

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 1

The Breath of God

What We Found

The Hebrew word *ruah* means breath, wind, and spirit at once. Before anything lived, the Spirit of God was moving over the waters (Genesis 1:2); St. Basil pictured that hovering as a bird brooding over her nest. The first man became a living being only when God breathed into him (Genesis 2:7). And when Israel was as good as dead in exile, God showed Ezekiel a valley of dry bones and summoned breath from the four winds until a whole people stood on its feet (Ezekiel 37). Life, in the Bible, is borrowed breath. Then, on Easter evening, the risen Jesus breathed on His apostles: "Receive the Holy Spirit." The story that began at creation is starting again, and this study is about where it lands: on you.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The Father was never without His Word and His Wisdom, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are like the Father's two hands, and with them He freely fashioned all things, including man. From the first page of Scripture, the Spirit is one of the hands that made you.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The Spirit "moving" over the waters is the image of a bird brooding over her eggs, warming 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*)

The Holy Spirit is like rain: one and the same water comes down, yet it becomes one thing in the palm tree and another in the vine, adapting itself to each living thing. So the Spirit, one and the same, gives Himself to each person as each one needs.

Live It This Week

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.

Memory Verse

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

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: If someone at school or at work asked you tomorrow, "What even is the Holy Spirit?", what would you say after tonight?

Sealed Until Session 14

Fill these in this week, then fold this page over and do not look again until the final session. On your honor.

CANDIDATE: MY GUESS. At the moment you are confirmed, what do you think the bishop will actually say and do? Write your best guess.

PARENT: MY MEMORY. What do you remember about your own Confirmation? The day, the name you took, the bishop, anything at all. If the honest answer is "almost nothing," write that; it will matter later too.

Before Next Session

Read Numbers 11:16-30. Moses, seventy elders, and a wish Moses makes out loud.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 691, 703, 704.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 2

The Spirit on the Few

What We Found

In the old covenant the Spirit's conspicuous task-gifts, prophetic, royal, military, came to a few, suddenly, for a mission, and could be withdrawn; God's grace was truly at work among His faithful all along, but these public endowments were another matter. He rested on the seventy elders chosen to help Moses carry the people, and even found Eldad and Medad out in the camp. He clothed Himself with Gideon, wearing a frightened farmer like a garment until an army rallied. He rushed on David from that day forward, and departed from Saul in the very next verse. And in the middle of it all, Moses said out loud the thing the whole Old Testament is waiting for: would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them. Then, centuries later, Jesus appointed seventy and sent them out ahead of Him (Luke 10:1), and Christians have long heard Moses' echo in it.

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 resting on a chosen few. Then the dew fell on all the ground: the Spirit poured out on all the nations.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

St. Thomas taught that the light of prophecy was given as a passing impression, not a permanent possession. A prophet could not prophesy whenever he wished; the gift came when God sent it and was not at his disposal. Thomas is describing prophecy's mode, not denying God's grace in the holy ones of old.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Teaching candidates preparing for the sacraments, St. Cyril 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. The Spirit you are preparing to receive is not a novelty; He has been at work among God's people for a very long time.

Live It This Week

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.

Memory Verse

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

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Moses wished the Spirit onto everybody. Who is one person you would wish the Spirit onto this week, and why?

Before Next Session

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13, slowly. We stopped at verse 14 tonight. This week, read the whole scene from the beginning, and pay attention to the thing Samuel carries with him to Bethlehem. Bring your noticing next week.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 687, 702, 1287.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 3

Oil and Anointing

What We Found

Israel poured oil on three kinds of people: priests, prophets, and kings, the three who stand between God and the people. The sacred oil marked a person as claimed, set apart, no longer merely their own, and when Samuel poured it on David, the Spirit of the LORD came in the same moment: sign and gift together. The Hebrew word for an anointed person is *mashiach*; in Greek it is *christos*. So "Christ" is not a last name. It is a claim: Jesus is THE Anointed One, the final priest, prophet, and king. The Church reads Isaiah's promise of a shoot from the stump of Jesse as pointing to Him: one on whom the Spirit would not rush but rest, carrying His gifts; the traditional list of seven follows the Church's ancient Greek and Latin translations of that verse. And Peter later said an astonishing thing: God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit. No horn of oil appears anywhere in the Gospels. So somewhere in the story is an anointing we have all read without recognizing it.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The gifts of the Holy Spirit that the Church names from 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 gifts make a soul easy for God to steer.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

St. Cyril told the newly initiated of Jerusalem plainly: through the anointing they share in Christ and are rightly called Christians, anointed ones bearing the Anointed One's own name.

