a real answer, and it will get one from the Acts of the Apostles.

DIG DEEPER

Genesis 8:8-12. If time allows: Noah's dove, sent out over the floodwaters, returning at last with the olive leaf as the waters receded (Genesis 8:8-12). Christians have long heard an echo at the Jordan: a dove over the waters as the sign of judgment ending and a renewed world beginning. Scripture never explains the Jordan dove; the echo is a traditional reading, and a lovely one, held as such.

One Last Glimpse

Read John 16:7 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Jesus, on the night before he died, tells his friends: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. Say only this, and then stop: the man on whom the Spirit rests without measure says that his leaving is somehow better for us than his staying. That should sound impossible. Next time, he explains himself.

Send: Closing Questions

1. At the Jordan, the Father's voice said "beloved" before Jesus had preached a sermon or worked a miracle. What would change this month if you actually believed God's first word over you is "beloved," not "prove it"?
2. Jesus stood in the sinners' line on purpose. Who is someone you tend to stand apart from, and what would standing with them look like?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Sometime this week, parents: tell your candidate the story of their own baptism. Who was there, what the day was like, what you remember feeling. Get out photos or the certificate or the candle if you have them. If the memories are thin or complicated, tell what you can and finish with the one sentence that is the whole point: "We brought you, and God claimed you." Candidates: your only job is to ask one question about that day.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Father, over the waters of the Jordan You tore the heavens open and named Your Son beloved, and the Spirit came down and stayed. Thank You that at our own baptism You did not whisper. Prepare these candidates for the day Your claim on them is sealed, and let every one of us hear again the first word You ever spoke over us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." (Luke 4:18)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 5, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Luke 3:15-22** (Build, Scene One: the baptism of Jesus; read at home this week)
- **John 1:32-34** (Build, Scene One: the Spirit descends and remains)
- **Isaiah 11:2** (recited from memory alongside John 1:32)
- **Luke 4:16-21** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, the Nazareth scroll)
- **Acts 10:38** (recalled from Session 3: God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit)
- **Genesis 8:8-12** (Dig Deeper: Noah's dove over the waters)
- **John 16:7** (One Last Glimpse: it is to your advantage that I go away)

Catechism: CCC 536, 537, 1286 (and 535-536 in your pocket for the adoptionism guard).

Voices: St. Irenaeus of Lyons (Against Heresies III, 17); St. Hilary of Poitiers (Commentary on Matthew); St. Gregory Nazianzen (Oration 39, On the Holy Lights).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 5, one per household, with the baptism-story practice and its gentle framing.

SESSION 6

The Promise of the Paraclete

John 14 • John 16 • John 20

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

On the night before he died, Jesus promised his frightened friends "another Paraclete" who would be with them for ever, teach them everything, and dwell not just with them but in them, and made the impossible claim that his own departure was to their advantage. Tonight participants learn who the Paraclete is and what he does, and then, in the live discovery, they walk into the locked room of Easter evening and watch Jesus breathe on the apostles, the down payment on everything he promised. The group that met the breath of God in Genesis in Session 1 now watches the risen Christ do Genesis 2:7 on purpose.

Catholic Touchstone

"Paraclete" is the name Jesus gives the Spirit: the one called alongside, the Advocate, Consoler, and Helper, the Spirit of truth who teaches and reminds (CCC 692). Jesus does not reveal the Spirit fully until he himself has been glorified, promising him as the one who will be with the Church for ever (CCC 728-729). Confirmation candidates, who received the Spirit at Baptism, are preparing for a fuller outpouring and strengthening of precisely the Person these chapters describe.

What You Need to Know

Parakletos. The Greek *parakletos* literally means "one called alongside": the friend you summon to stand next to you in trouble, especially in court. English Bibles split the word into Counselor, Comforter, Advocate, Helper, and every translation is a partial picture. Give the group the courtroom image: not a lawyer you hire, but the friend who stands beside you when you are accused, speaks for you, steadies you, and does not leave. Jesus says the Father will give ANOTHER Paraclete, which quietly tells us who the first one was.

What the Paraclete does. Collect the job description across the discourse: he will be with you for ever; he dwells with you and will be in you (there is Ezekiel's preposition again); he will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that Jesus said; he will bear witness to Jesus; he will guide you into all the truth; he will not speak on his own authority but will glorify Jesus. Notice the last one especially: the Spirit glorifies Christ and draws believers to him rather than putting himself forward, which is one reason he is the Person of the Trinity people feel they know least.

The scandalous advantage. John 16:7 is the night's hardest and best sentence: "it is to your advantage that I go away." How could losing Jesus' physical presence ever be a good trade? Because while Jesus walked among us, his visible bodily presence was in one place at a time, beside his disciples; in his divinity, of course, the Son was never absent from anywhere, so speak carefully here. What the Ascension and Pentecost open is a new mode of communion: through the Spirit, Christ dwells within believers wherever they are. Beside is wonderful; within is the deeper intimacy. The group has been prepared for exactly this by the prophets: from upon to within was the promise, and this is its mechanism.

The discovery is a payoff. The live discovery tonight is John 20:19-23, the locked room, and it is the same passage you glimpsed cold at the end of Session 1, five weeks ago. Some participants will feel the echo without placing it; one or two may place it exactly. Either way, do not explain the design. When they find the passage and someone says "wait, we have heard this before," the correct leader response is a smile and "have we?"

For the parents in the room. The Paraclete's job description includes "bring to your remembrance." Parents of teenagers live on this promise more than they know: years of prayers, examples, and words that seem to have vanished into an unresponsive adolescent are not gone; they are material the Spirit can retrieve for the rest of that child's life. A parent discouraged about whether anything is sticking should leave tonight with John 14:26 in their pocket.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- "He dwells with you, and will be in you" (John 14:17) is Ezekiel 36:27 ("I will put my Spirit within you") arriving at the front door. The prepositions the group tracked in Session 4 reappear on Jesus' own lips.
- Jesus breathing on the apostles (John 20:22) deliberately reenacts Genesis 2:7, God breathing life into the first man: the new creation begins the way the first one did. Thread A, planted in Session 1, pays out here and completes at Pentecost.
- "Another Paraclete" (John 14:16) has its echo in 1 John 2:1, where Jesus himself is our Advocate (parakletos) with the Father: tonight's Dig Deeper.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Tractates on the Gospel of John*)

Commenting on Jesus' words that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth because it neither sees him nor knows him, St. Augustine explained that the Spirit is not known the way objects are known, by looking. He is known by being possessed, the way you know love: from within, by having it. The world that insists on seeing before believing will never see him; the soul that receives him knows him better than sight could tell.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*)

St. Cyril of Alexandria took up the hardest sentence, that Jesus' departure was to our advantage, and answered it plainly: while Christ dwelt among his disciples in the flesh, he was present beside them; when he ascended and sent the Spirit, Christ came to dwell within them. The Spirit does not replace an absent Christ with a substitute; he achieves a deeper intimacy with Christ than his bodily presence allowed. Beside became within, and within is better.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great (*Homilies on the Gospels, Homily 30*)

Preaching at Pentecost on these very chapters, St. Gregory the Great gave the test for whether the

Spirit truly dwells in a person: the proof of love is shown in deeds. Jesus ties the Paraclete's coming to keeping his word; so, Gregory says, do not ask first how the Spirit feels in you, ask what he is doing through you. A warmed heart is a gift; a changed life is the evidence.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 692.** "Paraclete" is the name Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit: he who is called to one's side, the Advocate and Consoler, the Spirit of truth.
- **CCC 728.** Jesus does not reveal the Holy Spirit fully until he himself has been glorified through his death and resurrection.
- **CCC 729.** Only when the hour arrives does Jesus promise the coming of the Paraclete who will be with the disciples and in them, teach them, and guide them into all truth.

Thread Watch

Thread A: The Breath. Major development tonight: the group discovers John 20:19-23 themselves, the passage glimpsed in Session 1. Jesus breathing on the apostles is Genesis 2:7 performed on purpose. The thread completes at Pentecost next week, when breath becomes wind. Confirm any echo a participant catches; explain no design.

Thread B check. The Paraclete is promised "for ever" and prayed over "those who believe through their word" (John 17:20, in your pocket for the steelman). The gift is aimed past the upper room at the all. Resolution next week.

Next week is the summit. Session 7 is Pentecost, where Threads A and B both resolve and Moses' wish, Joel's promise, the Jordan's pattern, and tonight's promises all detonate together. Prepare accordingly: reread Sessions 1-6 Thread Watch notes before next week. It is the one session you must not lead cold.

Session Goals

1. Participants can explain what parakletos means and give the courtroom-friend picture in their own words.
2. Participants have assembled the Paraclete's job description from the text and noticed "with you" becoming "in you."
3. Participants can explain, in their own words, why Jesus' going away could be to our advantage.
4. Participants have found the locked room themselves, and the breath of Session 1 has come back around.
5. The group has faced the "promises for apostles only" objection at full strength, with the honest remainder named.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 2 (keep question 1), skip the Dig Deeper box on 1 John 2:1, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the advantage question or the live discovery of the locked room; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, Paraclete: called to our side, Advocate in our accusations, Comforter in our fears, Teacher of everything we keep forgetting. Jesus promised You to frightened people in an upstairs room, and You came. We are not so different from them. Stand beside us tonight, and better than beside: dwell within. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. Who is the person who "has your back," the one who shows up and stands next to you when things get hard? How did they earn that place?
2. What is the best advice anyone ever gave you, and do you remember it at the moments you actually need it?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: Another Paraclete (John 14:15-17, 25-26)

Households read John 14:15-26 at home. Have verses 15-17 and 25-26 read aloud now.

Question 1. Jesus promises "another Counselor." The Greek word is *parakletos*: literally, one called alongside, the friend who stands next to you in court. Two things to chew: what does that picture tell us about what the Spirit is FOR? And if this one is "another" Paraclete, who was the first?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The picture tells us the Spirit is given for our defense and our company: not a force to use but a Person who stands with the accused, speaks for them, steadies them, and stays. And "another" quietly identifies the first Paraclete as Jesus himself, the one who has been standing beside these men for three years. Jesus is not promising them a replacement for himself; he is promising them Someone of the same kind, so that what they have had in him, they will never lose. First John later completes the pair: Jesus remains our Advocate with the Father, while the Spirit is the Advocate within us.

Question 2. Build the Paraclete's job description as a table, out loud, from verses 16-17 and 25-26 (add John 16:13-14 if your table is fast). List everything Jesus says the Spirit will do or be. Then find the two little prepositions in verse 17 and tell me why a graduate of Session 4 should sit up straight.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The list: with you for ever; the Spirit of truth; dwells WITH you and will be IN you; will teach you all things; will bring to your remembrance all that I have said; (16:13-14) will guide you into all the truth, will not speak on his own authority, will glorify me. The prepositions: "he dwells with you, and will be in you." With, becoming in. That is Ezekiel 36:27, "I will put my Spirit within you," arriving on the lips of Jesus as a scheduled delivery. The promise the prophets mailed in Session 4 now has a date: soon, and connected to whatever is about to happen to Jesus. Also mark the Spirit's style in 16:13-14: he will not speak on his own authority, and he glorifies Jesus. The Spirit's way is to

point to Christ and draw us to him, which is why you rarely find him by looking straight at him. You find him by looking where he points.

Question 3. Now the impossible sentence. Have someone read John 16:5-7. Jesus says his going away is TO OUR ADVANTAGE, because otherwise the Paraclete will not come. Argue with him for a minute: would you rather have Jesus physically here, visible, touchable? Then work out how his answer could possibly be right.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Let the argument actually happen; most honest people would take Jesus-in-the-flesh, and saying so out loud makes the answer land. The resolution: a body is in one place. While Jesus walked in the flesh, he was BESIDE his disciples, external to them, one town at a time; Thomas could be far from him, and everyone after the first century would be. Through the Spirit, Christ dwells WITHIN every believer, everywhere, always, at Springfield and in the first century at once. St. Cyril of Alexandria said it exactly: beside became within, and within is the deeper intimacy. Then the payoff for your room: if Jesus was telling the truth here, then a Confirmation candidate in Nebraska is not living in the leftovers of a better era. They are living in the era Jesus called the advantage.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is on Easter day, in the evening. (The "locked room" is the study's shorthand; John says the doors were shut for fear.)

DIG DEEPER

The clue. "A locked room, because the men inside are afraid. Suddenly he is standing among them, and he shows them his hands and his side. Then he does something with his breath that nobody has done since a garden at the beginning of the world. Find the room."

When found, have the discovering table read John 20:19-23 aloud, slowly. If anyone says this sounds familiar, smile and say: "Does it?"

Question 4. Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Where else in Scripture does God breathe the breath of life into a human being, and what happened then? What is Jesus declaring by doing it again, on purpose, with his risen body?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Genesis 2:7: the LORD God breathed into the man's nostrils the breath of life, and dust became a living being; nowhere else does Scripture show God breathing life into a human being. Session 1, scene two; some tables will get there fast. By breathing on the apostles, the risen Jesus is deliberately performing the creation of man again: a new Genesis, a new humanity, beginning in a locked room with ten frightened men. The promise of the Paraclete has its down payment on Easter evening itself. And notice what the breath is immediately for in verse 23: the forgiveness of sins, given to the apostles as a commission. The new creation runs on mercy, and it is administered by

men who were hiding an hour before.

Question 5. Hold the two scenes side by side: the promise (the Spirit will be in you, teach you, stay for ever) and the locked room (receive the Holy Spirit). Here is the puzzle to leave open: if the apostles received the Spirit on Easter evening, why does Jesus, in Luke and Acts, still tell these same men to WAIT in Jerusalem for something more? What might be left?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Do not resolve this; sharpen it. The texts stand: Easter evening, "Receive the Holy Spirit," and forty days later, "wait for the promise of the Father... you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The risen Christ gives the Spirit, and then insists there is a further, public, empowering gift still coming for the same men. Whatever we make of that, one cheap answer dies tonight: "you already received the Spirit, so nothing more could be given" is a sentence the apostles' own story contradicts. God, apparently, gives the Spirit in more than one act, for more than one purpose. Let the group carry the puzzle out the door; next week answers it with wind and fire.

The Push-Back: Promises for Eleven Men Only?

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Read the room these promises were made in. Jesus is speaking to the Eleven, at one supper, on one night. "He will teach you all things" and "bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" can only apply to men who heard what Jesus said in the first place; you cannot be reminded of teaching you never received. "Guide you into all the truth" was fulfilled in the unique, foundational apostolic witness, preserved for all ages in the completed canon of Scripture, and it is finished. These are apostolic credentials, not a standing offer, and applying them to modern Christians, or worse, to a modern Church claiming the Spirit's ongoing guidance, is taking mail addressed to eleven men.

Question 6. The observation about the audience is genuinely right, so start by granting it. Then read John 14:16 again slowly, and John 17:20, and see what refuses to fit inside one generation.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Grant the center: these words were spoken to the apostles, and some of the promises are apostolic first: "bring to your remembrance all that I said to you" is precisely why apostolic testimony, and the Scriptures that preserve it, hold the normative place they do. Catholics should say that louder, not softer. But two texts strain against the one-generation frame from inside. First, 14:16: the Father will give another Paraclete "to be with you FOR EVER," language that most naturally reaches past one mortal generation toward the community Jesus is founding, though this verse alone does not settle the scope, and honesty says so. Second, and decisively wider, Jesus' own prayer minutes later: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word" (17:20); Jesus explicitly extends the night's horizon past the room, to everyone downstream of apostolic preaching, which includes every person at your table. The honest remainder, named plainly: HOW the Spirit's ongoing guidance operates in the Church, teaching office and all, is a real and disputed question that these verses alone do not settle, and tonight will not pretend to settle it. What the verses do settle is the Gift himself: a Paraclete promised for ever, to a people wider than eleven, is

not a museum piece. He is an inheritance.

DIG DEEPER

1 John 2:1. If time allows: "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The word is parakletos. So the Christian has two Advocates on retainer: the Spirit within, pleading alongside us here, and the Son above, pleading for us there. Nobody in this room ever walks into court alone.

One Last Glimpse

Read Acts 1:4-5 aloud yourself, without introduction.

The risen Jesus, at table with them, charges them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father: "for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Say only this, and then stop: they have the promise, and they even have the breath. And still he says: wait. Whatever is coming is bigger than a locked room. Next week we stop waiting.

Send: Closing Questions

1. The Spirit's job includes bringing to remembrance what Jesus said. What is one true thing you already know that you most need to be reminded of at the right moment?
2. Jesus said the Spirit makes his going away an advantage. Do you live like this is the advantage era, or like the good stuff happened two thousand years ago? What would change if you believed him?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Once a day, before homework, before work, before the hard conversation, whichever moment needs it most, pray one sentence: "Come, Holy Spirit, Spirit of truth: teach me, and remind me." Six words of request from John 14:26, prayed at the moment of actual need. Compare notes once during the week: did anything come back to mind when you needed it?

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord Jesus, on the worst night of Your life You spent Your last hours promising us the Paraclete. You said You would not leave us orphans, and You have not. Breathe on us as You breathed on the Ten, and make us ready for the wind. Come, Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 6, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **John 14:15-17, 25-26** (Build, Scene One: another Paraclete; read at home this week as John 14:15-26)
- **John 16:13-14** (Build, Scene One: guide into all truth, optional add)
- **John 16:5-7** (Build, Scene One: to your advantage that I go away)
- **John 20:19-23** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, the locked room)
- **John 17:20** (Push-Back answer: for those who believe through their word)
- **1 John 2:1** (Dig Deeper: Jesus our Advocate)
- **Acts 1:4-5** (One Last Glimpse: wait for the promise of the Father)

Catechism: CCC 692, 728, 729.

Voices: St. Augustine of Hippo (Tractates on the Gospel of John); St. Cyril of Alexandria (Commentary on the Gospel of John); St. Gregory the Great (Homilies on the Gospels, 30).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 6, one per household.

Leader homework: reread the Thread Watch notes from Sessions 1-6 before next week. Session 7 is the summit; do not lead it cold.

SESSION 7

Pentecost

Acts 2 • Exodus 19 • Joel Fulfilled

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Six weeks of planted seeds come up tonight. Participants watch the promise land: a sound from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind (the Breath of Session 1, at scale), tongues as of fire distributed and RESTING on EACH ONE of them (the abiding motif of Session 3, now plural), and Peter standing up to declare, of Joel's prophecy from Session 4, "this is what was spoken." Moses' wish is granted; the few become the all. In the live discovery, participants find Sinai and realize Pentecost is the mountain happening again, with the law arriving this time not on stone but on hearts. This is the summit session. Everything before tonight was climbing; everything after is what the summit means for them.

Catholic Touchstone

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Trinity is fully revealed: Christ, having been glorified, pours out the Spirit in abundance, and the Church is manifested to the world (CCC 731-732). The tongues as of fire signify the Spirit's transforming presence and power (CCC 696). And Peter's own words on the day carry the gift forward: the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are far off.

What You Need to Know

Lead this one hot. You have done six sessions of disciplined withholding: the John 20 glimpse, the sealed oil, the unanswered "when." Tonight you collect. Reread every Thread Watch note from Sessions 1-6 before you walk in; your job tonight is less to teach than to stand back while the room's own memories detonate, and to make sure each detonation gets its second of silence.

What Pentecost was before Pentecost. Pentecost ("fiftieth") is the Greek name for the Feast of Weeks, fifty days after Passover, one of the three great pilgrim feasts, which is why devout Jews "from every nation under heaven" fill Jerusalem in Acts 2:5. Exodus 19:1 places Israel's arrival at Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt, and Jewish tradition, attested clearly in the centuries after the New Testament and possibly earlier, came to celebrate the feast in connection with the giving of the Law; whether the Acts 2 crowd already kept it so is debated, and say as much if asked. What is certain is the typology the Church has long loved: fire on the mountain then, fire on each head now. Hold this until the live discovery hands it to the group.

