

## **The St. Peter Option: To Everyone an Answer**

### **Living as Exiles in a Foreign Land**

1 Peter, 2 Peter, Christian Vocation, and the Table of Duties

## **22 Encouragement for Shepherds and Their Sheep During the Exile**

1 Peter 5:1-14

**Concluding study:** Will begin with a short review of the Benedict Option, followed by encouragement for shepherds and their sheep (pastors and the baptized faithful) during the exile in a study of 1 Peter 5:1-14. The final portion will give a summary of the practical advice of what I would call "The St. Peter Option."

Introduction

- 1. Peter's encouragement "to shepherd the flock" is rooted in being a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed.** (1 Peter 5:1-2a)
  - a. Peter was an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ and its outcome: resurrection.
  - b. In Jesus' suffering he saw his Lord becoming a partaker of his sin for his redemption so that he could proclaim that same forgiveness to others as an undershepherd.
  - c. When Peter was going through "the little while" of suffering he didn't understand how necessary the suffering was for Jesus and for him. Both Jesus and Peter were joined together in the sufferings of Christ. Jesus' suffering for Peter was necessary for Peter's salvation. Peter's suffering (sorrow and contrition)—caused by his sin and the Word of the Lord—drew him back to Jesus for the forgiveness.
  - d. It is through the absolution that Peter became "a partaker of the glory that will be revealed" in the resurrection.
  - e. Forgiveness is the glory of the resurrection. By the absolution we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 2:4) and "the glory of the resurrection" now.
  - f. Remember how Peter was grieved in John 21, "Do you love me?" "Feed My lambs...Tend My sheep...Feed My sheep." He could not grasp the joy of these words apart from the Holy Spirit who is the agent of absolution by Jesus' word: "Peace be with you..."
  - g. Remember his reference "you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer/episkopos of our souls."
  - h. Peter's capacity to face all suffering, trial, opposition, adversity, persecution, and eventual martyrdom with joy was bound up with the resurrection of Jesus: Because He is risen from the dead, I shall rise from the dead. Because He is risen from the dead, my sin is forgiven.
  - i. Christ's absolution was the necessary "first word" for his ministry of joy and the necessary "first word" for the Christian in his vocation. "Ordained by forgiveness to preach and testify to the forgiveness of sins."

2. **Submission to Christ's forgiveness is the foundation for life in the Church and the joy of our fellowship together.** (1 Peter 5:2b-14)
- a. Peter now understood that the mandate of Jesus, "Feed My lambs, tend My sheep, feed My sheep" was really an absolution that sent him forth as a shepherd in the strength of Christ's forgiveness. Now the sorrow is turned to joy.
  - b. "Shepherd the flock..." was spoken to the elders in the diaspora from the same foundation of forgiveness.
  - c. The call of forgiveness is why the pastors are to serve, "not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; not as being lords over those entrusted to them, but as examples to the flock"
  - d. The promise of living by the call of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins is that "when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." That promise is to pastor and people as well when we live by faith in the Lord's forgiving word in our vocation.
  - e. Peter's submission to the Lord's forgiveness is "the example" for both pastors AND the sheep, and such submission is characterized by the repentant life of humble contrition and repentance.
  - f. "Likewise you younger people, submit to your elders/pastors" for forgiveness. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility..."
  - g. Impenitence is prideful boasting/penitence is humble contrition in our lives before the Lord and with one another.
  - h. The absolution of the Lord raises us up with Christ and "exalts us in due time" (a foretaste of the resurrection and ascension now)
  - i. The absolution of the Lord is the strength to "cast all our care upon Christ" to "be vigilant" to "resist the roaring lion who seeks to devour us" "to remain steadfast in faith" "to endure suffering" with joy and confidence.
  - j. The call of the Gospel of God's grace by the eternal glory of Christ's forgiveness in His resurrection will "perfect, establish, strengthen and settle" us. To God "be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."
  - k. Look at how the love of God in Christ's forgiveness overflows in Peter's final joyful words: "Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus."
3. **The St. Peter Option:**
1. Return daily to the promise of your Baptism.
  2. Gird up your loins with the Word of God in the Divine Service, Catechesis, Daily prayer in the home and parish. "All flesh is grass, but the Word of the Lord endures."
  3. "Abstain from fleshly lusts"—Creating in your homes and congregations communities that are "sanctified by the Word" and places of refuge from the world.
  4. Partake regularly of confession and absolution.
  5. Dare to live the call of the Gospel in a disposition of mercy toward enemies and confident faith in Christ as citizens, servants in the workplace, wives, husbands, etc.
  6. Sing hymns
  7. Rejoice when you suffer for confessing the love of Christ to those who hate you.