Live It This Week

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.

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)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Which of the seven gifts does our family need most right now, and what would change if we had it?

Before Next Session

Read Ezekiel 36:24-28, slowly, twice.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 436, 695, 1831.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 4

The Promise of Outpouring

What We Found

The prophets did not just describe the old pattern of the Spirit; they promised its end, and they made the promises to a nation at rock bottom. Ezekiel: a new heart, a heart of flesh for the heart of stone, and "I will put my Spirit WITHIN you," not upon but within. Jeremiah: a new covenant, not like Sinai, with the law written on hearts, God supplying from inside what He commands. And Joel, after the locusts ate everything: "I will pour out my spirit on all flesh," sons and daughters, old and young, even the servants, people of every age, sex, and standing, including all the overlooked. Moses' wish from the wilderness has become a signed promise. One question is left open on purpose: when does the promise get kept?

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The letter of the law, standing outside a person, commands what it cannot give; the Spirit of the new covenant writes God's law inwardly and supplies the love that fulfills it. As Augustine prayed elsewhere: give what You command, and command what You will.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The New Law is chiefly the grace of the Holy Spirit, given inwardly to believers; the written teachings of the Gospel express and guide the life that grace gives (I-II, q. 106, a. 1). Jeremiah's law written on hearts describes what the Holy Spirit does to a person.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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.

Live It This Week

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.

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)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Joel's list included every kind of person nobody expected. Who is someone the world overlooks that you suspect God has big plans for?

Before Next Session

Read Luke 3:15-22, twice.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 715, 1965, 1966.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 5

The Anointed One

What We Found

We solved Peter's riddle. He said God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit, yet no horn of oil appears anywhere in the Gospels, because the Messiah's anointing was better than oil. At the Jordan, the sinless one stood in the sinners' line on purpose, and as he prayed, the heavens opened, the Spirit descended in bodily form as a dove, and the Father's voice claimed him: "You are my beloved Son." John the Baptist was told to watch for one identifying detail: the One on whom the Spirit would descend AND REMAIN. Rest; remain: Isaiah's seven-hundred-year-old verb, landing. Then at Nazareth, Jesus found Isaiah's anointing text in the scroll, read "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me," and said the word that changed everything: today.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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, he intended for us: having learned to rest on one man, he would come to rest on mankind.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Christ comes up out of the water carrying the world up with him. Christ is bathed in light; let us also be bathed. He steps into our water so that we can step into his life.

Live It This Week

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.

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)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: At the Jordan, the Father said "beloved" before Jesus had done anything public at all. What would change in our house if we believed God's first word over each of us is "beloved"?

Before Next Session

Read John 14:15-26. The night before he died, Jesus made his friends a promise about Someone he called the Counselor. Read it slowly, and circle every single thing Jesus says this Counselor will do.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 536, 537, 1286.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 6

The Promise of the Paraclete

What We Found

On the night before he died, Jesus promised his frightened friends another *Parakletos*: one called alongside, the friend who stands next to you in court, Advocate, Comforter, Counselor. If this one is "another," the first was Jesus himself. The Paraclete's job description: with you for ever; dwelling WITH you and soon IN you, Ezekiel's promise arriving on Jesus' own lips; teaching all things; bringing to remembrance everything Jesus said; guiding into all truth; not speaking on his own authority, always glorifying Jesus. And one impossible sentence: "it is to your advantage that I go away," because while Jesus walked among us his visible presence was beside his disciples in one place at a time, and through the Spirit he would dwell within believers wherever they are. Then, on Easter evening, behind shut doors, the risen Jesus breathed on his apostles, the way God breathed on the dust in the garden, and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit." And still, forty days later, he told those same men to wait, because something more was coming.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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 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*)

Why was Jesus' departure to our advantage? 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. Beside became within, and within is the deeper intimacy.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The proof of love is shown in deeds. 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.