The details are all callbacks. A sound "like the rush of a mighty wind": *pnoe*, breath, ruah at hurricane force, the four winds of Ezekiel 37 arriving at one address. Tongues as of fire, "distributed and resting on each one of them": the verb of Isaiah 11:2 and the Jordan, now multiplied; the anointing of the One is being distributed to the many. About a hundred and twenty are in the room, and Acts 1:14 says explicitly this included the women, with Mary the mother of Jesus: Joel's "sons and daughters" is literal on day one.

The 3000. At Sinai, while Moses received the law on stone, the people broke it at the golden calf, and about three thousand fell (Exodus 32:28). At Pentecost, the day the Spirit writes the law on hearts, about

three thousand were baptized and came to life (Acts 2:41). St. Augustine built a whole theology of grace on that symmetry, and it belongs to the group tonight if the discovery goes well.

For the parents in the room. Peter's altar call ends with a sentence aimed straight at your tables: "the promise is to you AND TO YOUR CHILDREN" (Acts 2:39). On the Church's first day, the gift is offered across a generation gap. Parents brought their candidates to this study; Peter says the promise was always addressed to both of them at once. Make sure this lands; it is the memory verse for a reason.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Exodus 19:16-19 (God descends on Sinai in fire, with a sound growing louder) is tonight's live discovery: Pentecost is Sinai again, with the law given this time as the Spirit on hearts (Jeremiah 31, Session 4, paid in full).
- Joel 2:28-29 is quoted by Peter with the words "this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel": Thread B resolves on the apostolic dime, not ours.
- Genesis 11:1-9 (Babel) runs under the languages miracle: humanity scattered into mutually incomprehensible tongues is gathered into one comprehension. Tonight's Dig Deeper.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*On the Spirit and the Letter*)

St. Augustine set the two mountains side by side. At Sinai the law was given, written on stone tablets outside the people, and on that day about three thousand fell for breaking it. At Pentecost the Spirit was given, writing the law on hearts, and on that day about three thousand believed and came to life. The letter, he concluded, kills; the Spirit gives life. Same God, same law, new address, opposite result.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*)

St. John Chrysostom noticed the conditions and the choreography. The Spirit came upon disciples who were all together, of one accord, persevering in prayer: unity and prayer set the table for Pentecost. And the one gift arrived divided into tongues, one resting on each, so that no one could doubt that each person, not just the group, had received their own share of the one Spirit.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Lectures, Lecture 17*)

St. Cyril told his candidates that at Pentecost the Spirit came in fire, but a fire that does not destroy: tongues of fire, not to burn but to save, giving light and warmth without consuming what they touched. The apostles were not scorched; they were kindled. The power that fell on that house is the power his candidates, and yours, are preparing to receive.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 696.** Fire symbolizes the transforming energy of the Holy Spirit's actions; the tongues as of fire at Pentecost signify the Spirit filling the Church.
- **CCC 731.** On the day of Pentecost the Paschal mystery is fulfilled and the Holy Spirit is poured out; the age of the Church and of the Spirit's outpouring begins.
- **CCC 732.** On that day the Holy Trinity is fully revealed, and the kingdom announced by Christ is opened to those who believe.

Thread Watch

Thread A: The Breath. RESOLVES TONIGHT. Genesis breath, Ezekiel's four winds, the Jordan dove, the locked-room breathing: all of it arrives as the sound of a mighty rushing wind filling the house. When the group reads Acts 2:2, pause and ask what six weeks of this study make them hear in that wind. Take multiple answers. This is the payout; spend it slowly.

Thread B: From the Few to the All. RESOLVES TONIGHT. Peter quotes Joel and says "this is what was spoken." Have someone recite Numbers 11:29 from memory one last time immediately after the Joel quotation is read. Moses' wish, Joel's promise, Peter's declaration: let the room hear all three in one minute of the same evening.

Thread C: The Oil. Still sealed. Fire rests on each one; the anointing is being distributed. Say nothing. Two more sessions of evidence, then the seal question, then the rite.

The two-stage pattern. Session 1, Question 6 planted "God gives the Spirit in His own order and His own time" over the dry bones' two-stage rising, and Session 6 left open why men who received the breath still had to wait. Tonight partially answers it: the waiting ended in power. Next week, Samaria makes the two-stage pattern unavoidable. Do not preview it.

Session Goals

1. Participants have read Acts 2:1-13 aloud and named, from their own memory, at least three planted echoes (wind, fire resting on each, the crowd, sons and daughters).
2. Participants have found Sinai themselves and can explain in their own words why the Spirit fell on the feast of the Law.
3. Numbers 11:29, Joel 2:28, and Acts 2:16 have been heard together in the same minute.
4. The group has faced the "unrepeatable event" objection at full strength, and met Acts 2:39 as Peter's own extension of the gift.
5. Every household leaves with the Come Holy Spirit prayer and has prayed it once together before walking out.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 80 minutes; this is the one session where running long is better than cutting deep. To land at 60 if you must: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on Babel, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute. Never cut the Sinai discovery, the three-voices minute (Moses, Joel, Peter), or the closing prayer sung or spoken together; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit. For six weeks we have watched You promised: breath for the dry bones, a wish on the lips of Moses, oil on the head of David, an outpouring signed by the prophets, a dove that stayed, a Paraclete pledged in an upper room. Tonight the waiting ends. Fill this house as You filled that one. Fall on each of us, and hold nothing back. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. What is the best grand opening, launch, or first day you have ever been part of? What made it electric?
2. Describe a time you were close to real wind or real fire: a storm, a bonfire, something with power in it. What did it feel like to stand near it?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Day (Acts 2:1-13)

Households read Acts 1:1-14 at home: the waiting room. Now the waiting ends. Have your best reader read Acts 2:1-13 aloud, unhurried. Then sit in three seconds of silence before the first question.

Question 1. Start with verse 2: "a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house." You have been in this study for six weeks. What does that wind mean to you that it could not have meant six weeks ago? Say everything you hear in it.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Take several answers; the room has earned this question. The harvest available: ruah, the breath-wind-Spirit of Genesis 1:2, arriving not as a whisper but at gale force; the breath that made dust a living man in Genesis 2:7; the four winds Ezekiel summoned into the valley so that a dead nation stood up as an army, and here are about a hundred and twenty people in a house becoming the beginning of a new people; the breath Jesus gave the Ten in the locked room, now scaled from a breath to a wind. Six weeks of breath, and tonight God exhales. When the harvest slows, name Thread A out loud for the first time: you have been following the Breath since the first night, and it just arrived.

Question 2. Now verse 3, and read it precisely: "there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them." Two words in that sentence should ring a bell from Session 3 and Session 5. Which words, and what is God doing by choosing them?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Resting," and "each one." A tongue as of fire RESTED on each: not the same word in the original languages as Isaiah's "rest" or John's "remain," say so if asked, but unmistakably the same motif this study has tracked from Isaiah 11 to the Jordan: the Spirit who abides, now arriving to stay. And it rested on EACH ONE: not on the group as a blur, not on Peter as the new Moses while the rest watched, but one flame per person. The anointing that rested whole on the Anointed One is being

distributed without being divided. Note also who "each one" includes: Acts 1:14 has just told us the company included the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus. Sons and daughters, on day one, by name.

Question 3. Peter stands up (read Acts 2:14-18) and explains the uproar with one citation: "this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel," and he quotes the passage this group found for itself three weeks ago. And behind Joel stands something older still. Can anyone give it from memory?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29). Now assemble the chain out loud, all three links inside one minute: Moses WISHED it in the wilderness; Joel PROMISED it after the locusts; Peter, on the street in Jerusalem, points at what is happening and says THIS IS THAT. A wish became a promise became a Tuesday morning. Then name Thread B for the first time: from the few to the all, followed since Session 2, resolved by the first pope's first sermon. Let the room have its moment. Some groups applaud here. Allow it.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in the second book of the Bible, then that Moses is in it.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A mountain wrapped in smoke, because the LORD has come down on it in fire. The whole mountain trembles. A sound, like a trumpet, grows louder and louder. The people stand at the foot, trembling too. It happened in the third month after leaving Egypt. Find the mountain."*

When found, have the discovering table read Exodus 19:16-19 aloud. Then tell the group what feast fell on the day of Acts 2: the Feast of Weeks, fifty days after Passover, which Jewish tradition came to associate with the giving of the Law at Sinai.

Question 4. Lay the two scenes side by side: Sinai and Pentecost. Build the parallel columns together on paper: what matches, and what has changed?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Matches: God descends; fire; a sound from heaven growing overwhelming; a gathered people at the bottom of it; a covenant moment; even the timing, the feast tradition linked to the Law. The Church has read Pentecost in the light of Sinai from early on; offer the columns as that venerable reading, not as a claim Acts spells out. Changes, and each one is the gospel: at Sinai the fire stayed on the summit and the people were fenced back on pain of death; at Pentecost the fire leaves the mountaintop and lands on each person's head. At Sinai God gave the law written on stone, outside them; at Pentecost He gives the Spirit who writes it on hearts, the very thing Jeremiah promised in Session 4. And one more, for the table that finds it: at Sinai, the day the stone law arrived, about three thousand fell at the golden calf (Exodus 32:28); at Pentecost, the day the Spirit arrived, about

three thousand received the word and were baptized (Acts 2:41), which St. Augustine read as three thousand brought to life. He set the two numbers against each other and said it in six words: the letter kills; the Spirit gives life.

The Push-Back: You Cannot Schedule a Hurricane

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. Pentecost was a once-in-history event: the founding of the Church, with founding-day signs. There has been exactly one day of tongues of visible fire, and everyone knows it. So when the Catholic Church tells teenagers that Confirmation is "their personal Pentecost," it is writing checks Acts never signed. No wind will fill your parish hall. No fire will rest on anyone's head. Calling a quiet ceremony a Pentecost is marketing, borrowing the grandeur of an unrepeatable event for a rite that demonstrably does not repeat it. The honest thing is to admit Pentecost happened once, to them, and is over.

Question 5. Two things need sorting: the event and the gift. Read Acts 2:38-39, Peter's answer to the crowd on Pentecost itself, and work out which parts of the objection stand and which fall.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede the event, fully: the founding of the Church happens once, like the Resurrection, and its founding signs, the wind heard in the street and the visible flames, are not promised to anyone again. Any Confirmation prep that implies otherwise is setting candidates up to feel cheated, and the objection is right to burn it down. But now the gift. The crowd asks what to do, and Peter, on Pentecost itself, answers: repent and be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; "for the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." The man standing in the wreckage of the once-for-all event declares its gift transferable: to his hearers, to their kids, to people not yet born on continents not yet reached. The founding-day signs, the wind heard in the street, the visible flames, belong to the founding and are not promised as normative afterward (though Acts itself records tongues again on later occasions, at God's pleasure); the gift is for everyone the promise names, which, read closely, is every person at your table. The honest remainder: HOW the gift reached the next people after that day, by what act, through whose hands, is a question tonight's text does not answer. Acts does answer it, in detail, and that answer is the next two sessions.

DIG DEEPER

Genesis 11:1-9. If time allows: at Babel, one proud humanity grasping at heaven was scattered into languages that could not understand each other. At Pentecost, people "from every nation under heaven" each hear the mighty works of God in his own tongue. God does not delete the languages; He fills all of them. Babel scattered; Pentecost gathers, without flattening anyone. The Church is born multilingual on purpose.

One Last Glimpse

Read Acts 8:14-16 aloud yourself, without introduction.

The apostles in Jerusalem hear that Samaria has received the word of God, and they send Peter and John, who pray for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit; "for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Say only this, and then stop: baptized believers, and the Spirit had not yet fallen on them, and the apostles got on the road about it. Sit with how strange that is. Next week we find out what the apostles did when they arrived, and it is the reason this study exists.

Send: Closing Questions

1. The fire rested on each one: nobody at Pentecost got a group gift. Where in your faith life have you been hiding in the group, and what would it mean for the flame to have your name on it?
2. Peter said the promise is "to you and to your children." One generation is sitting next to the other at this table. What do you want the promise to do in the person beside you?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Learn a beloved traditional prayer to the Holy Spirit by heart, and pray it together once a day: "Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth." Pray it out loud together right now before leaving, once, so the week starts tonight.

Closing Prayer

Leader and all together: *Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him." (Acts 2:39)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 7, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Acts 1:1-14** (read at home this week: the upper room)
- **Acts 2:1-13** (Build, Scene One: the day of Pentecost)
- **Acts 2:14-18** (Build, Scene One: Peter quotes Joel)
- **Numbers 11:29; Joel 2:28-29** (recited and recalled: the three-voices minute)
- **Exodus 19:16-19** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, Sinai)
- **Exodus 32:28; Acts 2:41** (the two three-thousands, in the answer box)
- **Acts 2:38-39** (Push-Back answer: the promise is to you and to your children)
- **Genesis 11:1-9** (Dig Deeper: Babel reversed)
- **Acts 8:14-16** (One Last Glimpse: Samaria)

Catechism: CCC 696, 731, 732.

Voices: St. Augustine of Hippo (On the Spirit and the Letter); St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Acts); St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Catechetical Lectures, 17).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 7, one per household.

SESSION 8

Samaria: A Second Gift

Acts 8:4-24

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Participants examine the strangest paragraph in the Acts of the Apostles, and the one on which this study's whole question turns: Samaritans who genuinely believed and were genuinely baptized, on whom the Spirit "had not yet fallen," and two apostles who took the road north to pray and lay hands on them so that they would receive the Holy Spirit. The group discovers that the apostolic Church knew a real giving of the Spirit, through apostolic hands, distinguishable from Baptism, visible enough that a magician tried to buy it. Tonight is the primary steelman session: the strongest Protestant reading of this passage gets built at full strength and answered with the text open.

Catholic Touchstone

The apostles imparted the gift of the Spirit to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands, and the Catholic tradition rightly recognizes this imposition of hands as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation, which in a certain way perpetuates the grace of Pentecost in the Church (CCC 1288, drawing on Acts 8:14-17, which CCC 1315 quotes in full as the scriptural anchor of the sacrament).

What You Need to Know

Who the Samaritans were. To first-century Jews, Samaritans were the worst kind of wrong: half-foreign descendants of the northern tribes, worshiping on the wrong mountain with the wrong priesthood and only part of the Scriptures. Centuries of contempt ran both directions; "you are a Samaritan and have a demon" was a Jerusalem insult. Acts 8 is the gospel's first step across that wall, which is why what happens next matters so much: the first non-Jewish-in-the-full-sense church cannot be allowed to start life as a separate franchise.

Take the text's own inventory. Before anyone theologizes, make the group establish what Luke actually reports: Philip preached; the Samaritans believed and were baptized, men and women; Luke gives no hint their faith or baptism was defective; the apostles in Jerusalem heard and sent Peter and John; the two prayed FOR them THAT they might receive the Holy Spirit; "for it had not yet fallen on any of them"; then they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. Real baptism. Real subsequent gift. Real apostolic act in between. Everything tonight hangs on those three facts staying on the table.

Why the delay? The unity reading. The strongest account of why God withheld the falling of the Spirit until apostles arrived: so that the first church planted across Israel's bitterest boundary would be visibly, physically joined to the apostles, receiving the Spirit through Jerusalem's hands rather than alongside them. No rival Samaritan Christianity, no parallel start-up; one Body, one gift, one apostolic root. Hold this reading with appropriate confidence: it is an inference the text invites, not a statement the text makes, and you should present it as exactly that.

Simon saw something. Tonight's live discovery is Simon the magician, and his failed purchase is quiet gold: whatever happened when the apostles laid on hands, it was observable enough that a professional

in the wonder business assessed it as worth money. The giving of the Spirit at apostolic hands was not a private interior nuance; it was an event. His name became the name of a sin, simony, which the group will enjoy.

Two remainders come due tonight, and one gets paid. Session 5 left open what the apostles actually did when they gave the Spirit; tonight pays half of that debt (Ephesus pays the rest next week). Session 2's question about a Spirit who can be "sealed" remains open until Session 10. Track your debts; the group half-remembers them, and paying them on schedule is what makes the study feel inevitable rather than assembled.

For the parents in the room. Somewhere in your room is a parent whose own Confirmation felt like nothing: no experience, no change, a photograph and a party. Acts 8 is oddly good news for them, but only if you let tonight's honesty stand: the Samaritans' baptism was fully real before the apostles came, and the further gift was real whether or not Luke records anyone's feelings about it. God's gifts are events, not experiences; experiences may follow on any schedule, including decades later, including in a parish hall on a Tuesday during a study like this one.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Moses laid his hands on Joshua, and Joshua was "full of the spirit of wisdom" (Deuteronomy 34:9; the commissioning itself in Numbers 27:18-23): the Spirit passing through appointed hands is older than the apostles. Tonight's Dig Deeper.
- The dry bones rose in two stages (Ezekiel 37, Session 1): bodies assembled first, breath summoned second, by God's explicit design. The group planted this pattern seven weeks ago; tonight it stops being a curiosity.
- Jerusalem and Samaria, divided since the kingdom split under Rehoboam, are rejoined not by treaty but by the one Spirit given through the one apostolic college.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage (*Letter to Jubaianus, around AD 255*)

St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage two centuries after the apostles, described the practice of his own day and grounded it in tonight's passage: what was done with the Samaritans, he wrote, is done now among us. Those baptized in the Church are brought to the leaders of the Church, and by prayer and the laying on of hands they obtain the Holy Spirit and are perfected with the Lord's seal. For Cyprian this was not a new ceremony but the Acts 8 pattern, still running.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

Tertullian of Carthage (*On Baptism, around AD 200*)

Tertullian, the earliest Christian writer in Latin, walked through initiation as his church practiced it around the turn of the third century: after the bath in water, he says, the hand is laid on, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through blessing. Washing, then hand and invocation: the two moments of the Jordan pattern, both there, in order.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH**St. John Chrysostom** (*Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles*)

Preaching on this very chapter, St. John Chrysostom paused over the oddity the group will notice too: Philip could preach, work signs, and baptize, yet the giving of the Spirit waited for Peter and John. This gift, Chrysostom observed, belonged to the apostles; the deacon evangelized, and the apostles completed what he began. The division of roles was not a failure of Philip's but the order of the Church working as designed.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1288.** The apostles, fulfilling Christ's will, imparted the gift of the Spirit to the newly baptized by the laying on of hands; this imposition of hands is rightly recognized as the origin of the sacrament of Confirmation.
- **CCC 1315.** Quotes Acts 8:14-17 in full as the opening of the Church's brief statement of this sacrament.
- **CCC 1289.** Very early, an anointing with perfumed oil was added to the laying on of hands, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit. Leader's knowledge tonight; do not develop the anointing forward.

Thread Watch

The two-stage pattern surfaces. When a participant connects Samaria to the dry bones (assembled first, breath second) or to the Easter-breath-then-wait puzzle from Session 6, the study's longest quiet setup has worked. Confirm it warmly and fully; this one is meant to be caught tonight. If nobody catches it by Question 5, the answer box hands it to them.

Thread C: The Oil. Tonight is hands only; that is what the text gives, and the discipline matters. If someone asks where oil went, the honest answer is that tonight's passage has none, and the study follows the text. The oil returns when the Church's earliest practice enters in force. Two more weeks of patience.

Session Goals

1. Participants can state the three facts of Acts 8 from the text: real baptism, Spirit not yet fallen, apostolic prayer and hands.
2. Participants have found Simon the magician themselves and can say what his failed purchase proves about the visibility of the gift.
3. The group has built and faced the full-strength "Samaria was a one-off" objection, including Cornelius, presented by us before anyone else could raise it.
4. At least one participant has connected the two-stage pattern back to the dry bones or the locked room unprompted, or received it from the answer box.
5. Each household has taken home the hand-blessing practice.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 2 (keep question 1), skip the Dig Deeper box on Joshua, and shorten the steelman by presenting the

objection yourself in ninety seconds; tonight's steelman is the study's most important and should be the last thing you shorten. Never cut the inventory question, the Simon discovery, or the steelman itself.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit. You fell on Jerusalem in wind and fire, and in Samaria You fell when the apostles came and laid on hands, visibly binding the new church to the old. Teach us tonight how You give Yourself: in Your order, at Your time, through the Church You built. We are not in a hurry to be wrong. Make us patient enough to be right. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. When has a physical gesture, a hand on your shoulder, a hug, a handshake, said something to you that words could not have said?
2. Has anything in your life ever required someone official to show up in person to make it real: a signature, a ceremony, an inspection? Why did it have to be in person?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Inventory (Acts 8:4-17)

Households read Acts 8:1-17 at home. Have verses 4-8 and 12-17 read aloud now, and put a piece of paper in the middle of each table.