Live It This Week

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." Compare notes once during the week: did anything come back to mind right when you needed it?

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)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Jesus said it was to our advantage that he go away, so the Spirit could come. Why might the Spirit dwelling within be a deeper communion than standing beside Jesus? Argue about it kindly.

Before Next Session

Read Acts 1:1-14.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 692, 728, 729.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 7

Pentecost

What We Found

Six weeks of promises landed on one morning. A sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind: the ruah of Genesis, the four winds of Ezekiel's valley, the breath of Easter evening, arriving at gale force. Tongues as of fire were distributed and RESTED on EACH ONE of them: the abiding the prophets promised and the Jordan revealed, now one flame per person in a company that included the women and Mary (Acts 1:14). Peter stood up and quoted the passage we found three weeks ago, and said the words that resolved everything: "this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." Moses wished it; Joel promised it; Peter pointed at it. And we discovered the mountain underneath the morning: Pentecost fell on the feast that Jewish tradition links with the Law given at Sinai, and the Church has long read the two days together. Fire on the mountain then, fire on each head now; law on stone then, the Spirit writing on hearts now; three thousand fell at the golden calf, three thousand were baptized at Pentecost. The letter kills; the Spirit gives life. And Peter's offer reached across every table in our room: the promise is to you, and to your children.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

At Sinai the law was written on stone outside the people, and about three thousand fell for breaking it. At Pentecost the Spirit was given, writing the law on hearts, and about three thousand came to life. Same God, same law, new address, opposite result. The letter kills; the Spirit gives life.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The Spirit came upon disciples who were together, of one accord, persevering in prayer. 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*)

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.

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together. Pray this beloved traditional prayer to the Holy Spirit together once a day, until you both know it by heart: "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."

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)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: The fire rested on each one, and the one Spirit made the many into one Church: both at once. If a flame with your name on it landed tomorrow, what do you think it would be for?

Before Next Session

Read Acts 8:1-17, twice.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 696, 731, 732.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 8

Samaria: A Second Gift**What We Found**

The strangest paragraph in Acts, taken at inventory: the Samaritans believed Philip's preaching and were genuinely baptized, men and women, with joy in the city, and Luke breathes no criticism of their faith. And yet the Spirit "had not yet fallen on any of them." The apostles did not shrug; they sent Peter and John in person, and the two prayed for the Samaritans that they might receive the Holy Spirit, laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. Real baptism; a real further gift; a real apostolic act between them. Whatever its observable effect, which Luke does not describe, it was compelling enough that Simon the magician, a professional in the amazement business, tried to buy it, and his name became the permanent name of that sin. And we finally caught the oldest pattern in this study: the dry bones rose in two stages, body first and breath second (Ezekiel 37:8-10); the apostles received the Easter breath and were still told to wait for power (John 20:22; Acts 1:4-5). The Church has long seen in such passages a picture of God giving the Spirit in more than one act, for more than one purpose, in His own order. Read that way, Samaria is not an exception to the story. It is the story, happening to a church.

Voices of the Church**VOICES OF THE CHURCH**

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

What was done with the Samaritans 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. Not a new ceremony, but the Acts 8 pattern, still running.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Walking through initiation as his church practiced it at the turn of the third century: after the bath in water, the hand is laid on, invoking and inviting the Holy Spirit through blessing. Both moments, washing and hand with invocation, were there, in order.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Philip could preach, work signs, and baptize, yet the giving of the Spirit waited for Peter and John: this gift belonged to the apostles. The deacon evangelized, and the apostles completed what he began; the division of roles was the order of the Church working as designed.

Live It This Week

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. Sixty seconds is enough. Blessing is allowed to feel awkward the first time. Do it anyway.

Memory Verse

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

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Simon wanted the Spirit's power for what it could do for him. What is the difference between wanting God's gifts and wanting God?