Question 1. Before anyone interprets anything: inventory only. List exactly what Luke reports, in order, with no additions. What happened in Samaria before Peter and John arrived? What state does verse 16 describe? What did the apostles do, and what happened when they did it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The inventory: Philip preached Christ; the crowds gave heed; there were signs, deliverances, healings, and much joy; they believed Philip's preaching and were baptized, both men and women. Luke breathes no criticism of their faith or their baptism. Verse 16: the Spirit "had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, then laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. (Luke does not say what, if anything, was visible; hold that.) Keep this list on the table physically for the rest of the night. Every argument that follows has to survive contact with it.

Question 2. Sit in the strangeness before explaining it. These people were genuinely baptized, and Luke, who told us in Acts 2:38 that baptism brings the gift of the Spirit, now says the Spirit had not yet FALLEN on them, and the apostles treated that as something requiring a forty-mile trip. What does the apostles' reaction itself tell you, before any theory does?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The reaction is the revelation. The apostles did not write back saying "your baptism sufficed; nothing further is needed"; they sent Peter and John, two apostles, in person. Whatever "fallen upon" means beyond what Baptism had already truly given, the apostolic Church considered it real, urgent, and apostolic business. Be precise here and keep the group precise: Baptism gives the Holy

Spirit; the Church has always taught it, and nothing tonight unsays it. What Samaria shows is a further giving, a falling-upon, a completion, which the apostles would not leave undone and would not delegate. The text does not name this act, and note for precision: Luke records that the apostles themselves came, without telling us they could not have delegated; the Church's later discipline (in which bishops are the ordinary ministers and priests can confirm with the faculty) grew from this seed without being spelled out here. Tonight, just make sure the group has seen that the act exists.

Question 3. Why Samaria, and why the delay? Recall who Samaritans were to Jews: centuries of contempt, the wrong mountain, the wrong blood. The first church across that wall, and God holds back the falling of the Spirit until Jerusalem's own apostles are physically present. What might God be building by that timing?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Offer this as the reading the text invites rather than a verse you can point to, and say so: if the Samaritan believers had received everything with no connection to the apostles, church history's first chapter would have included an independent Samaritan Christianity, born across the bitterest boundary in the region, owing Jerusalem nothing. Instead the Spirit falls through the hands of Peter and John, and the first frontier church begins life physically joined to the apostles: one Body, one gift, one root. God delayed the falling, on this reading, precisely to weld the new church to the old at the moment of maximum temptation to split. The Spirit builds unity into the delivery mechanism. Flag the epistemic status honestly: this is inference, well-grounded and ancient, but inference; the inventory on the table is fact.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three minutes; it is close to where they have been reading. If they stall, say: same chapter, keep going.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A professional magician watches the apostles closely, sees something happen when their hands come down, and reaches for his wallet. He offers money for the power. His first name became the permanent name of a sin. Find him, and find out what two apostles said to his offer."*

When found, have the discovering table read Acts 8:18-24 aloud.

Question 4. "Now when Simon SAW that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money." Simon is a professional in the amazement business; he had been Samaria's biggest act. What does his sales assessment tell us about the laying on of hands? And what does Peter's furious answer protect?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Simon's wallet is a hostile witness, which makes it a good one. Luke does not tell us what Simon saw, and honesty keeps it that way; but he SAW that the Spirit was given through the apostles' hands, and whatever the observable effect was, the region's reigning wonder-worker rated it worth

buying. Some compelling effect attended the act; its exact nature Luke withholds. And Peter's answer, "your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money," protects the one thing simony forgets: the Spirit is a GIFT. He cannot be bought, earned, inherited by talent, or unlocked by achievement, which, said gently to your candidates, also means Confirmation is not a merit badge for the kids who did the service hours. The sin still bears Simon's name, simony, so the Church would never forget which mistake this is. The group found the origin of a word tonight; let them enjoy it.

Question 5. Now the oldest question in this study comes due. Where have we seen God give life in two stages before: a first act that makes something real, and a second act that completes it with the Spirit? There are at least two answers, one from the first night and one from two weeks ago.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The valley of dry bones: the bodies assembled, sinews and flesh and skin, complete "but there was no breath in them," until the breath was summoned from the four winds as a second act, and only then the host stood on its feet (Ezekiel 37:8-10; Session 1, where the answer box told you to hold the thought lightly because you would meet the pattern again in Acts; tonight is that day). And Easter evening: the risen Jesus breathed the Spirit on the apostles, and still commanded those same men to WAIT for the further gift of Pentecost (John 20:22 with Acts 1:4-5; Session 6's open puzzle). Held as the suggestive typology it is rather than a proof: Scripture repeatedly shows God giving the Spirit in more than one act, for more than one purpose, in His own order, real life first, power and completion second, and the second is not an insult to the first. The Church has long seen Samaria inside that pattern. Samaria is not an anomaly in the story the group has been reading. It looks like that story, happening to a church.

The Push-Back: A One-Time Exception?

This is the study's most important steelman. Build it at full strength, add the Cornelius evidence yourself before anyone can, and give the answer the time it needs.

The objection. Samaria is a unique, unrepeatable moment of salvation history, not a template. God delayed the Spirit this once, for exactly the unity reasons you yourselves just gave: to certify, before apostolic eyewitnesses, that despised Samaritans were fully included. It is a Samaritan Pentecost, a founding-era milestone like the day of Pentecost itself, and milestones do not repeat. Sharpen it further, as its best defenders would: "fell upon" in Acts may denote the manifest, empowering outpouring, prophecy, tongues, visible power, rather than the Spirit's regenerating indwelling, which the Samaritans, as true believers validly baptized, already possessed; on that reading nothing sacramental was missing at all, only the public Pentecost-sign extended to Samaria before apostolic eyewitnesses. Luke is DESCRIBING what happened, not PRESCRIBING a ceremony. And the surrounding chapters prove there is no fixed rite: turn to Acts 10, and the Spirit falls on Cornelius and his whole household BEFORE baptism, with no hands laid at all, while Peter is still mid-sermon. If Acts 8 establishes Confirmation, Acts 10 abolishes it. The honest conclusion: the Spirit blows where He wills, the narratives vary, and building a permanent, mandatory sacrament on one exceptional story is bad hermeneutics. Baptism plus faith is the pattern; everything else is scaffolding the Catholic Church built later and read backward into Acts.

Question 6. This deserves the best answer we can give, with everything conceded that should be. Work through it: what stands, what falls, and what does the apostles' own behavior establish even inside the objection's strongest reading?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede generously, because much of this is right. Samaria IS a unique salvation-history moment; the unity reading we gave an hour ago says so. The manifestation reading has real force too: Luke's Spirit-language is varied, and "fell upon" does often attend visible power; a Catholic gains nothing by pretending the verse-16 wording settles the theology alone. Cornelius IS real: the Spirit truly fell before baptism, no hands in sight, and Catholics gain nothing by hiding the Bible's untidiness; God is free, and Acts shows Him exercising the freedom. And Luke IS writing narrative, not rubrics; nobody should pretend Acts 8 is a liturgy book. Now watch what survives every concession. First: in the unique situation, the apostles' chosen INSTRUMENT was prayer and the laying on of hands for the giving of the Spirit; the situation was unrepeatable, but they reached for an act they evidently knew, and next week the same act appears in another city, from another apostle who was not even present in Samaria, treated as normal ministry. One exceptional context does not explain a repeated instrument. Second: Cornelius cuts the other way on inspection. When the Spirit fell early, Peter did not conclude that the outward acts were therefore optional; he immediately COMMANDED baptism (Acts 10:48). God's freedom to give ahead of the sign did not, in the apostles' own judgment, retire the sign; if anything it proves the acts were the norm from which God occasionally, sovereignly, ran ahead. Third: even on the objection's own reading, Acts 8 establishes this much beyond appeal: valid Baptism and the falling of the Spirit through apostolic hands are DISTINGUISHABLE gifts; whatever else is debatable, "it is all one indivisible package" died in Samaria. The honest remainder, stated plainly: Acts alone gives narratives, not a rulebook, and a Catholic should not claim the sacrament arrives fully labeled in chapter 8. What Acts plants, the apostolic Church waters: whether the earliest Christians after the apostles treated post-baptismal hands and invocation as standard practice is a factual question, and Cyprian and Tertullian, early and weighty North African witnesses in tonight's Voices, testify to it for their churches; next week adds the second biblical witness and more. The steelman is owed exactly that evidence, and it is coming.

DIG DEEPER

Deuteronomy 34:9 (and Numbers 27:18-23). If time allows: "Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him." At God's explicit command, the Spirit's commissioning passed through appointed hands a millennium and a half before Peter and John took the road north. The apostles did not invent the gesture; they inherited it.

One Last Glimpse

Read Acts 19:1-2 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Years later, hundreds of miles away in Ephesus, Paul finds some disciples and asks them a question: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they answer: "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Say only this, and then stop: notice what Paul's question assumes: that receiving the Holy Spirit is a definite thing that either happened to you or did not, and that a person could know which. Next week, we watch what Paul does about their answer, and whether it looks like anything we saw tonight.

Send: Closing Questions

1. The Samaritans had joy, faith, and baptism, and the apostles still came to complete the gift. Where in your faith are you tempted to say "what I have is enough" to avoid asking for more?
2. Simon wanted the Spirit's power for what it could do for him. Honestly: what is one selfish reason you are drawn to Confirmation, and what would the unselfish version of that same desire be?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Once this week, unhurried: parent, place your hand on your candidate's head or shoulder and pray one sentence of blessing over them, out loud, in your own words. Candidate, receive it without deflecting; then place your hand on your parent's shoulder and pray one sentence for them. The gesture is ancient, the words can be simple, and sixty seconds is enough. Blessing is allowed to feel awkward the first time. Do it anyway.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, You sent Peter and John down the road to Samaria because You give Your Spirit through the Church, not around her. Thank You for hands: Moses' hands on Joshua, the apostles' hands in Samaria, every hand You have ever blessed through since. Prepare these candidates for hands that will one day be laid on them, and make all of us a Church worth being joined to. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:17)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 8, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Acts 8:1-17** (read at home this week; verses 4-8 and 12-17 aloud in session)
- **Acts 2:38** (recalled: baptism and the gift of the Spirit)
- **Acts 8:18-24** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, Simon the magician)
- **Ezekiel 37:8-10; John 20:22 with Acts 1:4-5** (recalled: the two-stage pattern)
- **Acts 10:44-48** (Push-Back: Cornelius, presented by us)
- **Deuteronomy 34:9; Numbers 27:18-23** (Dig Deeper: Moses' hands on Joshua)
- **Acts 19:1-2** (One Last Glimpse: Paul's question at Ephesus)

Catechism: CCC 1288, 1315 (and 1289 as leader's knowledge only).

Voices: St. Cyprian of Carthage (Letter to Jubaianus); Tertullian of Carthage (On Baptism); St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Acts).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 8, one per household.

SESSION 9

Ephesus and the Foundations

Acts 19:1-7 • Hebrews 6:1-2

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Scripture's own courtroom principle, that a matter is established on the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15), makes a fitting frame, offered as illustration rather than exegetical proof. Last week gave the first witness; tonight gives the second and third. In Ephesus, years after Samaria and hundreds of miles away, Paul, an apostle who was not in Samaria and learned his gospel independently, meets baptized disciples, asks whether they received the Holy Spirit, completes their baptism, and then lays his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit comes on them. Same structure, different city, different apostle: a pattern, not an incident. Then, in the live discovery, participants find Hebrews 6:1-2, where "the laying on of hands" sits in the apostolic Church's own list of foundational, elementary teachings, filed between baptisms and the resurrection: beginner material, known to every catechized Christian of the first generation. The debt promised to Session 5's steelman is paid in full tonight.

Catholic Touchstone

The Church has kept the sign of the imposition of hands, by which the apostles transmitted the gift of the Spirit, in her sacramental epicleses to this day (CCC 699). Very early, an anointing with perfumed oil was added to this laying on of hands, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit (CCC 1289), and East and West carried the one apostolic inheritance forward in their own ways (CCC 1290).

What You Need to Know

Who the Ephesian twelve were. Paul finds about twelve "disciples" who had received only "John's baptism": followers formed somewhere downstream of John the Baptist's movement, sincere, devout, and running on the covenant's last preparatory chapter. They answer that they have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit, which in context most likely means they had not heard that the Spirit had been given, the Pentecost news, rather than total ignorance of the Spirit's existence; disciples of the Baptist, who preached a coming Spirit-baptism, could hardly have never heard the word. Their formation stopped before Pentecost reached them. Paul does not despise the head start; he completes it: they are baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and then, as a distinct further act, Paul lays his hands on them and the Holy Spirit comes on them, with prophetic speech as the visible receipt.

Why Paul is the perfect second witness. Paul was not one of the Twelve and was not in Samaria; at the time of Acts 8 he was persecuting the Church. Galatians 1 shows a man emphatic about the independence of his gospel, though it does not tell us how he learned particular practices, so claim only what the texts give: a second apostle, in a second city, years later, reaching for the same instrument, and Luke narrating it as unremarkable apostolic ministry. Two independent narrative witnesses converging on one practice is strong evidence that the practice is apostolic rather than regional.

Paul's question assumes a theology. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" is only a sensible question if receiving the Spirit is a definite, knowable event, distinguishable from believing itself: something that either happened to you or did not, and about which you could be asked. Let the

group feel how strange that question sounds to modern ears trained to treat the Spirit as an ambient assumption, and how normal it evidently sounded to Paul.

Hebrews 6 is the quiet heavyweight. The author scolds his readers for still needing milk, then lists what the "milk," the elementary foundation, contains: repentance, faith, instruction about ablutions, THE LAYING ON OF HANDS, resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment. Hand-laying sits in the foundational instruction of the letter's own audience, filed in the initiation sequence between the washings and the last things. Be honest about the hedges: "ablutions" is plural and debated, and hands were laid for several purposes; tonight's steelman takes exactly that objection head on. The list corroborates; the narratives carry the weight.

For the parents in the room. The Ephesian twelve are the patron saints of everyone whose religious formation just stopped at some point: sincere people running on what they were given, unaware a further chapter existed. Some parents in your room ARE the Ephesian twelve, sacramentalized decades ago and never told what they carry. Paul's move is the model: no scorn for the head start, and no leaving them there either. This study is, for some of the adults present, their Ephesus.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- "Only on the evidence of two witnesses, or of three witnesses, shall a charge be sustained" (Deuteronomy 19:15): Scripture's own standard of proof. Samaria and Ephesus are the two witnesses; Hebrews 6 makes a third.
- Jacob crossing his hands to bless Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 48:13-16) is the Bible's first laying on of hands: blessing and identity conferred through touch, at the very root of Israel.
- Moses' hands on Joshua (Deuteronomy 34:9, last week's Dig Deeper) stands behind both apostles' practice: commissioning through appointed hands is Torah, not innovation.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Hippolytus of Rome (*the Apostolic Tradition, around AD 215*)

The third-century church order traditionally attributed to St. Hippolytus, whose authorship, date, and provenance scholars debate, preserves an early initiation practice: after the washing, the newly baptized are brought to the bishop, who lays his hand on them and prays for God's grace. Whatever its exact origin, it stands roughly a century after the apostle John's death as an early witness that washing was followed by the bishop's hand and prayer.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*On the Mysteries*)

St. Ambrose, catechizing the newly initiated of Milan in the fourth century, told them that after the font comes the spiritual seal, when at the invocation of the priest (for Ambrose, the bishop at the font) the Holy Spirit is poured out with the sevenfold grace the group met in Isaiah 11: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength, of knowledge and piety and holy fear. The gifts prayed over Milan's newest Christians were the ones resting on the shoot of Jesse.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Jerome (*Dialogue Against the Luciferians*)

St. Jerome, no man to spare a custom he thought baseless, records and defends the practice of his day: bishops travel out to those baptized in smaller towns by priests and deacons, to lay hands on them and invoke the Holy Spirit, and he traces the custom to the Acts of the Apostles, to Peter and John sent to Samaria, while adding his own careful note that the reservation to bishops serves the honor and good order of the episcopate as much as strict necessity. Even with the qualification, his root is apostolic: this is what the apostles were sent to do.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 699.** By the laying on of hands the apostles transmitted the gift of the Spirit, and the Church has kept this sign of the Spirit's outpouring in her sacramental prayers.
- **CCC 1289.** Very early, an anointing with perfumed oil was added to the laying on of hands, the better to signify the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- **CCC 1290.** East and West carried the apostolic inheritance forward with different emphases, one practice from the apostles unfolding across the whole Church.

Thread Watch

A debt is paid tonight; say so. Session 5's steelman ended with a promise: "the question that settles it is what the APOSTLES did when they gave the Spirit, and that evidence is exactly where this study goes." When Question 3 lands the two-witnesses point, name the debt and mark it paid: two cities, two independent apostles, one instrument, plus the beginners' list of Hebrews 6. The study keeps its promises on schedule; that is why the group trusts it.

Thread C: The Oil. St. Ambrose's voice tonight lets one word into the room: seal. Do not develop it, and do not connect it to anything. Next session is called Sealed, and the group's first sight of the word should be a saint's, not yours. The oil itself stays sealed until Session 14.

The glimpse changes registers tonight. Every glimpse so far has pointed at story; tonight's points at the candidates themselves (2 Corinthians 1:21-22, "he has put his seal upon us"). From here to the end, the study turns from what God did to what God is doing to them. Feel the gear change; let the room feel it too.

Session Goals

1. Participants can retell the Ephesus incident and name what makes Paul an independent second witness.
2. Participants have felt the strangeness and the precision of Paul's question: receiving the Spirit as a definite, knowable event.
3. Participants have found Hebrews 6:1-2 themselves and located the laying on of hands inside the apostolic beginner's curriculum.
4. The group has faced the "hands mean many things" objection at full strength, with the corroborating-versus-weight-bearing distinction made honestly.
5. Session 5's promised debt has been explicitly marked paid, and each household leaves praying daily for their bishop by name.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on 2 Timothy, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut Paul's question, the two-witnesses moment, or the Hebrews discovery; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit. You are not a regional custom or a local memory; You gave Yourself through Peter's hands in Samaria and Paul's hands in Ephesus, one gift on two roads. Ask us tonight the question Paul asked, and give us the honesty to answer it. Establish Your pattern in our eyes on the evidence of Your witnesses. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. What is something in your family that gets passed down hand to hand: a recipe, a tool, a skill, a tradition? Who put it in your hands?
2. Has a single question from someone ever revealed to you that you had missed something big? What was the question?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Question (Acts 19:1-7)

Households read this at home. Have it read aloud now, all seven verses, slowly.

Question 1. Start with Paul's opening question itself: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" What does a question like that assume? Could anyone ask YOU that question and expect a definite answer?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The question assumes that receiving the Holy Spirit is a definite event: something that either happened to a person or did not, distinguishable from believing itself, and knowable enough to be asked about, like asking whether you were ever vaccinated or ever married. Paul is not asking about feelings or vibes; he expects a yes or a no. Let the second half of the question sit on the room without forcing answers aloud: most modern Christians, teens and parents alike, have never once been asked it, and would not know what event they would point to. The apostolic Church could point. By the end of this study, so will everyone at this table.

Question 2. Walk Paul's response step by step from verses 4-7. These men had John's baptism, sincere but pre-Pentecost. What does Paul do first, and then what does he do as a further act, and what happens at each step? Keep the two acts distinct on paper.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

First, Paul completes their initiation into Christ: their previous baptism was John's, a preparation and not yet Christian Baptism, so on hearing his explanation they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and that Christian Baptism truly gave them the Holy Spirit; keep the group precise here. Then, verse 6, a distinct further act with its own verse: "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying." Baptism, and then hands for a further coming of the Spirit with power, the completion the Church would come to call Confirmation. Note what Paul did NOT do: he did not treat the baptism as the

whole of initiation with nothing further to be done, and he did not skip the baptism and go straight to hands. Both acts, in order, each doing its work. Where has the group seen that exact structure before? Let them say Samaria; do not say it for them.