Before Next Session

Read Acts 19:1-7.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1288, 1315.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 9

Ephesus and the Foundations

What We Found

Scripture's courtroom principle, a matter is established on two or three witnesses, gave us our frame, and tonight we heard the second and third. In Ephesus, Paul, an apostle who was not in Samaria, found about twelve sincere disciples running on John's baptism, who had not yet even heard the news of the Holy Spirit's outpouring. He asked them the question that assumes receiving the Spirit is a definite, knowable event: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Then he completed what they had: Christian Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus, which truly gives the Spirit, and, as a distinct further act, his hands laid on them, "and the Holy Spirit came on them." Two cities, two apostles, one instrument: a pattern, not an incident. And in the letter to the Hebrews we found a third, corroborating witness: "the laying on of hands" sitting in an apostolic-era list of elementary foundations, filed between the washings and the resurrection. The debt this study promised four weeks ago is paid.

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, its exact origin debated, preserves an early practice: after the washing, the newly baptized are brought to the bishop, who lays his hand on them and prays for God's grace. Roughly a century after the apostle John's death, washing was already followed by the bishop's hand and prayer.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

After the font comes the spiritual seal, when at the priest's invocation the Holy Spirit is poured out with the sevenfold grace the Church names from Isaiah 11: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and strength, of knowledge and piety and holy fear. The gifts prayed over the newly initiated were the ones resting on the shoot of Jesse.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Jerome (*Dialogue Against the Luciferians*)

St. Jerome records and defends the practice of his day: bishops travel out to those baptized in smaller towns to lay hands on them and invoke the Holy Spirit, a custom he traces to Peter and John being sent to Samaria, while noting that its reservation to bishops also honors the good order of the Church. The root, even so, is apostolic.

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together. The bishop, a successor of the apostles, is the ordinary minister of Confirmation. Find out his name this week if you do not know it, 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."

Memory Verse

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

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Paul's question, at our own table: "Did you receive the Holy Spirit?" What would each of us honestly answer tonight?

Before Next Session

Read Ephesians 1:3-14, slowly.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 699, 1289, 1290.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 10

Sealed

What We Found

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

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Ephesians*)

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

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

Live It This Week

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

Memory Verse

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

Table Talk

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

Before Next Session

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

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

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 11

The Seven Gifts

What We Found

The seal marks the crate; tonight we opened the cargo. Two kinds of equipment, and the difference matters: the seven GIFTS (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord) are received with grace at Baptism and strengthened at Confirmation, and their job is the receiver's holiness, making a soul in grace quick to catch the Spirit's promptings. The CHARISMS of 1 Corinthians 12 are distributed deliberately unevenly, one to this person and another to that, and their purpose is stated in five words: for the common good. The gifts are the Church's naming of Christ's own equipment become our inheritance: what rested on the Head at the Jordan was distributed at Pentecost, one flame per person, and the Spirit believers receive is the Spirit of Christ Himself, not a lesser substitute; tradition hears Psalm 133 singing it, the oil on Aaron's head running down onto the robes. And the first person in the whole Bible whom God says He FILLED with His Spirit was not a prophet, priest, or king: he was Bezalel, a craftsman, filled with the Spirit for excellent work with his hands. The gifts are for Tuesdays.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The Spirit 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. He 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.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

The seven gifts are an ascent the Spirit works in a soul: fear of the Lord the first step and wisdom the summit, the climb rising until the soul tastes things as God tastes them. Not seven trophies on a shelf, but one Spirit's ascending work, and the gifts operate together rather than one rung at a time.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

There is grace that makes the receiver holy and pleasing to God, and there are graces freely given so that through one person others may be helped toward God (I-II, q. 111; on the gifts themselves, q. 68). The seven gifts belong with the first kind; the charisms are the second, distributed as the Spirit wills. Knowing which you are looking at is half of spiritual sanity.

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together: gift-spotting. Once a day, each of you names ONE of the seven gifts you saw operating in the other person that day, out loud and specifically: "I saw fortitude in you when you..." 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.

Memory Verse

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

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: The first man Scripture calls filled with the Spirit was a craftsman, filled for building God's sanctuary. What is the work in each of our hands right now, and what would doing it for God change?