Question 3. Now the courtroom move. Deuteronomy 19:15 gives Scripture's own rule: a matter is established on the evidence of two or three witnesses. Consider what kind of witness Paul is: was he in Samaria? Did he learn his methods from Peter and John? (Galatians 1:11-12 if you want his own testimony.) What do two independent apostles converging on the same practice establish?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Paul was not in Samaria; at the time of Acts 8 he was still persecuting the Church. And he is emphatic in Galatians that his gospel came by revelation, not by instruction from Jerusalem, with the Jerusalem apostles later confirming rather than sourcing it. So Ephesus is not simply Samaria's custom traveling: a second apostle, absent from the first scene, uses the same instrument, baptism, and the laying on of hands for the giving of the Spirit, and Luke records it as ordinary ministry. Measured by the two-witnesses principle we borrowed as a frame, the pattern stands established as apostolic practice, not an incident or a regional habit. And here, name the debt and pay it: Session 5 ended its steelman with a promise that the question would be settled by what the apostles did when they gave the Spirit. Two cities. Two apostles. One instrument. Paid in full, with one more witness still coming tonight.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in a letter, then that the letter is addressed to the Hebrews.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A letter scolds its readers: by now you ought to be teachers, and you still need milk. Then it lists the milk, the foundation every beginner was taught first: turning from dead works, faith, washings, hands, rising from the dead, judgment. Find the list, and find what sits fourth in it."*

When found, have the discovering table read Hebrews 6:1-2 aloud, twice.

Question 4. Look at the company "the laying on of hands" keeps in this list: repentance, faith, ablutions, resurrection, judgment. What kind of teachings are these: advanced electives, or the absolute basics? So what does it tell us that hand-laying made this particular list, and where in the sequence does it sit?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

These are the foundations, the "elementary doctrines," the milk the author is impatient to move past: what this apostolic-era community's beginners learned FIRST. And the laying on of hands sits inside the initiation sequence, right after the washings and before the last things: exactly where Samaria and Ephesus put it in practice, now appearing in the curriculum. This is a third witness of a different kind: not a story about what apostles did once, but a syllabus showing what all beginners were routinely taught. Two honest hedges, given freely: "ablutions" is plural and scholars

debate its exact reference, and this verse names the practice without explaining it, so on its own it corroborates rather than proves. But a practice that made an apostolic-era beginner list was not marginal or optional knowledge for that church. It was milk, and read together with Acts and the Church's Tradition, it corroborates where the narratives carry the weight.

The Push-Back: Hands Mean Everything, So They Prove Nothing

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. The laying on of hands is the New Testament's all-purpose gesture. Jesus laid hands on the sick to heal them (Mark 6:5) and on children to bless them (Mark 10:16). The apostles laid hands to ordain the seven (Acts 6:6) and to commission missionaries (Acts 13:3); Timothy received his ministry gift through hands (1 Timothy 4:14). Healing, blessing, ordination, sending: hands do everything. So Hebrews 6:2 could mean any of these, and probably means all of them loosely; you cannot pluck one meaning out and call it Confirmation. The Catholic argument finds hands in Acts 8, hands in Acts 19, hands in Hebrews 6, and quietly assumes they are all the SAME hands. That is not exegesis; that is a magnet passing over the text collecting anything metallic.

Question 5. The survey of uses is completely accurate, so grant it. Then ask the sharper question: when a gesture has many uses, what tells you which use a given text means? Apply that to Acts 8, Acts 19, and Hebrews 6 in turn.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Grant it all: hands are the Bible's universal sign of conferral and transmission, blessing, healing, office, mission, and that breadth is not an embarrassment; it is WHY the gesture fits the giving of the greatest Gift. But ambiguity of gesture is resolved the way all ambiguity is resolved: by stated purpose and stated result. In Acts 8 the purpose is explicit before the act ("prayed for them THAT they might receive the Holy Spirit") and the result explicit after it ("they received the Holy Spirit"); in Acts 19 the result is in the same verse ("the Holy Spirit came on them"). Nobody is guessing what those hands were for; Luke says. The honest concession lands on Hebrews 6:2 alone: by itself, its "laying on of hands" is genuinely underdetermined, and a Catholic overplays the verse by treating it as a proof text. Its real work is corroboration by placement: in an initiation sequence, between the washings and the resurrection, the natural referent is the initiation-completing hands the narratives just showed us twice, and that is how the Church that received the letter read it. So state the architecture plainly, because it is honest and it is strong enough: the weight-bearing texts are the two narratives with stated purpose and stated result; Hebrews 6 corroborates from the curriculum; and the unbroken practice of the generation after the apostles, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Ambrose, Jerome, confirms which reading the actual heirs of the apostles thought obvious. The magnet only collected what was already labeled.

DIG DEEPER

2 Timothy 1:6-7. If time allows: Paul tells Timothy to "rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands," adding that God gave us a spirit not of timidity but of power and love and self-control. The context is Timothy's ministry, ordination rather than initiation, and say so plainly; but the principle underneath is for everyone at your table: a gift given through hands

can go banked and drowsy, and the owner's job is to rekindle it. Some parents in the room are carrying exactly such a gift. The verb Paul chose means to stir a fire back to flame.

One Last Glimpse

Read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Paul writes: it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has commissioned us; he has put his SEAL upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Add one footnote-truth the group has earned: the Greek behind "commissioned" is echrisen, literally "anointed," as the RSV2CE's own note records. Say only this, and then stop: anointed, sealed, guaranteed. Three words from the world of contracts and kings, applied to ordinary Christians in a real city. What is a seal, what does it do, and can it be broken? Next week is about the mark you cannot see.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Paul's question, put to you: did you receive the Holy Spirit? Whatever your honest answer is tonight, what would need to happen for you to be able to answer it the way the Ephesians could by verse 7?
2. The Ephesian twelve were running sincerely on an unfinished formation. Where might your own formation have simply stopped at some point, and what would letting God finish it cost you?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. The bishop is the ordinary minister of Confirmation, a successor of the apostles, and whether he or a priest with the faculty confirms these candidates, the bishop stands behind the sacrament in your diocese. Find out his name this week if you do not know it (the parish bulletin or website will), and pray one sentence for him together each day: "Lord, bless our bishop, N.; make him holy, and prepare him and us for the day of Confirmation." You have spent two weeks watching apostles travel to lay on hands. Pray for the man who holds their office among you.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, on the evidence of two witnesses You establish a matter, and You have shown us two: Samaria and Ephesus, Peter's hands and Paul's, one gift on both roads. Thank You that the pattern still runs, and that hands are already appointed for these candidates. Finish every unfinished formation in this room. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them." (Acts 19:6)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 9, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Acts 19:1-7** (Build, Scene One: Ephesus; read at home this week)
- **Galatians 1:11-12** (Build, Scene One: Paul's independence, optional lookup)
- **Deuteronomy 19:15** (Build, Scene One: the two-witnesses rule)
- **Hebrews 6:1-2** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, the foundations list)
- **Mark 6:5; Mark 10:16; Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3; 1 Timothy 4:14** (Push-Back: the many uses of hands)
- **2 Timothy 1:6-7** (Dig Deeper: rekindle the gift)
- **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** (One Last Glimpse: anointed, sealed, guaranteed)

Catechism: CCC 699, 1289, 1290.

Voices: St. Hippolytus of Rome (the Apostolic Tradition); St. Ambrose of Milan (On the Mysteries); St. Jerome (Dialogue Against the Luciferians).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 9, one per household.

SESSION 10

Sealed

Ephesians 1 • 2 Corinthians 1 • Ephesians 4:30

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Participants learn what a seal meant in the ancient world, ownership, authentication, protection, permanence, and then find Paul applying exactly that word to ordinary Christians: "you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance." In the live discovery they find Ezekiel's vision of a mark set on the foreheads of the faithful before judgment falls, and in the steelman they face the strongest Protestant use of these very verses, eternal security, and answer it with the honesty it deserves. Tonight the study also pays its oldest debt: Session 2 ended with "you cannot seal the wind" left standing. Tonight the group learns that God says otherwise, and what His seal does and does not guarantee.

Catholic Touchstone

The symbolism of the seal marks the sacrament: a seal is a sign of personal authority and ownership, the mark by which soldiers were enrolled and documents authenticated; Christ himself is marked with the Father's seal, and the Father marks us with his in Christ (CCC 1295-1296). Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual mark, the character, which is why the sacrament can never be repeated (CCC 1304).

What You Need to Know

What a seal did. Teach four functions and let every text tonight land on one of them. Ownership: masters marked what belonged to them; soldiers of Rome were marked at enlistment, and the mark said whose army you were in for life. Authentication: a king pressed his signet into wax, and the document carried his own image and could not be forged. Protection: what bore the owner's seal was under the owner's guard, and tampering with it meant answering to him. Permanence: a seal pressed into wax or skin was made to last. The Greek word is *sphragis*. The word itself simply means a seal or mark; the four functions are what seals DID in that world, the associations Paul's first readers would carry, illustrative background rather than four dictionary definitions packed into one word.

Arrabon. Paul's other business word: the Spirit is given as the *arrabon* of our inheritance, a first installment, a down payment, the earnest money that binds the seller because part of the price has actually changed hands. Modern Greek still uses a form of the word for engagement and betrothal. The Spirit in a Christian's heart is not a promissory note about heaven; He is heaven's first installment, already paid in, guaranteeing the rest because the rest is of the same kind. This is the study's answer to what "guarantee" means: God binding Himself.

The debt from Session 2, and how to pay it. Nine weeks ago the steelman said: the Spirit departed from Saul; David begged "take not thy holy Spirit from me"; you cannot seal the wind. The answer then was that the Old Testament's revocable era was the setup for a promised abiding gift, and the question was held open. Tonight it closes: the prophets promised the Spirit within; the Spirit came to rest and remain at the Jordan; Pentecost distributed the resting; and Paul names what the recipients now carry:

a SEAL. The new gift is different in kind from what Saul lost, and "sealed" is the apostolic word for the difference. Name the debt out loud when Question 3 pays it.

The precision that keeps tonight honest. Hold two truths with equal grip, because the steelman will test both. First: the seal is truly permanent; the Church teaches that Baptism and Confirmation imprint an indelible character that no sin erases, which is why neither is ever repeated, and why a Catholic who leaves and returns is not re-confirmed. Second: the sealed can still grieve the Spirit, and Paul says so to the sealed themselves (Ephesians 4:30), in a letter that goes on to warn the sealed about sins that exclude from the kingdom. Permanent mark; resistible grace. St. Augustine's deserter, in tonight's Voices, is the image that holds both: the brand outlasts the desertion, which is exactly why the deserter can be recognized, and reconciled without re-branding.

For the parents in the room. The character doctrine lands pastorally on parents more than teens: a parent who drifted for twenty years and came back was never unmarked, and any parent grieving an older child who has left the practice of the faith should hear tonight, plainly, that the seal on that child has not come off. The Church leaves lights on for the marked. Do not force this application on anyone; leave it on the table where the people who need it can pick it up.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Ezekiel 9:3-6 (a mark set on the foreheads of those who grieve over evil, sparing them in judgment) is tonight's live discovery: the protective seal is older than Paul, and St. Jerome noted that the mark, the Hebrew letter tav, was written in the old script as a cross shape.
- Haggai 2:23 ("I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you"): God calls a chosen man His own signet ring, the intimate emblem of His choice; devotional readers have loved to extend the image to the pressing of the King's likeness into the world.
- Genesis 4:15 (the mark on Cain, protecting even the guilty from vengeance): the Bible's first mark is protective, and set on a sinner: in that story at least, God's mark guarded the very man who deserved it least.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Arguing with the Donatists, who wanted returning apostates re-marked (see especially Contra Epistulam Parmeniani II), St. Augustine reached for the army: a soldier of Rome carried the military mark on his body, and if he deserted, the mark deserted with him; when he returned, he was received back, and no one branded him again, for the mark had never left. So it is, Augustine taught, with the seal of Christ: the character remains even in one who abandons the ranks. It does not save the deserter by itself, but it names him forever as one who belongs to the King's army, and it is why the Church receives the returning without ever repeating the seal.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Ephesians*)

Preaching on "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit" (Homilies on Ephesians, on 1:13-14), St. John Chrysostom dwelt on the word arrabon, the first installment: God has not merely promised us our inheritance; He has given a part of it in advance, and the part pledges the whole. The certainty of

the Christian hope, on this reading, rests on a deposit already given, and the deposit is the Spirit Himself.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

St. Thomas taught (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 72, a. 5) that Confirmation imprints a character, an indelible spiritual mark, and he explained what the mark is for: it is a spiritual power deputing the Christian to profess the faith of Christ publicly, as it were by office. The image of household and front line is our application of his point, and it is faithful to it: what the mark makes you, in Thomas's account, is someone deputed to confess Christ before the world.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1295.** A seal is a symbol of a person: a sign of personal authority and ownership; soldiers were marked with their leader's seal, and documents authenticated by it.
- **CCC 1296.** The seal of the Holy Spirit marks our total belonging to Christ and enrollment in his service for ever; Christ himself is marked with the Father's seal, and the Father has sealed us in him.
- **CCC 1304.** Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a spiritual mark, an indelible character, on the soul; for this reason it is received only once.

Thread Watch

Debt payment, announced. When Question 3 lands, say the words: nine weeks ago we left an objection standing, "you cannot seal the wind," and tonight the apostle Paul answers it in writing. The group's trust in the study is built on watching it keep its promises; this is the biggest one so far.

Thread C: The Oil. The seal vocabulary tonight sits one step from chrism, and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 puts "anointed" and "sealed" in the same breath. Read it, let it ring, and connect nothing. When someone asks how exactly God seals a person, the honest answer is: hold that question with both hands; it is the last question of this study, and it gets answered in a church, not a classroom. Four more weeks.

Session Goals

1. Participants can name the four functions of an ancient seal and find each one in tonight's texts.
2. Participants can explain arrabon in their own words: a first installment of the same kind as the whole.
3. The Session 2 debt has been named and paid out loud.
4. The group has faced the eternal-security steelman at full strength and can state the Catholic both-and: indelible mark, resistible grace.
5. Each household leaves with the slow sign of the cross practice.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on the Song of Songs, and present the steelman objection yourself in ninety seconds; tonight's steelman matters enormously in this part of the country, so shorten

it last. Never cut the four-functions teaching, the Ezekiel discovery, or the debt payment; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit. You are the seal of the living God: the mark of the Owner, the image of the King, the guard on the door, the first installment of everything promised. We are done being vague about what we carry. Show us tonight what it means to be Yours in writing. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. What do you own that is marked with your name or initials, and why did you mark it?
2. Engagement rings, security deposits, pre-orders: when has a down payment made you certain of something that had not fully arrived yet?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Word on the Document (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Households read Ephesians 1:3-14 at home, hunting for the word from the world of kings and contracts. Collect the hunt first: what word did people find, and what does Paul say it guarantees? Then have verses 13-14 read aloud.

Question 1. Before we touch Paul's sentence, build the background together. In a world without photo ID, passwords, or notaries, what jobs did a seal do? Think of a king's signet ring, a merchant's crate, a soldier's enlistment mark, an official letter. Build the list.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Four jobs, and get all four on paper. Ownership: the mark says whose this is; soldiers were marked at enlistment, and the mark said which king owned their service. Authentication: the signet pressed the king's own image into wax; the document was genuine because it carried his likeness, and forging a seal was a capital matter. Protection: a sealed crate, tomb, or letter was under the owner's guard; breaking a seal meant answering to whoever set it. Permanence: seals were pressed to last; wax hardens, brands stay. Now reread verse 13 with that world in view: "you... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Paul names the sealing itself and its guarantee; the four ancient functions tell you what a sealed person in Ephesus would have HEARD in it, and the Church's teaching on the seal (CCC 1295-1296) unfolds the same associations. Owned by God, stamped with His image, under His guard, lastingly.

Question 2. Verse 14 adds the second business word: the Spirit is the GUARANTEE (*arrabon*) of our inheritance. An *arrabon* was earnest money: a first installment that binds the deal, and, note carefully, is a piece of the actual price, not a token. Modern Greek still uses a form of the word for engagement and betrothal. What is Paul claiming about the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life right now, before heaven?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

That the Christian is not living on an IOU. God has not merely promised the inheritance; He has paid the first installment into our hands, and the installment is of the same kind as the whole: the Spirit we have now is not a voucher for eternal life, He is eternal life, begun. An engagement gift is

not a certificate about a future marriage; it is gold in your hand now, and its weight is the argument. This is why Paul can be so certain: a God who has already given you His own Spirit has put too much of Himself into the deal to walk away from it. Whatever heaven is, the person with the Spirit has tasted the first course.

Question 3. Have someone read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 aloud: established, ANOINTED, SEALED, given the Spirit as guarantee. Now the moment nine weeks in the making. Session 2 ended with an objection we left standing: the Spirit departed from Saul, David begged not to lose Him, and "you cannot seal the wind." With everything from Isaiah 11 to the Jordan to Pentecost to tonight on the table: answer it.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Walk the whole arc, and let the group supply the steps: the old covenant's conspicuous task-endowments truly were withdrawable, Saul above all, and we conceded it without flinching. But the prophets promised a gift different in kind: within you, not upon you. At the Jordan the Spirit descended and REMAINED, the verb the Baptist was told to watch for. At Pentecost the remaining was distributed, a flame resting on each. And now Paul, writing to ordinary believers, names what the recipients of the distributed gift carry: God "has put his SEAL upon us." Saul's task-endowment could lift away; the baptized carry a seal. And keep the Catholic precision razor-sharp here, because tonight's steelman will test it: the SEAL, the sacramental character, is indelible and never comes off; sanctifying grace, the life of God in the soul, can still be forfeited by mortal sin and restored in Confession. Mark permanent; communion losable; both true at once. The objection was right about its own era and wrong about ours: the whole point of the new covenant is that God did what the objection said could not be done. He sealed the wind, by giving the gift a permanent mark. Say it formally: the debt from Session 2 is paid. Then note what 2 Corinthians put next to "sealed": "anointed." Hold that pairing with both hands, and add nothing. It is the last question of this study.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in a prophet the group has visited twice before, then that it is near his front.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"The city has gone rotten, and judgment is coming. But before it falls, a man clothed in linen with a writing case at his side is sent through the streets with one job: put a mark on the foreheads of everyone who sighs and groans over the evil around them. The destroyers who follow have one absolute order: touch no one who bears the mark. Find the man with the writing case."*

When found, have the discovering table read Ezekiel 9:3-6 aloud.

Question 4. Who gets the mark in this vision, what does the mark do, and, worth noticing, what had the marked people actually done to qualify? Then one detail for the ages: the "mark" is the Hebrew letter tav, and St. Jerome observed that in the ancient script of Ezekiel's own day, tav was written as a cross shape. Sit with that.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The marked are those who "sigh and groan over all the abominations" of the city: not the powerful, not the credentialed, just the people whose hearts have not made peace with the evil around them. The mark protects absolutely; the destroyers may touch no one who bears it. Notice the mercy of the standard: the qualification is not sinlessness but grief, a heart still soft enough to mourn what God mourns; the memory-verse practice of Session 4, naming the stone moments, was training for exactly this softness. And the tav: St. Jerome, commenting on Ezekiel, observed that in the old Hebrew script the letter tav was written in a cross-like shape, and marveled at the foreshadowing; the observation is his typological reading, not a claim the verse itself makes, and it is still worth a moment of quiet. Say no more than that.

The Push-Back: Sealed Means Saved, Forever, Period

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you; many of their neighbors and classmates hold it sincerely, from these exact verses.

The objection. Take tonight's texts at face value and they prove eternal security: once saved, always saved. You were sealed "for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30): the seal's expiration date is the end of the world. The Spirit is the GUARANTEE of your inheritance: and a guarantee that can fail is not a guarantee; a refundable deposit is no arrabon at all. If a truly sealed believer could be lost, then God's seal was broken, God's earnest money was forfeited, and God's guarantee bounced, which is blasphemy to suggest. So the sealed CANNOT be lost. And the strongest defenders add the counters before you can raise them: the warnings of Scripture, they say, are God's appointed MEANS of preserving His elect, fully compatible with certain perseverance; Ephesians 5's excluded immoral man describes the unregenerate professor, never the truly sealed; and Hebrews 6's fallen were enlightened tasters who had never truly been born again. The Catholic teaching that a confirmed Christian in mortal sin has lost sanctifying grace makes God's seal weaker than a notary's. Either the seal means what seals mean, or this whole night was poetry.

Question 5. This is the strongest Protestant use of tonight's own verses, and it deserves a real answer, not a dodge. Start with what must be conceded. Then read the second half of Ephesians 4:30's own sentence-world: what is the verse actually doing there, and what do Ephesians 5:5-6 and this study's own Hebrews 6 add?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede the assurance, fully and gladly: these texts teach real security on God's side. God will never break His own seal, never forfeit His own deposit, never abandon what He has marked; a Catholic who thinks God's grip is nervous has not read tonight's verses. But now look at what the sealing texts themselves do next. Ephesians 4:30 is not a trophy sentence; it is a COMMAND: "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed." The command is at minimum a real warning that the sealed can truly grieve the Spirit; the Reformed reply, that warnings are God's means of preserving the elect, is genuinely coherent and deserves saying, so do not pretend this one verse alone ends the debate. One chapter later, the same letter tells the same sealed readers that no immoral or impure man has any inheritance in the kingdom, and "let no one deceive you with empty words" (5:5-6): Paul evidently thought the sealed could be deceived about exactly this. And this study's own text, Hebrews 6:4-6, describes those who were enlightened, who became partakers of the Holy Spirit, and who fell away; the eternal-security readings of that passage exist and are serious, but "partakers of the Holy Spirit" is a strange thing to say of the never-regenerate, and the

Catholic reading takes the words at face value. So hold the Catholic both-and, which is the only reading that keeps every verse: the MARK is indelible; God's side never fails; the deserter, in Augustine's image, still carries the brand, which is why he is received back without re-sealing. But the brand does not march for him; grace can be grieved, resisted, and mortally refused by the free creature God insists on having. The seal guarantees that God will never let go; it does not anesthetize the hand that can. The honest remainder, named without embarrassment: how full assurance and real warning coexist is a mystery both traditions strain against, and the Church's word for living inside it is HOPE: certain of God, unpresuming about ourselves, confident like a child holding a faithful Father's hand over a cliff edge, which is certainty of exactly the right kind.

DIG DEEPER

Song of Songs 8:6. If time allows: "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death." The Bible's love poetry reaches for the same word: to be sealed on someone is to be loved with a love that does not negotiate with death. That is the register in which God says "sealed" about you.

One Last Glimpse

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Paul writes: to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. Say only this, and then stop: sealed is who you are. But the Sealer does not mark empty crates; the mark goes on cargo. What exactly is IN a person the Spirit has sealed, what came in the package? Next week we open it.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Owned, authenticated, protected, permanent: which of the seal's four meanings do you most need to be true about you right now, and why?
2. "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" is written to sealed people. What is one concrete way you suspect you have been grieving Him lately, and what would change this week if you stopped?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Nearly everyone in this room was signed with the cross at Baptism, many before they could talk; adult converts chose the signing with open eyes, which is its own glory. This week, once a day, make the sign of the cross SLOWLY, all four points deliberate, and as you make it, think one sentence: "I am sealed: owned, real, guarded, and the mark does not come off." (The gesture recalls the seal; the indelible character itself comes by the sacraments.) Parent and candidate, make it together once a day, even in the driveway. The oldest gesture you know is about to mean what it always meant.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Father, You marked the mourners of Jerusalem before judgment fell, You set Your signet on the men You chose, and in Christ You have sealed us with the promised Holy Spirit, the first installment of everything You intend to give. We will not grieve the Guest You gave us. Guard what You have marked, and finish what You have begun. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

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

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 10, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Ephesians 1:3-14** (read at home this week; verses 13-14 aloud in session)
- **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** (Build, Scene One: anointed, sealed, guaranteed; the debt payment)
- **Ezekiel 9:3-6** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, the mark on the foreheads)
- **Ephesians 4:30** (Push-Back and memory verse: do not grieve the Spirit)
- **Ephesians 5:5-6; Hebrews 6:4-6** (Push-Back answer: warnings addressed to the sealed)
- **Song of Songs 8:6** (Dig Deeper: a seal upon your heart)
- **1 Corinthians 12:7** (One Last Glimpse: to each is given)

Catechism: CCC 1295, 1296, 1304 (and 1305 behind the Aquinas voice).

Voices: St. Augustine of Hippo (on the sacramental character, against the Donatists); St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Ephesians); St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae III, q. 72).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 10, one per household.

SESSION 11

The Seven Gifts

Isaiah 11 Revisited • 1 Corinthians 12 • Exodus 31

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The seal marks the crate; tonight the group opens the cargo. Participants revisit the seven gifts of Isaiah 11, this time not as the Messiah's equipment but as their own inheritance, and get working, Tuesday-afternoon definitions of each one. They then meet the charisms of 1 Corinthians 12, learn the difference between the gifts that make the receiver holy and the gifts given for everyone else's benefit, and discover, in the live discovery, that the first person in all of Scripture whom God says He has FILLED with His Spirit was not a prophet, priest, or king, but a craftsman with skilled hands. The Spirit's equipment turns out to be aimed at ordinary excellent life, and every scrap of it, as the memory verse insists, is given for the common good.

Catholic Touchstone

The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, permanent dispositions that make us docile to His promptings (CCC 1830). Alongside these, the Spirit distributes charisms, graces oriented toward the building up of the Church and the good of the world, to be received with gratitude and discerned in the Church (CCC 799-801).

What You Need to Know

Two kinds of equipment; keep them straight. The seven GIFTS (the Church's traditional list drawn from Isaiah 11; CCC 1830-1831) are received with sanctifying grace at Baptism and strengthened and completed at Confirmation, and their job is the receiver's holiness; their fruitful operation presupposes a soul living in grace and cooperating: permanent dispositions that make a soul quick to catch and follow the Spirit's promptings, sails set for His wind. The CHARISMS (1 Corinthians 12) are distributed variously, one to this person and another to that, and their job is principally everyone else: building up the Church and serving the world (which does not mean the receiver gets nothing; serving sanctifies the servant too). St. Thomas's clean distinction in tonight's Voices: grace that makes YOU pleasing to God, versus graces freely given THROUGH you for others. Teens habitually collapse these into one pile marked "superpowers"; tonight's whole architecture is the sorting.

Definitions that survive a Tuesday. The seven gifts die in the mind as a list of synonyms for "smart and holy." Give each one a working definition and a concrete teenage scene. Wisdom: a taste for God's perspective, so His priorities start seeming obvious rather than imposed. Understanding: seeing into the truths you believe, so the Creed stops being flashcards. Counsel: right judgment in a live situation, knowing the next right move at the party, in the group chat, at the bedside. Fortitude: doing the known good when it costs, and the quieter version, enduring. Knowledge: seeing created things as they stand before God, so success, bodies, money, and grades take their true size. Piety: the family instinct, relating to God as Father and His people as yours, so worship feels like coming home rather than reporting for inspection. Fear of the Lord: the awe that will not trade God for anything, terror's opposite, the refusal to shrink Him. These land as scenes, not definitions; use the ones in the answer boxes and add your own.

The count, one more time. Session 3 already banked the honesty: Hebrew six, Septuagint and Vulgate seven, the Church's traditional list following the ancient translations, and CCC 1831 giving that received list of seven. If it resurfaces tonight, spend the banked credit: we told you the truth about the count eight weeks ago, and the list remains what it always was, a portrait of the Spirit's fullness, not an inventory with countable parts.

Gift envy is tonight's pastoral landmine. First Corinthians 12 exists because Corinth turned charisms into a status ladder. Your room has its own ladder: the kid who speaks easily about faith, the parent who runs everything, versus the quiet ones convinced they got shipped an empty box. Paul's body metaphor, Basil's "whole to each," and Bezalel the craftsman are all aimed at the bottom of that ladder. Watch for who goes quiet during this session; the Live It practice, gift-spotting in the other person, is built for them.

For the parents in the room. Parents received these same seven gifts at their own Confirmation, and 2 Timothy's "rekindle" from two weeks ago still applies. Tonight's framing for adults: the gifts are not adolescent starter equipment that expires; they are the standing riggings of a Christian life, and many adults have sailed for decades on bare poles. The gift-spotting practice runs both directions on purpose: candidates will name gifts they see operating in their parents, and some parents will hear, for the first time in years, evidence that the Spirit has been working through them all along.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Exodus 31:1-5 (Bezalel, filled with the Spirit of God for craftsmanship) is tonight's live discovery: the Spirit's first "filling" in Scripture equips excellent ordinary work.
- Isaiah 11:1-3, memorized in Session 3 as the Messiah's portrait, returns tonight as the family inheritance: what rested on the Head is distributed to the Body.
- Psalm 133 (the precious oil on Aaron's head, running down on the beard, onto the collar of his robes): what is poured on the head does not stay on the head. Tonight's steelman answer in one image.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Basil the Great (*On the Holy Spirit, chapter 9*)

St. Basil answered the fear of the small portion before anyone in your room was born to feel it: the Spirit, he taught, is like sunlight, which each person enjoys as if it shone for him alone, yet it lights land and sea and mingles with the whole air. The Spirit gives Himself in proportion to each one's capacity, yet remains whole to each and wholly present everywhere. Nobody is working from the Spirit's leftovers; the quietest person at your table has the whole Sun.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Gregory the Great (*Moralia on Job*)

St. Gregory the Great (*Moralia on Job, on the seven sons; see Book I*) read the seven gifts as an ascent the Spirit works in a soul, with fear of the Lord as the first step and wisdom as the summit: the climb begins in awe that will not trifle with God and rises toward tasting things as God tastes them. The gifts, for Gregory, are not seven trophies on a shelf but one Spirit's ascending work,

operating together in the soul rather than one rung at a time.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 111*)

St. Thomas drew the map for tonight's central distinction: there is grace that makes the receiver holy and pleasing to God, and there are graces freely given, granted not for the receiver's own sanctification but so that through him others may be helped toward God. The seven gifts belong to the first kind and are for everyone; the charisms belong to the second and are distributed as the Spirit wills. Knowing which kind you are looking at, Thomas would say, is half of spiritual sanity.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1830.** The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit: permanent dispositions that make man docile in following the promptings of the Spirit.
- **CCC 799.** Charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, oriented to her building up and to the good of men.
- **CCC 800.** Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the one who receives them and by all members of the Church (with CCC 801: no charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds for discernment).

Thread Watch

The Head-to-Body transfer. Tonight completes a quiet arc that began in Session 3: the gifts were introduced as the Messiah's portrait, seen resting on Him at the Jordan in Session 5, distributed as flames on each head in Session 7, and claimed tonight as inheritance. If a participant assembles that chain aloud, the study's middle third has done its work; celebrate it. Psalm 133 in the steelman answer is the image to leave them holding: the oil on the Head runs down onto the Body's robes.

Two sessions of equipment, then the mission. Tonight is the gear; next week is what grows; the week after is what it is all FOR. Resist every temptation to preach Session 13 early. When someone asks "but what am I supposed to DO with all this," smile and say: that is precisely the right question, and it has its own night.

Session Goals

1. Participants can distinguish the seven gifts from the charisms and say what each kind is for.
2. Every participant can give a working definition and a concrete scene for at least three of the seven gifts.
3. Participants have found Bezalel themselves and registered what the Spirit's first filling was for.
4. The group has faced the "seven gifts are scaffolding, not Scripture" objection at full strength, spending Session 3's honesty credit.
5. Each household leaves with the gift-spotting practice, and the quiet ones have been watched for.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on Psalm 133 (moving its image into your own steelman summary), and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the seven working definitions or the Bezalel discovery; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit, and unpack Your gifts in us: wisdom to taste as You taste, understanding to see into what we believe, counsel for the next right step, fortitude for the costly ones, knowledge to size the world truly, piety to know we are family, and fear of the Lord, that we may never trade You for anything smaller. You have never shipped an empty box. Open ours tonight. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. What is a tool, device, or feature you own that you have honestly never learned to use properly?
2. Look at your partner. Name one ability of theirs that you genuinely admire, and tell them.

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Inheritance (Isaiah 11:1-3, Revisited)

Have someone recite the Session 3 memory verse; help them land it. Then read Isaiah 11:1-3a aloud once more from the page.

Question 1. Eight weeks ago this passage was a portrait of the promised Messiah, and in Session 5 you watched the Spirit rest on him at the Jordan. Tonight the claim gets personal: the Church prays these exact seven gifts over every person she confirms. On what grounds? Trace it with what you know: how does the Messiah's own equipment become YOUR inheritance?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The chain the study has built, and name its two kinds of link honestly. The scriptural premises: the Spirit rested whole on the Anointed One (Isaiah 11, the Jordan); the fullness was promised to the whole messianic people (tracked since Session 2); at Pentecost the resting was distributed, one flame per head, without being divided; and Paul told the Romans that if the Spirit of Christ dwells in you, it is Christ's own Spirit you have, not a budget substitute (Romans 8:9, worth reading aloud here). Then the Church's articulation, which reads those premises together and names the inheritance with Isaiah's portrait: the gifts are not seven prizes God hands out beside Christ; they are the Church's traditional naming of the character of Christ's own Spirit, and whoever receives HIM receives what He is like. The Church prays the sevenfold gift over the confirmed for the same reason a family expects the heir to receive the whole estate: it is not seven bequests, it is one inheritance, and the inheritance is a Person.

Question 2. Now make the list livable. Go around the table and assign each gift a real scene from an ordinary week, school, work, home, phone, where that gift and nothing else is what the moment needs. Push past synonyms for "smart and holy"; the leader has scenes ready wherever the table stalls.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Working definitions with scenes, for the leader's pocket. Wisdom: a taste for God's perspective; the scholarship and the friendship conflict, and you find you already know which one heaven weighs

heavier. Understanding: seeing into what you believe; the Creed line you have said five hundred times suddenly opens like a door. Counsel: the next right move in a live moment; everyone at the party looks at you, and you know, specifically, what to do now. Fortitude: the good done at cost; you defend the absent kid in the group chat, knowing the price, and the quieter form, enduring the long unfixable thing without going bitter. Knowledge: creation at true size; you watch the likes come in and feel, accurately, how much they weigh. Piety: the family instinct; Mass stops feeling like inspection and starts feeling like the kitchen of a house you belong to. Fear of the Lord: the awe that will not trade Him; alone, with a real opportunity to get away with it, you find there is something you will not spend. Close the round by naming what all seven scenes had in common: not one of them was about feeling religious. The gifts are for Tuesdays.

Scene Two: The Distributed Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

Households read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 at home. Have verses 4-11 read aloud now.

Question 3. Paul's list here, wisdom in speech, healing, prophecy, tongues, looks different from Isaiah's, and it comes with different plumbing: "to one is given... to another... to another." Compare the two lists as two kinds of gift: who gets which, and, from verse 7, what is the distributed kind FOR?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The sorting the whole night runs on. The seven gifts of Isaiah go to EVERY confirmed Christian, and their job is the receiver: making the soul holy, docile, quick to the Spirit's promptings. The charisms of Corinth are DISTRIBUTED, deliberately unevenly, one to this person and another to that, and verse 7 states their job in five words: FOR THE COMMON GOOD. St. Thomas's map: grace that makes you pleasing to God, versus graces given through you for others. Practical cash-out for your table: nobody may look at another's charism and conclude they got less Spirit, because the sanctifying gifts come whole to everyone (Basil's sunlight); and nobody may treat their charism as a trophy, because it is principally for others and for the Body. The comparison game that runs every youth group and every parish committee dies at verse 7, if anyone lets it.

Scene Three: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it is in the second book of the Bible, near the end, while Moses is still on the mountain.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. "The first person in the entire Bible whom God says He has FILLED with the Spirit of God is not a prophet, not a priest, and not a king. He works with his hands: gold, silver, bronze, stone, wood. God names him personally, and gives him the Spirit for a construction project. Find the craftsman."

When found, have the discovering table read Exodus 31:1-5 aloud.

Question 4. Bezalel, filled with the Spirit of God "with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship," to build the sanctuary. Of everyone in Scripture, why might God have chosen a craftsman for the first "filled with the Spirit" in the Bible? What does it do to your picture of what the Spirit's gifts are for?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Let the surprise breathe before interpreting it. The Spirit's first recorded filling produces neither a sermon nor a miracle but excellent work, and note the text's own precision: work for the SANCTUARY, a sacred commission, skill given so that God's dwelling would be built beautifully. The extension to ordinary life is our application, and a sound one: a God who fills a craftsman for His house dignifies craft as such, so homework done with real craft, a shift worked honestly, code written cleanly, a room made beautiful for people you love, all of it stands in Bezalel's light. For the teenager convinced the Spirit only equips the kids who can talk about Jesus fluently in public: the first Spirit-filled man in your Bible would likely have been the quiet one at your table, and God named him personally. Excellence at the work in your actual hands is a spiritual résumé. It always was.

The Push-Back: A List Scripture Never Made

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you.

The objection. The famous "seven gifts of Confirmation" are a construction, not a revelation. Isaiah 11 describes the Messiah, one man, not Christians; no New Testament text ever says believers receive these seven; the count itself, as this very study admitted in Session 3, depends on a Greek translation variant, since the Hebrew has six. And when Paul, an actual apostle, lists the Spirit's gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12, his lists look nothing like Isaiah's: no piety, no fear of the Lord, plenty of prophecy and administration. The medieval Church took one poetic verse, ran it through a translation quirk, numbered it, and built a catechetical industry on it. Sincere, maybe; scriptural, no. Confirmation prep should teach what the New Testament teaches about the Spirit's gifts, and retire the septet.

Question 5. The factual claims here are almost all true, and the group knows it, because this study told them first. So concede what is owed, then answer the real question: on what grounds does the Church pray Christ's own gift-list over ordinary Christians? You built the answer an hour ago in Question 1; now deploy it against the strongest version of the doubt.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede cleanly and collect the honesty credit: Isaiah 11 is messianic; the seven-count follows the Septuagint, exactly as we said in Session 3; and no New Testament verse enumerates "the seven gifts of the confirmed." A Catholic who pretends otherwise loses this argument and deserves to. But the objection assumes the Church's claim is "this verse lists what Christians get," and that was never the claim. The claim is an inheritance argument, and every link is Scripture: the Spirit with His fullness rests on the Messiah (Isaiah 11); the fullness was promised to the whole messianic people, not retained by the Head (Joel, Session 4; the resting distributed at Pentecost, Session 7); and the Spirit believers actually receive is the Spirit OF CHRIST, not a second, lesser Spirit (Romans 8:9). the Church's tradition reads Psalm 133 as painting it a thousand years early (a Christological typology, held as such): the precious oil poured on Aaron's HEAD runs down the beard, onto the collar of his ROBES; what is poured on the Head reaches the Body, and reaches it as the same oil. So the seven-gift list is the Church doing exactly what she says she is doing: describing the character of the Spirit her members receive, using the portrait Scripture painted of that Spirit at maximum resolution, which is Isaiah's portrait of Him resting on Christ. Paul's lists do not compete with it; they name the distributed charisms, the other kind, sorted an hour ago. The honest remainder, stated plainly: the ENUMERATION, seven and these seven, is the Church's catechetical

crystallization, tradition's way of teaching a fullness, and a Catholic should say so without flinching; what Scripture itself guarantees is not a number but the Person, the whole Spirit of Christ, whole to each. The list is the label the family wrote on the inheritance. The inheritance is Him.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 133. If time allows, read all three verses: the oil on Aaron's head, running down on the beard, onto the collar of his robes, and the psalm calls this the image of a people dwelling in unity. The anointing that starts on the Head and reaches the whole Body is not just tonight's argument; it is the Bible's picture of what a united Church IS.