Before Next Session

Read Galatians 5:16-26, twice.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1830, 799, 800.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 12

The Fruits

What We Found

Paul's grammar is his theology. The WORKS of the flesh, plural: separate deeds a person manufactures, and the catalog includes the respectable ones, enmity, strife, jealousy, factions, filed right beside the sins everyone gasps at. But the FRUIT of the Spirit, singular: one organic life with nine facets, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, tending to grow together the way one healthy tree carries leaf and blossom and fruit, even while particular virtues ripen unevenly and in season. Works are what we produce; fruit is what we become. We found the vine: the branches' foundational job is one word, repeated again and again: remain. And it is this study's favorite verb: the Spirit descended and REMAINED on Jesus at the Jordan; the branch REMAINS in the vine; fruit grows at that address and nowhere else. Fruit takes seasons; Scripture's own growth chart (Psalm 1) says "in its season." Anyone whose patience did not arrive this week has described week one of an orchard, not a failure.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Love, and do what you will. Not that anything goes, but the opposite: a heart truly rooted in the love of God can be trusted with freedom, because what grows from that root will be good. The root determines the produce.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Commentary on Galatians*)

Paul says WORKS of the flesh but FRUIT of the Spirit, and Chrysostom, expounding Galatians, drew out the contrast: evil deeds are wrought from ourselves, while the good grown in a believer is fruit of the Spirit, from a life shared with Another. The inventory-and-harvest wording is this study's gloss on his point.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (*Story of a Soul, Manuscript B*)

"In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be love": her own words. The rest is her life's evidence: sanctity made almost entirely of fruit borne in hidden, ordinary places, patience with the irritating, kindness with no audience, joy held onto in illness. Proof that the fruit list is a real job description, achievable at any age, in any hallway.

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together. You chose one facet of the fruit your household most lacks. Every day this week, each of you does one deliberate act of it 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.

Memory Verse

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Who is someone we know whose life shows real fruit under real pressure? What do we think their root is?

Before Next Session

Read Acts 1:1-11 again. And one thing to start praying about this week: if you have not yet chosen a sponsor or a saint, ask God to start pointing.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 736, 1832, 2074.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 13

Witnesses

What We Found

Jesus' last sentence before ascending gave the confirmed their job title: "you shall be my WITNESSES." The Greek word is *martys*, courtroom testimony, and within a hundred years so many witnesses paid for their testimony with their lives that the word grew its second meaning: martyr. We saw the sacrament's before-and-after photo: Peter, routed by a servant girl's question at a charcoal fire, and the same man, filled with the Holy Spirit, standing before the council that had opposed Jesus and handed him over, so bold that the council's only explanation was that he "had been with Jesus." We found Stephen, praying for his executioners as the stones fell, while a young man named Saul held the coats; the coat-minder would become St. Paul, whose letters form a major part of the New Testament. And we met the two companions the Church commends: a sponsor on earth where possible, the wider Church physically showing up, and, by cherished custom, a patron in heaven, an ally, a syllabus, and a name to grow into. Nobody is sent out alone.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Traveling under guard to his execution, Ignatius begged the Roman Christians not to rescue him: I am God's wheat, and am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread of Christ. 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 church of Smyrna's Martyrdom of Polycarp, around AD 155*)

Offered his life for one small blasphemy, Polycarp answered, as the church of Smyrna's account records: eighty-six years I have served him, and he has done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my King who saved me? Long fidelity, and a loyalty that will not trade the King for anything: fear of the Lord at full maturity.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

Writing to the Roman authorities in defense of the persecuted: 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.

Live It This Week

Parent and candidate together: two appointments. Each evening, read one short saint's life together, five minutes; by next week the candidate should have a patron chosen or a shortlist of two. And this week the candidate personally asks their intended sponsor, by call or face to face; parents help rehearse the ask, then step back.

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)

Table Talk

One question for the drive home or the dinner table: Peter's only credential was that he "had been with Jesus." What in our week would show someone we had been with him?

Before Next Session

Bring Take-Home 1, with both sealed boxes STILL SEALED. On your honor: one more week. And read Acts 2:36-42 once more, slowly.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1285, 2473, 2683.

TAKE-HOME • SESSION 14

Be Sealed

What We Found

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

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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

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

From Here to the Day

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

Memory Verse

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

Table Talk

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

A Final Word

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