One Last Glimpse

Read Matthew 7:16-17 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Jesus says: you will know them by their fruits; a sound tree bears good fruit. Say only this, and then stop: tonight was the equipment. But equipment can sit in the box, and gifts can be carried unopened for decades. How would anyone, including you, actually KNOW the Spirit is at work in a life? Jesus says there is a way to know, and it grows. Next week: the produce.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Of the seven gifts, which one, honestly, is the one you most operate without, and what is one situation this month where you will deliberately ask for it on the spot?
2. Bezalel's Spirit-filled work was craftsmanship. What is the work actually in your hands right now, school, job, home, and what would doing it "filled with the Spirit of God" change about how you did it this week?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together: gift-spotting. Once a day, each of you names ONE gift of the seven you saw operating in the other person that day, out loud and specifically: "I saw fortitude in you when you..." or "That was counsel, what you said to your sister." One sighting each, once a day. You are not complimenting; you are bearing witness to the Spirit's activity in someone who probably cannot see it in themselves. By Sunday you will both have seven pieces of evidence.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, You filled a craftsman before You filled a king, You poured on the Head what You intended for the whole Body, and You have never once shipped an empty box. Give these households eyes this week to spot Your gifts in each other, and courage to say what they see. Wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord: unpack them all in us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 11, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Isaiah 11:1-3** (Build, Scene One: revisited; memory verse recited)
- **Romans 8:9** (Build, Scene One: the Spirit of Christ in believers)
- **1 Corinthians 12:1-11** (read at home this week; verses 4-11 aloud in session)
- **Exodus 31:1-5** (Build, Scene Three: live discovery, Bezalel)
- **Psalms 133** (Push-Back answer and Dig Deeper: the oil from Head to Body)
- **Matthew 7:16-17** (One Last Glimpse: known by their fruits)

Catechism: CCC 1830, 799, 800 (with 1831 behind Scene One from Session 3).

Voices: St. Basil the Great (On the Holy Spirit, 9); St. Gregory the Great (Moralia on Job); St. Thomas Aquinas (Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 111).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 11, one per household.

SESSION 12

The Fruits

Galatians 5:16-26 • John 15:1-8

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Gifts are the equipment; fruit is the produce, the visible evidence that the equipment is being used and the tree is alive. Participants work through Paul's two lists in Galatians 5, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, and notice the grammar Paul chose on purpose: works, plural, are things you DO; fruit, singular, is one thing that GROWS. In the live discovery they find the vine and the branches, and inside it a verb they have met before: the Spirit REMAINED on Jesus at the Jordan, and Jesus' one command to his branches is the same word, remain in me. The session answers the question every honest teenager eventually asks about religious people, whether all this actually changes anyone, with Paul's testable claim: rooted lives grow recognizable produce.

Catholic Touchstone

The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory; the tradition of the Church, following the ancient Latin text of Galatians, lists twelve of them (CCC 1832). Grafted onto the true vine, we can bear the fruit of the Spirit (CCC 736), and Galatians itself gives the walking orders: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). Apart from the vine, the branches can do nothing (CCC 2074).

What You Need to Know

The grammar is the theology. Paul writes "the WORKS of the flesh," plural: a pile of separate deeds a person commits, and any subset qualifies. Then "the FRUIT of the Spirit," singular, followed by nine facets: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Not nine fruits on a menu where you pick your strengths; one organic life with nine visible facets, the way one healthy tree shows leaf, blossom, and fruit together. As a pastoral insight, hold it this way: the Spirit tends to form an integrated life, so a person cannot indefinitely claim deep love while running on zero patience; and yet growth in particular virtues is often uneven and gradual, and unevenness is not fraud. Make the group find the singular themselves in Question 2; it lands harder discovered than announced.

Nine or twelve, and the honesty pattern holds. The Greek text of Galatians 5:22-23 lists nine. The ancient Latin translation lists twelve, adding generosity, modesty, and chastity, and the Catechism's traditional list follows the Latin (CCC 1832). This is the third time this study has hit a count question, after the six-or-seven gifts and the two three-thousands, and the same policy applies: tell the truth immediately, and the truth is undramatic. The Latin tradition unpacked three of the Greek terms into their near neighbors; nothing was invented, and the reality being described, one Spirit-grown life, was never a matter of arithmetic. Spend the credibility you have banked; by now the group trusts the study precisely because it tells them these things first.

Fruit takes seasons. Nobody plants an orchard Tuesday and picks fruit Friday. The fruit metaphor carries a timescale teens badly need: growth is slow, mostly invisible, seasonal, and dependent on staying planted. A candidate who prays for patience and blows up Thursday has not disproven the

Spirit; they have described week one of an orchard. This also defuses the post-Confirmation crash before it happens: the sacrament plants and waters; the produce is measured in seasons, not weekends.

The remain thread. The live discovery is John 15, and buried in it is the study's favorite verb. The Spirit descended and REMAINED on Jesus (John 1:32, the sign the Baptist was told to watch for); Jesus' one command to the branches is the same Greek verb, *meno*: REMAIN in me, abide in me. The Spirit remains on Christ; the Christian remains in Christ; and fruit is what grows at that address and nowhere else. If a participant catches the verb, the study's architecture has paid out again; the answer box hands it over if nobody does.

For the parents in the room. Tonight's steelman quotes the objection every parent has heard from a teenager or thought themselves: plenty of unbelievers are kinder than churchgoers. Do not flinch from it and do not let the room flinch; the answer concedes real natural goodness, and the concession is Catholic doctrine, not diplomacy. The distinctive claim is narrower and stronger than "Christians are nicer," and parents who absorb tonight's version of it will be better equipped for their kitchen-table apologetics than by any amount of defensiveness.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Psalm 1:1-3 (the man who delights in the law of the LORD is a tree planted by streams of water, yielding fruit in its season): the Bible's first page of songs already measures a life by planting, seasons, and produce.
- Israel as God's vine (Psalm 80, Isaiah 5) stands behind John 15: when Jesus says "I am the TRUE vine," he is claiming to be, in himself, the faithful Israel the old vine failed to be, and grafting his people into himself.
- Ezekiel 36:26-27, the study's Session 4 memory verse, is the mechanism under tonight: fruit grows outside because the Spirit was put WITHIN.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Augustine of Hippo (*Homilies on the First Letter of John*)

St. Augustine compressed the fruit-borne life into five famous words: love, and do what you will. He did not mean that anything goes; he meant the opposite, that a heart truly rooted in the love of God can be trusted with freedom, because what grows from that root will be good: if you keep silence, silence out of love; if you correct, correct out of love. The root determines the produce. Get the root right, Augustine says, and the branches will take care of themselves.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Commentary on Galatians*)

St. John Chrysostom, expounding Galatians, noticed Paul's grammar before your group does: Paul says WORKS of the flesh but FRUIT of the Spirit, and Chrysostom drew the contrast: evil deeds are wrought from ourselves, while the good grown in a believer is the Spirit's fruit, not our unaided product. The inventory-and-harvest wording that follows is this study's gloss on his point: what we manufacture is inventory; what the Spirit grows is harvest.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH**St. Thérèse of Lisieux** (*Story of a Soul*)

St. Thérèse, a Doctor of the Church who died at twenty-four, found her whole vocation inside tonight's subject, writing in Manuscript B of *Story of a Soul*: in the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be love. Her sanctity was made almost entirely of fruit borne in hidden, ordinary places: patience with the sister whose habits irritated her, kindness with no audience, joy held onto in a long illness. No missions, no miracles in her lifetime, no platform: just the produce of a life that never left the vine. She is proof that the fruit list is a real job description, achievable at any age, in any hallway.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 736.** By the power of the Spirit, God's children can bear fruit; he who has grafted us onto the true vine will make us bear the fruit of the Spirit.
- **CCC 1832.** The fruits of the Spirit are perfections that the Holy Spirit forms in us as the first fruits of eternal glory; the tradition of the Church lists twelve.
- **CCC 2074.** "Apart from me you can do nothing": united to the vine, we bear much fruit; cut off, nothing.

Thread Watch

The meno payoff. When John 15 is found, listen for anyone connecting "abide/remain" to the Spirit remaining on Jesus (Session 5). Confirm it fully if caught; the answer box delivers it otherwise. From tonight, the group should hear "remain" as this study's verb: the Spirit remains on the Head; the members remain in Him; the fruit follows the remaining.

One session of story left before the summit of Part IV. Next week is Witnesses: what the equipment and the produce are FOR, plus sponsors and saint names, the session with the most direct practical payload for candidates' actual preparation. The week after is the Rite, and the sealed pages come home. Remind households at the door, casually, to make sure Take-Home 1 is still findable and still sealed. Watch the reaction; it will tell you who has peeked.

Session Goals

1. Participants can state the works-versus-fruit grammar and why the singular matters.
2. Participants can name at least five facets of the fruit from memory by the end of the night.
3. Participants have found the vine themselves, and the remain verb has been connected across the study.
4. The group has faced the "this is just being nice, no Spirit required" objection at full strength, with natural goodness honestly conceded.
5. Each household has chosen its one fruit for the week and knows the practice.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 75 minutes. To land at 60, make these cuts and no others: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on Psalm 1, and present the steelman objection yourself in one minute rather than building it with the group. Never cut the grammar question, the vine discovery, or the household fruit-choosing; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit, Gardener of every soul in this room. You do not decorate lives; You grow them. Show us tonight the difference between what we manufacture and what You harvest, and plant us so deep in the true Vine that fruit becomes inevitable. We are done performing. We would rather grow. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. Have you ever grown anything, a garden, a houseplant, a sourdough starter, anything alive? What did it actually require of you?
2. Who is the most genuinely good person you know personally, not famous, known to you? What is it like to be around them?

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: Two Lists (Galatians 5:16-26)

Households read this at home. Have verses 16-23 read aloud now, both lists, unhurried.

Question 1. Start with the first list, the works of the flesh, and resist the urge to rush past it. Paul's catalog runs from the obvious (immorality, drunkenness) to the churchy (enmity, strife, jealousy, dissension, party spirit). Which items on this list are the ones religious people are most tempted to treat as not really counting, and what is Paul doing by filing them with the others?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Let the room say it: the respectable sins. Enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, dissension, factions, envy, the works of the flesh that thrive in parishes, group chats, and families, wearing better clothes than the obvious ones. Paul files the feud with your cousin in the same catalog as the sins everyone gasps at, and he means the filing: flesh is flesh, whether it looks like a party or a grudge. For a room of teens and parents preparing for a sacrament, the list is a mirror before it is a weapon; the instruction "walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" is addressed to us, about our own catalog, before it is ammunition about anyone else's.

Question 2. Now the second list, and read verse 22 with a magnifying glass. Paul called the first list "the WORKS of the flesh." What exact word does he use for the Spirit's list, and is it singular or plural? Nine things follow it. Why does the grammar matter?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"The FRUIT of the Spirit is": fruit, singular, one word governing nine facets. Works are deeds, plural, separate, manufactured, done and done with; any assortment qualifies. Fruit is one organic growth showing nine faces, the way one healthy tree carries leaf and blossom and fruit as a single life. Two consequences worth pressing, as pastoral wisdom rather than iron law. First, no menu: you do not get to claim love while permanently excusing yourself from patience; the Spirit grows an integrated life, even though particular virtues ripen unevenly and at different speeds. Second, no

manufacturing: you can DO a kind act with gritted teeth, and it counts for something, but kindness as FRUIT is what comes out of you when you are not performing, at 11 p.m., with family, when tired. Works are what we produce; fruit is what we become. St. John Chrysostom saw the same grammar sixteen centuries ago: what we manufacture is inventory; what the Spirit grows is harvest.

Question 3. Count the facets in verses 22-23 as your Bible prints them: nine. The Church's traditional list (CCC 1832) has twelve: generosity, modesty, and chastity join the nine. Third time this study has hit a counting question. Based on the first two times, what do you predict the honest answer is, and does the difference change what Paul is describing?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The group should be able to predict the shape of the answer by now, which is itself the point. The Greek text lists nine; the ancient Latin translation the Western Church prayed with for centuries renders the list as twelve, unpacking some of the Greek terms into near neighbors (goodness opening into generosity, self-control into modesty and chastity), and the Catechism's traditional list follows that Latin heritage. Nothing was smuggled in; a fuller wording of the same life was handed down. And no, the count changes nothing Paul is describing, because he was never doing arithmetic: fruit is singular, one Spirit-grown life, and whether you describe its facets with nine words or twelve, the tree is the same tree. Give the room its due: they have now watched this study handle six-or-seven, three-thousand-and-three-thousand, and nine-or-twelve the same way, truth first. That habit is itself a fruit; its name is faithfulness.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them it was spoken between the supper and the garden, then that this study has visited that night twice before.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. *"A vine, a vinedresser, and branches: some pruned to bear more, some gathered and burned. And one command, the same word over and over and over: stay. Find the vine."*

When found, have the discovering table read John 15:1-8 aloud, slowly.

Question 4. Jesus gives the branches exactly one job: "Abide in me." Everything else, fruit included, is promised as a consequence. What does abiding actually consist of for a person, practically? And verse 5 makes a claim about the alternative: "apart from me you can do nothing." Nothing is a strong word. What kind of nothing does he mean?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Abiding is staying connected where the sap flows, and for a Christian the connection points are not mysterious: prayer that actually happens, the sacraments actually received, his words actually dwelling in you (verse 7), his people actually yours. Not heroics; residence. The branch's whole contribution is not leaving. And the "nothing" of verse 5 is precise: not "you can accomplish no

tasks," since obviously the severed can still build careers and win trophies, but "you can bear no FRUIT," nothing of the kind tonight is about, nothing that lasts into eternal life. A cut branch can be useful; it cannot be alive. One more thing, and let a participant find it if they can: the verb translated "abide" or "remain" is *meno*, and this study has met it before, at the Jordan, where the Baptist was told the sign of the Christ was the Spirit descending and REMAINING on him. The Spirit remains on the Vine; the branches remain in the Vine; and fruit grows at that address and nowhere else. The study's favorite verb turns out to be the Christian life's foundational instruction, the root from which the rest, keeping his commandments, loving one another (verses 9-17), grows.

The Push-Back: Nice Without God

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Ask the group to make it as strong as they can with you; every teenager in the room has heard it or thought it.

The objection. Look at the fruit list: love, kindness, patience, self-control. Aristotle taught these four centuries before Christ and never met the Holy Spirit. Every culture prizes them; every decent scout troop produces them. And be honest about the field data: plenty of atheists and Buddhists and nones are visibly kinder, calmer, and more patient than plenty of weekly communicants, some of whom are on this list's FIRST catalog by Wednesday. If ordinary human decency produces this fruit reliably, and religious observance demonstrably fails to guarantee it, then calling character "fruit of the Spirit" is the Church stamping her logo on produce she did not grow. Virtue is human. The theology is packaging.

Question 5. The field data is real, so start by conceding what a Catholic actually must concede, which is more than people expect. Then find the actual claim of Galatians 5, which is narrower and stranger than "Christians are nicer," and test it against the hardest cases: what does this fruit look like under pressure that natural virtue cannot explain?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede generously, because the concessions are doctrine, not damage control. Natural virtue is real; Catholic tradition has always recognized genuine natural moral goodness, later integrating the best of the philosophers through St. Thomas, and grace perfects nature rather than replacing it. The unbeliever's genuine kindness is genuinely good, honored by God, and no Catholic may sneer at it. And the scandal of nasty churchgoers is not a gotcha we must dodge; Scripture itself files enmity, strife, and factions under works of the flesh precisely because Paul found them in churches. Now the actual claim, which was never "religious people are nicer." Galatians 5 claims something about SOURCE and SHAPE. Source: fruit is what grows from a life rooted in the Spirit, so the claim is only testable the way orchards are tested, from inside, over seasons, by planting; sampling strangers' behavior tests niceness, not roots. Shape: the fruit's full profile is not generic decency but the character of CHRIST under load, and at the extremes the difference shows: love of enemies, actually willed, for the persecutor by name; joy inside suffering, not despite it; peace while the cost is being paid; the martyrs forgiving their executioners with their remaining breath. Prudent natural virtue, as the philosophers honestly described it, does not counsel dying with a blessing for your killers; the SHAPE of that fruit is Christ's own, and while outward acts alone can never prove their supernatural source, God being free to give grace beyond all visible borders, the shape keeps recurring where people abide in the Vine, from Stephen to the present tense. The honest remainder, named plainly: you cannot prove the Spirit from the outside by behavior audit, and tonight does not claim to; the claim of Galatians 5 is an invitation with a growing season attached: remain in the Vine and inspect your own harvest in a year. It is falsifiable only by people willing to plant. That is

not a weakness of the claim. That is what claims about living things are like.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 1:1-3. If time allows: the very first psalm measures a life exactly as tonight does: a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit IN ITS SEASON. Planted, watered, seasonal. Anyone discouraged that their patience did not arrive this week is invited to notice that Scripture's own growth chart is marked in seasons, and to stay planted.

One Last Glimpse

Read Acts 1:8 aloud yourself, without introduction.

Jesus, in his last recorded sentence before ascending, tells them: you shall receive POWER when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my WITNESSES, in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. Say only this, and then stop: sealed, gifted, growing fruit, and all of it, according to Jesus' final sentence, is FOR something, with an address list attached that ends at the end of the earth. Next week: what all of this is for, and the two helpers the Church gives every candidate for the road, one of whom is already in heaven.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Look back at the works list with the mirror rule: which respectable work of the flesh is the one your own week actually produces, and what would its opposite facet of the fruit look like grown in you?
2. The branch's one job is not leaving. What is the connection point, prayer, Mass, Scripture, this table, that you are most tempted to quietly disconnect from after Confirmation, and what would keep you attached?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together. Tonight before leaving, choose together the ONE facet of the fruit your household most lacks right now; be honest, and let each person get a veto. Then, every day this week, each of you does one deliberate act of that facet at home, and at dinner or in the car, names what you did in one sentence, no speeches. One fruit, one act, one sentence, seven days. You are not manufacturing the fruit; you are practicing standing where it grows.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord Jesus, true Vine, we have exactly one job and You have told us what it is. Keep us where the sap flows. Prune what wastes us, and let Your Father the Vinedresser find fruit on every branch at this table: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, in their season. We are staying. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 12, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Galatians 5:16-26** (read at home this week; verses 16-23 aloud in session)
- **John 15:1-8** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, the vine and the branches)
- **John 1:32** (recalled: the Spirit remained; the meno connection)
- **Psalms 1:1-3** (Dig Deeper: fruit in its season)
- **Acts 1:8** (One Last Glimpse: power, and witnesses)

Catechism: CCC 736, 1832, 2074.

Voices: St. Augustine of Hippo (Homilies on the First Letter of John); St. John Chrysostom (Commentary on Galatians); St. Thérèse of Lisieux (Story of a Soul).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 12, one per household. Casual reminder at the door: locate Take-Home 1; keep it sealed.

SESSION 13

Witnesses

Acts 1:8 • Acts 4 • Acts 7 • Sponsors and Saints

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Sealed, gifted, and growing fruit: tonight the group learns what it is all FOR. Jesus' last sentence before ascending gives the confirmed their job title: "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my WITNESSES." The Greek word is *martyrs*, and participants watch what it did to actual people: Peter, who folded before a servant girl, standing before the same council that had opposed Jesus and handed him over, and refusing to be silenced; and Stephen, in the live discovery, praying for his executioners with a young man named Saul holding the coats. The session then turns intensely practical: the two companions the Church commends for this road, a sponsor on earth (to be provided insofar as possible) and, by cherished custom, a patron in heaven, how to choose both well, and what the parents' own irreplaceable role is and is not.

Catholic Touchstone

Confirmation gives a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ (CCC 1285). Martyrdom is the supreme witness to the truth of the faith, borne even unto death (CCC 2473). And the witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those the Church recognizes as saints, contemplate God, praise him, and do not cease to care for those they have left on earth; their intercession is their most exalted service (CCC 2683).

What You Need to Know

Martyrs. The Greek *martyrs* simply means witness: a person who testifies to what they have seen and know, especially in court. In the Church's early centuries, so many witnesses paid for their testimony with their lives that the word increasingly took on its second meaning, and English keeps only that one: martyr. Teach the sequence honestly: the job title is witness; the price tag, in some times and places, was everything; and the Church has never separated the word from its cost. Most witness is unbloody: a lunch table, a locker room, a break room. But the unbloody kind is real currency of the same denomination, which is why courage is what the sacrament is for.

The Peter comparison is the sacrament's before-and-after photo. The night before the crucifixion, Peter denied Jesus three times at a fire, the first challenge coming from a servant girl, the next from others. In Acts 4, the same man, "filled with the Holy Spirit," stands before the Sanhedrin, the council that had opposed Jesus and delivered him to Pilate, and the court is astonished at his *parrhesia*, his boldness, noting that he is uneducated and common, and recognizing only that he "had been with Jesus." Nothing about Peter's résumé changed between the fire and the courtroom. One thing changed, and this study spent Session 7 on it.

The sponsor, precisely. Church law asks that, insofar as possible, each candidate have a sponsor (canon 892), and sets the qualifications (canons 893 and 874): a Catholic who has been confirmed, has received the Eucharist, leads a life in harmony with the faith, is normally at least sixteen, is not bound by a canonical penalty, and is not the candidate's parent; check with the parish, since particular law can adjust details. The Church even recommends, where suitable, the baptismal godparent, to underline that

Confirmation completes what Baptism began. Explain the not-the-parent rule as gift rather than slight: the parents' role is primary, prior, and permanent, and needs no appointment; the sponsor is the wider Church physically showing up, proof that the candidate's faith has a family bigger than their household. Practical counsel for choosing: someone whose actual practiced faith the candidate has SEEN, who will still be praying for them at twenty-five, and who can be asked hard questions. Holiness over convenience; availability over prestige.

The saint name, precisely. Taking a saint's name at Confirmation is a venerable custom, strong in this country, though not an absolute requirement everywhere; candidates may also carry forward their baptismal name, especially if it is already a saint's. Where the custom is kept, frame the choice as choosing a patron: an ally in heaven whose life the candidate will actually study, whose prayers they will actually ask, and whose name they intend to grow into. Counsel against choosing by coolness of name alone; counsel toward reading three or four short lives first and noticing which one will not leave them alone. The right patron often feels less chosen than assigned.

For the parents in the room. Two pastoral currents run tonight. First, the not-the-parent sponsor rule can sting; the framing above, primary role needs no appointment, usually heals it; in the liturgy the candidates are ordinarily presented by the pastor or another minister, with parents accompanying, and the parents' formative role stands prior to the whole day. Second, tonight's steelman is the one many parents have absorbed from the surrounding culture or their own upbringing: that asking saints' prayers detracts from Christ. Give it full strength and a full answer; a parent who leaves tonight able to explain the communion of saints to a skeptical relative has been handed a tool they will use for years.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- "You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen" (Isaiah 43:10): the job title predates the courtroom of Acts; Israel was commissioned as witness to the nations, and the confirmed inherit the commission.
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before the furnace (Daniel 3:16-18): the Bible's young witnesses under state pressure, and the greatest "but if not" in Scripture. Tonight's Dig Deeper.
- The prophets, from Samuel to the Baptist, are the long line of witnesses whose testimony cost them; Stephen, in his final speech, names the pattern to the faces of his judges.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ignatius of Antioch (*Letter to the Romans, around AD 107*)

St. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote ahead to Rome while under armed guard, traveling to his execution, and begged the Christians there not to rescue him: I am God's wheat, he wrote, and am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread of Christ. A man one lifetime from the apostles, facing the arena, described his death in the vocabulary of the Eucharist. Witness, for Ignatius, was not a tragedy interrupting his faith; it was his faith arriving at its destination.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Polycarp of Smyrna (*the Martyrdom of Polycarp, around AD 155*)

St. Polycarp, who had known the apostle John, testified that he had served Christ for eighty-six years when the proconsul offered him his life for one small blasphemy. His answer, preserved in the

church of Smyrna's account of his martyrdom, became the most famous sentence attributed to any martyr: eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my King who saved me? An entire theology of witness in two clauses: long fidelity, and a loyalty that will not trade the King for anything, which the group will recognize as fear of the Lord, the seventh gift, at full maturity.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

Tertullian of Carthage (*Apology, around AD 197*)

Tertullian, writing an open defense of the persecuted Christians to the Roman authorities, ended with a warning the empire proved true: the more you mow us down, the more we grow; the blood of Christians is seed. Witness under pressure did not shrink the Church; it planted her. Every candidate in your room is downstream of testimony somebody paid for, and most of them have never once been told so.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1285.** Confirmation gives a special strength of the Holy Spirit to spread and defend the faith by word and action as true witnesses of Christ.
- **CCC 2473.** Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: the martyr bears witness to Christ, and to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine, enduring death.
- **CCC 2683.** The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom contemplate God, praise him, and do not cease to care for those on earth; their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan.

Thread Watch

The title verse surfaces. Acts 1:8 is the sentence this whole study is named for, and tonight it becomes the memory verse. When it is read, let it be read twice, and say nothing about the title; anyone who notices gets a smile.

One week out. At the door tonight: every household must bring Take-Home 1 next week, sealed boxes intact. Say it plainly, and add the promise: next week, everything in this study gets opened, the pages and the rest of it. Session 14 needs your full preparation; reread every Thread Watch note from all thirteen sessions, and obtain a copy of the Order of Confirmation from your pastor this week if you do not have one. You will be walking the group through it text in hand.

Session Goals

1. Participants know what martyrs means, what it came to cost, and can tell the Peter before-and-after from the texts.
2. Participants have found Stephen themselves and noticed both his prayer and the young man holding the coats.
3. The group has faced the "one mediator" objection at full strength and can explain asking a saint's prayers without embarrassment.
4. Every candidate leaves knowing what a sponsor is for, how to choose one, and how to choose a patron saint, with the parent's own role honored and distinguished.
5. Every household knows to bring Take-Home 1, sealed, next week.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 80 minutes; the sponsor and saint section deserves its time. To land at 60: drop Win question 1 (keep question 2), skip the Dig Deeper box on Daniel, and present the steelman objection yourself in ninety seconds. Never cut the Peter comparison, the Stephen discovery, or the sponsor and saint counsel; those carry the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, Advocate of every witness. You turned a fisherman who feared a servant girl into a man no court could silence, and You gave a deacon dying under stones the breath to bless his killers. We are not asking to be spared the stand. We are asking to be ready for it. Fill us with the boldness You gave them, and surround us with the friends You have given us, on earth and in heaven. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win: Opening Questions

Parent and candidate pairs. Two minutes each question, then a few pairs share with the table.

1. If you were on trial for something and could pick one person to stand in your corner, who would you pick, and what makes them the one?
2. Is there someone no longer living whose example still shapes how you act? Tell your partner who, and how.

Build: Into the Text

Scene One: The Job Title (Acts 1:8)

Households reread Acts 1:1-11 this week with orders to memorize the job title in verse 8. Have verse 8 read aloud, twice, then collect: what is the job title?

Question 1. Witnesses. The Greek word is *martyrs*: someone who testifies to what they have seen and know, especially in court. In the early Christian centuries, the word grew a second meaning, the one English kept. What is it, how do you suppose that happened to a word, and what does the word's history tell you about the job?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Martyr. The word for courtroom testimony became, over the Church's early centuries, the word for dying, because so many witnesses paid for their testimony with their lives that the testimony and the price fused into one word. Let the room absorb what that etymology is: a fossil record of courage. Two things follow for your table. First, the job is testimony, saying what you have seen and know about Jesus Christ, and most of it happens in cafeterias and break rooms, not arenas; the unbloody witness is the same currency. Second, the Church has never pretended the job is free, and neither should Confirmation prep: the sacrament's special strength (CCC 1285) exists because the job needs it. Nobody issues body armor for a desk job.

Question 2. Now the before-and-after. Recall Peter on the night of the arrest: three denials at a charcoal fire, the first prompted by a servant girl, the rest by others around it (Luke 22:54-62, summarize or read). Then have someone read Acts 4:8-13: the same man before the Sanhedrin, the council that had opposed Jesus and handed him over. List what the court notices about him. What changed between the fire and the courtroom, and what emphatically did not?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The court notices his BOLDNESS (parrhesia, fearless open speech), notices that he is uneducated and common, is astonished, and can produce only one explanation: "they recognized that they had been with Jesus." What did not change: Peter's education, class, connections, or nerve; he brought no new résumé to the courtroom. What changed sits between Luke 22 and Acts 4, and this study spent an entire evening on it: Pentecost. The Spirit did not make Peter clever; He made Peter unstoppable, and the court's own minutes record the difference. This is the sacrament's before-and-after photograph, and it is admissible evidence: the strength Confirmation confers is the strength that turned that man into this one. Same man. New wind.

Scene Two: Live Discovery

Do not announce the passage. Read the clue and let the tables hunt. Allow three or four minutes; if they stall, tell them he first appears being chosen to wait on tables, then that his story runs from Acts 6 into Acts 7.

DIG DEEPER

The clue. "A man chosen to wait on tables ends up on trial for his life, and his judges see his face looking like the face of an angel. As the stones begin to fall, he sees heaven standing open, prays for the men killing him, and falls asleep. And a young man is minding the coats of the witnesses, a young man whose name you know. Find the man on trial, and find the young man with the coats."

When found, have the discovering table read Acts 6:8-15, then Acts 7:54-60, aloud, unhurried.

Question 3. Stephen, "full of grace and power," full of the Spirit. Walk his last minutes: what does he see, what does he say, and for whom are his final words? Then the detail Luke plants on purpose: who is the young man named Saul, what is he doing at this scene, and what do you know about the rest of his story?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Stephen, gazing up, sees the heavens opened and the Son of man STANDING at the right hand of God: standing, as if risen to his feet for the testimony of his witness. His final words are Christ's own dying words made his: receive my spirit, and, kneeling under the stones, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." The fruit of Session 12 at its extremity: love of enemies, actually prayed, for the men killing him, mid-execution; natural virtue does not grow this, and the group has the categories now to say so. And Saul: consenting to the death, holding the coats, breathing threats within two chapters, and then, on the Damascus road, becoming the apostle Paul, this study's second witness, whose letters fill so much of the New Testament. The Church has always dared to connect the two: the first martyr's dying prayer, and the conversion of the man who watched him die. Witness under pressure is never wasted; God brings fruit from it in ways and on timelines nobody at the scene can see. Somebody may be watching your candidates the same way. That sentence belongs out loud in your room.

Scene Three: The Two Helpers

Shift registers: from the text to their preparation. This scene is counsel, not exegesis; keep it warm and concrete.

Question 4. The Church does not send witnesses out alone; she gives every candidate two helpers, one on earth and one in heaven. First, the sponsor, whom the Church asks be provided insofar as possible. The qualifications, in brief: a confirmed Catholic who has received the Eucharist and lives the faith, normally at least sixteen, and, hear the rule before judging it, NOT your parent; where it fits, the Church even suggests your baptismal godparent (your parish has the full requirements). Work the puzzle at your tables: why would the Church, which trusts parents with everything, insist the sponsor be someone else?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Because the parents' role needs no appointment: it is primary, prior, and permanent; parents were their child's first heralds of the faith and remain so for life; in the liturgy itself the candidates are ordinarily presented by the pastor or another minister, while many celebrations involve parents in accompanying their candidates, and the parents' formative role stands prior to the whole day. The sponsor is a different gift: the wider Church physically showing up, living proof that this candidate's faith has a family bigger than their household, and an adult who can be asked the questions a teenager will not ask a parent. Suggesting the baptismal godparent, where suitable, stitches the two sacraments visibly together. Then the practical counsel, said slowly: choose someone whose practiced faith you have actually SEEN, who will still be praying for you at twenty-five, whom you could call at a bad hour. Holiness over convenience; availability over prestige; never merely the relative it would be awkward not to pick. And candidates: the ask should come from YOU, personally, this week; it is the first act of your adult faith, and it should be done like one.

Question 5. The second helper: the patron saint, and where the custom is kept, the name. Recall CCC 2683 from tonight: the witnesses who have gone before us do not cease to care for those on earth, and their intercession is their most exalted service. What is a patron saint actually FOR, and how does a person choose well rather than just choosing a name that sounds good?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Three things a patron is for, and none of them is decoration. An ally: a member of the Body, more alive than ever, who will actually be asked for prayers, by name, for the rest of the candidate's life. A syllabus: a real human life, with documents, that the candidate will actually study, because you cannot imitate what you have not read. A trajectory: a name to grow into, chosen on purpose, which is why Scripture keeps marking new missions with new names. How to choose: read three or four short lives before deciding; notice which saint will not leave you alone, because the right patron often feels less chosen than assigned; consider saints who faced what you face, your temperament, your interests, your particular fear; and pray about it, since the friendship runs both directions. Candidates who already bear a saint's baptismal name may carry it forward, and doing so deliberately is itself a worthy choice. What matters is not the paperwork but the friendship: nobody should walk toward that day accompanied by a stranger.

The Push-Back: One Mediator

Build the objection at full strength before answering it. Many in the room have relatives and friends who hold it sincerely; treat it with the respect a serious argument deserves.

The objection. Scripture is explicit: "there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). ONE mediator. The Bible never records a single prayer addressed to a departed saint, not one, in either Testament; what it does record is stern warnings against consulting the dead. The "cloud of witnesses" of Hebrews 12 means examples to imitate, spectators in the stands, not switchboard operators taking requests. When the Church teaches a sixteen-year-old to choose a heavenly patron and ask that person's prayers, she is teaching a Christian to route requests through the dead when Jesus himself said: come to ME. However tenderly it is framed, the practice trains the instinct to go somewhere other than Christ. The saint-name custom is the gateway habit.

Question 6. Begin with the verse itself: what IS 1 Timothy 2:5 claiming, and, crucially, what is Paul doing in the verses immediately before it (read 1 Timothy 2:1-5 whole)? Then test the objection's picture of death against Romans 8:38-39 and Revelation 5:8, and sort out what should be conceded.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-5 whole, and the objection's own proof text reorganizes itself: Paul URGES that supplications and intercessions be made by Christians FOR all men, and grounds that very command in the one mediator. So intercession by the redeemed for others is not competition with Christ's mediation; in Paul's own paragraph it is the FRUIT of it. Nobody thinks asking a friend to pray for you before a test violates the one mediator; Paul begs churches for exactly such prayers constantly. The whole question, then, is whether death disqualifies a member of the Body from doing what every member does. Romans 8:38-39 answers: death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ, and what death cannot sever, death cannot sever; the saints are not the dead in the objection's sense, they are the most alive members the Body has. And Revelation's imagery points the same direction: in Revelation 5:8 the elders before the throne hold bowls of incense "which are the prayers of the saints," prayer rising and presented before God in heaven; the verse does not by itself prove the invocation of saints, but it shows a heaven that is anything but sealed off from the Church's prayer. So a Catholic asks a saint's prayers exactly as one asks a friend's, IN Christ, never around him, and worships no one but God. Now the concessions, given honestly: Scripture indeed records no prayer addressed to a departed saint, and the group should never claim it does; the practice rests on the communion of saints as the Church has lived it from her early centuries; ancient graffiti at Roman shrine sites asking Peter and Paul to pray for the writers is among the early evidence commonly cited, and its dating and interpretation belong to the scholars, so hold it as supporting testimony rather than a knockout. The condemned consulting of the dead, necromancy, sought secret knowledge from spirits apart from God, and is as forbidden to Catholics now as ever; asking a brother in Christ to pray to Christ is not that, and confusing the two is the objection's central slip. And one concession with teeth: authentic devotion must lead toward Christ, never away from him, and a devotion that in practice obscures Christ has gone wrong, as the Church's whole Christ-centered teaching on devotion implies; Catholics may say so out loud. The test of a true patron friendship is simple: it should end you up talking to Jesus more, not less. That is, after all, what the saints themselves are doing.

DIG DEEPER

Daniel 3:16-18. If time allows: three young men, roughly your candidates' age, before a king and a furnace. Their answer is the gold standard of witness under pressure: our God is able to deliver us; BUT IF NOT, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods. Faith that negotiates no exit clause. "But if not" belongs in every candidate's vocabulary before the day they are sealed.

One Last Glimpse

Read Revelation 2:17 aloud yourself, without introduction.

To him who conquers, says the risen Christ, he will give some of the hidden manna, and a white stone with a new name written on it which no one knows except him who receives it. Say only this, and then stop: new names, given at thresholds, known first between you and God. You have sealed pages at home with guesses and memories written inside them, and some of you have a new name half-chosen. Next week: bring the sealed pages. Everything opens.

Send: Closing Questions

1. Name the one place in your week, a table, a chat, a room, where testimony from you would cost the most. What would the smallest true witness there look like?
2. Peter's only credential was that he "had been with Jesus." If people examined your ordinary week, what would show that you had been with him, and what would you want to be there that is not yet?

Live It This Week

For every household, parent and candidate together: two appointments. First, each evening read one short saint's life together, five minutes, any solid source; by next week the candidate should have a patron chosen or a shortlist of two, and if the baptismal name is the choice, choose it out loud and on purpose. Second, the candidate personally asks their intended sponsor this week, by call or face to face, not by text relayed through a parent; parents, your job is only to help them rehearse the ask. And on the door frame on your way out: Take-Home 1 comes back next week, sealed. On your honor, one more week.

Closing Prayer

Leader: *Lord God, You have never once sent a witness out alone. Thank You for the sponsor already living who will stand by these candidates, and the friend already home who will pray for them by name. Give every person in this room one moment this week to say what we have seen and know, and the boldness of Peter when the moment comes. We are Your witnesses. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Scripture Memory Verse

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 13, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **Acts 1:1-11** (read at home this week; verse 8 aloud twice, memory verse)
- **Luke 22:54-62** (Build, Scene One: Peter at the fire, summarized or read)
- **Acts 4:8-13** (Build, Scene One: Peter before the Sanhedrin)
- **Acts 6:8-15; Acts 7:54-60** (Build, Scene Two: live discovery, Stephen and Saul)
- **1 Timothy 2:1-5** (Push-Back: the one mediator, read whole)
- **Romans 8:38-39; Revelation 5:8** (Push-Back answer: death does not sever; the prayers of the saints)
- **Isaiah 43:10** (Old Testament root: you are my witnesses)
- **Daniel 3:16-18** (Dig Deeper: but if not)
- **Revelation 2:17** (One Last Glimpse: the new name on the white stone)

Catechism: CCC 1285, 2473, 2683.

Voices: St. Ignatius of Antioch (Letter to the Romans); St. Polycarp of Smyrna (the Martyrdom of Polycarp); Tertullian of Carthage (Apology).

At the door: Take-Home 13 out; Take-Home 1 comes back next week, SEALED. Leader homework: reread all Thread Watch notes, and obtain the Order of Confirmation from your pastor this week.

SESSION 14

Be Sealed

The Mystagogy of the Rite • Every Thread Resolves

Part 1: Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

Fourteen weeks ago, candidates sealed a guess about what the bishop will actually say and do, and parents sealed a memory of their own Confirmation. Tonight the pages open, and then the Rite itself opens, walked element by element with the study's whole map in hand: the presentation of the candidates, the renewal of baptismal promises, the bishop's outstretched hands and the prayer for the sevenfold gift, the sponsor's hand on the shoulder, the sacred chrism, the words "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit," and the exchange of peace. Nothing in the Rite is arbitrary; every gesture and word gathers threads this group has been holding for months, read in the light the Church's tradition has always read them. The session ends where the study began: with the breath of God, now about to be given to them.

Catholic Touchstone

The bishop extends his hands over the candidates and prays for the outpouring of the Spirit with his sevenfold gift (CCC 1299). The essential rite follows: the anointing with sacred chrism on the forehead, done by the laying on of the hand, with the words "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" (CCC 1300). The chrism itself, perfumed oil consecrated by the bishop, ordinarily at the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday, carries the whole meaning of anointing the study has traced from Samuel's horn to tonight (CCC 1297).

What You Need to Know

This session runs differently. The sealed pages replace the Win questions; the Rite walkthrough replaces the usual Build scenes; and your job is mostly traffic control while fourteen weeks of planted connections fire on their own. Bring the Order of Confirmation and read the actual liturgical texts from it at the marked moments; hearing the real words, tonight, before the day itself, is the mystagogy. Prepare more than usual and plan to say less than usual.

The opening ceremony, exactly. Collect nothing in advance. Parents first: invite volunteers to read their sealed memory aloud; expect thin memories, funny details, and one or two unexpectedly moving ones, and receive every kind with equal honor, especially "almost nothing," which you promised in week one would matter, and tonight it does: it is about to be impossible for their child, who will know exactly what happened and why. Then candidates: every candidate reads their sealed guess aloud, quickly, around the room, no commentary yet. Write the guesses' common elements on a board if you have one. THEN walk the Rite, and let each candidate discover in real time how close they came. Score-keeping is allowed and fun; the guess that lands closest gets applause.

Chrism, precisely, because tonight the oil thread resolves. Sacred chrism is perfumed oil, commonly olive oil mixed with balsam (current discipline permits another plant oil with perfume), consecrated by the bishop, ordinarily at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week, and used in only three sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, plus the consecration of churches and altars. The Church's tradition hears in it the fulfillment of Exodus 30's sacred anointing oil, reserved and never for

ordinary use, exactly as the group learned in Session 3. The word chrism and the word Christ are the same root, and St. Cyril's sentence from Session 3 comes due tonight: having received the anointing, you have become christs. If your parish can arrange for the group to SEE the chrism in the ambry after the session, do it; fourteen weeks of oil deserves a look at the actual oil.

The formula's own story. The words "N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit" come from St. Paul VI's 1971 revision, which chose a formula corresponding in meaning to the ancient words of the Byzantine Rite, so that West and East now seal with substantially one meaning. The word "Gift" is capitalized on purpose: the Gift IS the Holy Spirit himself, the promise of the Father, Acts 2:38's "gift of the Holy Spirit" placed on each forehead by name. Every word of the formula is a session of this study: the NAME (Session 13), BE SEALED (Session 10), the GIFT (Session 7), the HOLY SPIRIT (all of it).

The peace is the locked room. After the anointing, the bishop says: Peace be with you. Do not let this pass as liturgical filler. "Peace be with you" is the first sentence of the risen Christ behind the shut doors of Easter evening (John 20:19), the greeting of the scene in which he breathed the Spirit on the apostles (20:21-22). The Rite ends the anointing by putting the newly sealed in that room, on Easter evening, receiving the risen Lord's own greeting. When the group catches this one, and they will, the study's first night and its last night close like a ring.

For the parents in the room. Tonight many parents discover, in detail, the sacrament they received but never had explained. Expect real emotion, and expect the quiet grief of "nobody ever showed me this." The answer to that grief is standing next to them: they just spent fourteen weeks making sure their child will never say it. Name that plainly at the close; it is the truest thing you can send them home with. The steelman tonight, Confirmation as graduation, is also chiefly for parents; give it full strength, because they have watched it happen.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

- Exodus 30 (the sacred anointing oil, reserved and never ordinary) is heard by the Church's tradition as fulfilled in sacred chrism; 1 Samuel 16 (oil poured, Spirit given, one event) finds its echo on each forehead.
- Ezekiel 9 (the mark set on the foreheads of the faithful, the tav St. Jerome saw as cross-shaped) has traditionally been read as foreshadowing the chrismed cross traced on each candidate's forehead.
- Numbers 11:29 and Joel 2:28, Moses' wish and Joel's promise, fulfilled in Christ's gift of the Spirit to his whole people, reach one candidate at a time, by name, in your parish, on a date already on the calendar.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The group heard St. Cyril in Session 3; tonight they hear the rest of him. Teaching the newly anointed of Jerusalem, he told them that as Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the Jordan, so they, coming up from the sacred waters, were given the anointing, the figure of that very Spirit, and thereby became christs, anointed ones, sharers in the Anointed One himself. Everything Cyril said sixteen centuries ago about candidates like yours, the Rite will say over yours, with the same oil family and the same Gift.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH**St. Paul VI** (*Divinae Consortium Naturae*, 1971)

St. Paul VI, revising the Rite for the whole Latin Church in *Divinae Consortium Naturae*, gave the Latin Church the formula "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit," explaining that it aptly expresses the sacrament's effect and corresponds in meaning to the ancient formula of the Byzantine Rite. The essential words spoken over a candidate in Nebraska thus carry substantially the meaning spoken over Eastern candidates for well over a millennium: one seal, confessed by East and West together.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH**St. Theophilus of Antioch** (*To Autolycus*, around AD 180)

When pagans mocked the very name "Christian," St. Theophilus of Antioch answered the mockery by owning the word's root: we are called Christians, he wrote, because we are anointed with the oil of God. Within a century and a half of the Resurrection, the family name of the whole Church was being explained by the anointing. Your candidates are about to receive, on their own skin, the thing their name has meant all along.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 1297.** The consecration of sacred chrism, ordinarily by the bishop at the Chrism Mass of Holy Thursday, is an important action that precedes the celebration.
- **CCC 1299.** The bishop extends his hands over the candidates and prays for the outpouring of the Spirit with his sevenfold gift (the Catechism's wording names wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord; the English Order of Confirmation renders the last pair "reverence" and "wonder and awe in God's presence").
- **CCC 1300.** The essential rite: the anointing with sacred chrism on the forehead, done by the laying on of the hand, with the words: Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

Thread Watch: Final Accounting

Every thread resolves tonight; know the ledger. Thread A, the Breath: resolved at Pentecost, echoed tonight in the bishop's epiclestic outstretched hands and in "Peace be with you," the locked room's greeting. Thread B, few to all: resolved by Peter's sermon, enacted tonight one name at a time. Thread C, the Oil: RESOLVES TONIGHT in sacred chrism; the thread you have guarded since Samuel's horn in Session 2 ends at the ambry. The two-stage pattern: the candidates, baptized long ago, complete the pattern of the dry bones, the locked room, Samaria, and Ephesus in their own bodies. The sealed pages: opened tonight, by design, at the start. Your only discipline left is to let the group say the connections before you do. They can. You built it that way.

Session Goals

1. Every sealed page has been opened and honored, and the best guess has gotten its applause.
2. The group has walked the entire Rite with the actual liturgical texts read aloud, and can explain every element from the study's own material.

3. Thread C has resolved at the chrism, and the John 20 "Peace be with you" connection has been caught, preferably not by you.
4. The group has faced the "Confirmation is graduation" objection at full strength and knows why this study is itself the answer.
5. Every household has chosen its one permanent practice, and knows the study's last assignment.

Time Note

Full plan runs about 90 minutes, and tonight is worth it; warn households in advance. If you absolutely must land at 75: trim the parent-memory readings to three volunteers, skip the Dig Deeper box, and compress the steelman to your own five-minute presentation. Never cut the candidate guesses, the full Rite walkthrough with real texts, or the closing blessing; those ARE the session.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: *Come, Holy Spirit. Fourteen weeks ago we sealed our guesses and our memories, and You have been unsealing Yourself to us ever since: breath and oil, wind and fire, hands and promises. Tonight we open everything. Open the pages, open the Rite, open our eyes, and get us ready, because the next scene is not in this room. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The Opening of the Pages

In place of Win questions. Take Take-Home 1 in hand; sealed boxes only now.

Parents first. Volunteers read their sealed memory aloud: what they wrote, fourteen weeks ago, about their own Confirmation. Receive every kind with equal honor, the vivid, the funny, and especially the "almost nothing," which was promised in week one to matter tonight. When the readings finish, say why it matters: whatever was or was not explained to the parents of this room, their candidates will walk to the bishop knowing exactly what is happening and why, because these parents sat here for fourteen weeks to make it so.

Candidates next. Around the room, every candidate reads their sealed guess: what will the bishop actually say and do? No commentary, no corrections; collect the common elements out loud or on a board. Then say: in about an hour, you will know exactly how close you came, and the best guess in this room gets applause. Now we open the Rite.

Build: Walking the Rite

Read the actual texts from the Order of Confirmation at each step. After each element, ask the room the same question: "Where have we seen this?" and let them answer before you do. The notes below are your net, not your script.

Element One: The Presentation and the Promises

Question 1. The candidates are presented, ordinarily by the pastor or another minister according to the Order of Confirmation, with parents and sponsors close at hand, and then the bishop asks them to stand and renew, in their own voices, the baptismal promises that first marked their Christian life, for most, promises once made for them by others: the renunciations, and the Creed, asked and answered. Why does the Rite have them say out loud, as their own, what for many was once said for them? Where have we seen the shape of this?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Because tonight the faith changes voices. At most of their baptisms, parents and godparents answered for infants who could not speak (candidates baptized as adults spoke for themselves, and renew what they once professed); now the Church puts the same questions to the candidates and waits for their own "I do." This is the hinge of the whole intergenerational study: the parents, whose formation carried the candidates from the font to this night, watch their work change voices, and the candidates answer, the first act of the adult faith the sacrament equips. The Ephesian twelve heard and answered before Paul's hands came down; the Samaritans believed before Peter and John arrived; faith spoken precedes the Spirit's completing gift, in Acts and in your parish alike. And note the parents' place in the Rite's own vision: canon law and the Order treat the parents' formation of their candidates as primary and irreplaceable, whatever local practice assigns for the presenting

itself. Fourteen weeks ago we said parents never lose their role. The Church's law agrees in writing.

Element Two: The Outstretched Hands and the Sevenfold Prayer

Read the bishop's prayer over the candidates from the Order of Confirmation, in full, slowly. Then:

Question 2. The bishop, with any concelebrating priests, extends his hands over ALL the candidates together and prays. You just heard the prayer. Inventory it: what gesture is being made, and what, exactly, is being asked for, item by item? Where have we seen every single piece of this?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The gesture is the laying on of hands, extended over the whole group: Moses over Joshua, Peter and John over Samaria, Paul over the Ephesian twelve, the sign the apostles chose and the Church never put down (Sessions 8 and 9, paid again in front of them). And the asking is the sevenfold gift, by name: wisdom and understanding, counsel and fortitude, knowledge and reverence, wonder and awe in God's presence, Isaiah 11's portrait of the Spirit resting on the shoot of Jesse (Session 3), the Messiah's own equipment claimed as the candidates' inheritance (Session 11), prayed over them by a successor of the apostles. Some candidate will notice the list is the one they memorized and prayed over their house, seven gifts in seven days. When they say so, the answer is: yes. It was always this prayer you were practicing.

Element Three: The Anointing

Walk it in order, slowly, reading the formula from the Order of Confirmation: the sponsor's hand on the candidate's shoulder; the name given; the bishop's thumb in sacred chrism tracing the cross on the forehead; the words: "N., be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit"; the answer: "Amen."

Question 3. First, the oil, because a thread fourteen weeks long ends here. Sacred chrism: olive oil mixed with fragrant balsam, consecrated by the bishop at the Chrism Mass, used only for Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders and the consecration of churches and altars. Where have we seen this oil, and what does its very name confess?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

This is Exodus 30's "most holy" anointing oil arrived at its destination: set apart, consecrated, never for ordinary use, marking what it touches as claimed for God (Session 3, where the leader's notes have been holding this connection under seal since week three; you may now say so, and enjoy their faces). It is Samuel's horn, poured now not on one shepherd but on every candidate, and as in 1 Samuel 16:13, sign and Gift arrive as one event. Its name is its confession: chrism, christos, Christ, one root; St. Theophilus told mocking pagans that Christians are so called because we are anointed with the oil of God, and St. Cyril told his candidates the sentence this study has owed your group since Session 3: having received the anointing, you have become christs. The candidates asked in week three why Peter could say Jesus was anointed when no oil appears in the Gospels; tonight the question completes its orbit: the Anointed One was anointed with the Spirit Himself, and at Confirmation the anointing with chrism gives what it signifies, the same Spirit, to each of His christs. If the parish can show the group the actual chrism in the ambry tonight, this is the moment it pays for.

Question 4. Now the words and the mark. A cross, traced in chrism, on the FOREHEAD, with the candidate's chosen NAME, and the formula: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit." Take it apart, word by word and gesture by gesture: where has this study seen every piece? And candidates: check your guesses.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The forehead: Ezekiel's man with the writing case, marking the foreheads of the faithful, with St. Jerome's typological observation that the ancient tav was written in a cross-like shape; Revelation's servants of God sealed on their foreheads. In the Church's traditional reading, the chrismed cross on the forehead answers the mark Ezekiel saw (Session 10), a foreshadowing arriving home rather than a proof-text. The name: spoken aloud, possibly a new one, chosen with a patron attached (Session 13, and Revelation 2:17's white stone). "Be sealed": the sphragis of Session 10, ownership, authentication, protection, permanence, the indelible character that is why this moment happens once in a lifetime. "The GIFT of the Holy Spirit": Peter's own phrase from Pentecost afternoon, Acts 2:38, the promise "to you and to your children" now landing on a particular child whose parent is watching from the pew; and Simon Magus's corrective built in, for a Gift, by definition, is never bought or earned (Session 8). And St. Paul VI's decision means these words are the ancient East's words too: one formula, both lungs. Then the shortest word in the exchange, and the candidate's personal answer to the sacramental words: Amen. (They will also have renewed their baptismal promises aloud, and will answer the greeting of peace; but at the anointing itself, their whole speaking part is the Bible's word for "yes, truly, let it be so," which is, if you think about it, the whole job.) Now: whose guess came closest? Applause as promised.

Element Four: The Peace

Question 5. The bishop concludes: "Peace be with you." And the newly confirmed answers: "And with your spirit." Last question of the study, and it should be answered by anyone but you: where is the FIRST place in this study, and in the Gospel, that a room full of Jesus' people heard "Peace be with you," and what happened next in that room?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The locked room, Easter evening, John 20:19: "Peace be with you" is the first sentence of the risen Christ to his gathered Church; he showed them his hands and side, said it again, and then, in that same scene, breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." The Rite's final exchange places every newly sealed candidate inside that room: greeted by the risen Lord's own words, on the far side of receiving the Spirit, commissioned like the Ten. Which means the study has closed its ring: night one began with the breath of God over the waters and ended with a glimpse of that locked room; night fourteen ends with your candidates standing in it. When someone lands this connection, and in a group that has come this far someone will, let there be a moment of quiet, and then say the only thing left to say: the next scene is not in this room. It is in a church, with a bishop, on a date already on the calendar, and everyone here knows exactly what will happen there, and Who.

The Push-Back: The Sacrament of Goodbye

The last steelman, and mostly for the parents. Build it at full strength; they have watched it happen.

The objection. Look at the actual results. In parish after parish, Confirmation functions as graduation: the retention numbers are grim, the pews thin out the Sunday after, and everyone in this room can name confirmed Catholics, some in their own families, for whom the sacrament visibly changed nothing. If Confirmation truly conferred power from on high, the data would show it. It does not. Whatever the theology says, the sociology says this is a rite of passage that operates, in practice, as an exit ritual, and preparing teenagers for it with fourteen weeks of study is elaborate staging for a goodbye.

Question 6. Concede the data first; pretending otherwise insults everyone's intelligence. Then bring the whole study to bear: what have fourteen weeks taught this room about how God's gifts relate to human freedom, unopened cargo, and growing seasons, and what, concretely, is the answer to the exit-ritual pattern? Look around the table before answering.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Concede it whole: the retention pattern is real, the grief behind the objection is real, and several people at your tables are carrying a name while it is discussed; handle it like the pastoral live wire it is. But the study has spent fourteen weeks building the categories that answer it. A sacrament is not a spell; grace is real AND resistible, which is Session 10 verbatim: the seal is indelible, and the sealed can still grieve the Spirit, and Augustine's deserter still carries the brand, which is precisely why he can come home without being re-sealed; the door the data mourns is the same door that never closes. Gifts can ride unopened for decades, which is Session 9: the Ephesian twelve ran sincerely on an unfinished formation until someone asked them one question, and Timothy himself had to be told to REKINDLE a gift gone banked; unopened is not empty. Fruit grows in seasons, not weekends, which is Session 12: auditing a sixteen-year-old's faith the autumn after Confirmation is inspecting an orchard in week one. And enlistment is not annulled by desertion: soldiers walking away does not prove the commissioning empty; it proves the war real. Then the concrete answer, and deliver it looking at them: the exit-ritual pattern feeds on candidates who were sacramentalized without being evangelized, sealed without ever once reading Samaria, anointed without knowing what oil means, and the counter-practice is not a program; it is what this room has been DOING: fourteen weeks, Scripture open, parents beside candidates, every objection faced at full strength, every question answered or honestly held. The honest remainder, because this study ends as it lived: no preparation compels a free heart, and some of these candidates will still drift, and if they do, everything tonight remains true about them, the seal, the brand, the open door, the Father on the porch. But nobody leaves this study able to say they were never told. That was the point of it. Look around the table: you were the answer to this objection, and you have been for three and a half months.

DIG DEEPER

1 Peter 2:9. If time allows, one hidden discovery remains: the fisherman from the charcoal fire, writing to scattered ordinary Christians, calls them "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people... that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness." Set it beside Session 3, and beside the Church's teaching that the baptized share in Christ's offices of priest, prophet, and king (CCC 783-786): royal priesthood, prophetic declaring, a people belonging to the King. The verse names its own titles; the threefold-office reading is the

Church's, and it was hiding in plain sight.

Send: The Last Questions

1. You now know exactly what will be said and done over you, and what every word and gesture means. What do you want to be true of you as you walk back down the aisle that day, one sentence?
2. Parents: you have watched your candidate for fourteen weeks. Tell them, right now, at this table, one way you have seen the Spirit already at work in them. Do not generalize. Candidates: your only job is to hear it.

Live It: From Here to the Day, and After

Three assignments, and the study is complete. First: as a household, choose tonight the ONE practice from these fourteen weeks, the morning breath prayer, the hand blessing, the gift-spotting, the Come Holy Spirit, any of them, that becomes permanent in your house, and say your choice out loud at the table before you leave. Second: from tonight until the day, candidates and parents pray daily for the candidate's Confirmation day and for the bishop by name; the prayer you learned in Session 7 is built for exactly this. Third: candidates, sometime before the day, write a letter to yourself to be opened in five years, and put one thing in it: what you knew, tonight, that you never want to forget. Seal it. You have practice.

Closing Blessing

Do this exactly. Have every parent (or, for adult candidates, whoever accompanied them here) stand behind their candidate and place a hand on the candidate's shoulder, the sponsor's posture, borrowed for one night by the ones who started it all at the font. Then the leader prays, slowly, over every bowed head:

Leader: All-powerful God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You freed these Your sons and daughters from sin and gave them new life in Baptism. Send Your Holy Spirit upon them: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and reverence, and fill them with the spirit of wonder and awe in Your presence. Keep every promise You have made them, and bring us all together to the day when every seal is opened. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

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

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in Session 14, in order of use. RSV2CE.

- **The Order of Confirmation** (the liturgical texts, read at each element; obtain from your pastor)
- **Acts 8:14-17; Acts 19:5-6** (recalled: the hands, Elements One and Two)
- **Isaiah 11:1-3** (recalled: the sevenfold prayer, Element Two)
- **Exodus 30:25-32; 1 Samuel 16:13** (recalled: the chrism, Element Three)
- **Ezekiel 9:4; Acts 2:38-39; Revelation 2:17** (recalled: forehead, Gift, name, Element Three)
- **John 20:19-22** (recalled: Peace be with you, Element Four)
- **2 Timothy 1:6-7; Galatians 5:22-23** (Push-Back answer: rekindle; seasons)
- **1 Peter 2:9** (Dig Deeper: the royal priesthood)
- **2 Corinthians 1:21-22** (memory verse: anointed, sealed, guaranteed, finally in full)

Catechism: CCC 1297, 1299, 1300.

Voices: St. Cyril of Jerusalem (Mystagogical Catecheses, 3); St. Paul VI (Divinae Consortium Naturae); St. Theophilus of Antioch (To Autolycus).

Distribute at the door: Take-Home 14, one per household. The study is complete. Well done, good and faithful leader.