

Mysterium

Session 3 - Thursday, July 7

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PRIEST?

1. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5b-6).

Notes

1.1. Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)

PRIESTS ARE CONSECRATED TO OFFER SACRIFICE

2. On entering the People of God through faith and Baptism, one receives a share in this people's unique, priestly vocation: "Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men, has made this new people 'a kingdom of priests to God, his Father.' The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 784)

ADAM AND THE LOSS OF THE COMMON PRIESTHOOD

3. [The priestly tribe of Levi] shall perform duties [*shamar*] for him and for the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, as they minister [*abodah*] at the tabernacle; they shall have charge [*shamar*] of all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, and attend to the duties [*shamar*] for the people of Israel as they minister [*abodah*] at the tabernacle. (Numbers 3:7-8)

For Prayer

3.1. The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till [*abodah*] it and keep [*shamar*] it. (Genesis 2:15)

THE RESTORATION OF THE COMMON PRIESTHOOD - HOW IS THE CHRISTIAN CONSECRATED TO OFFER SACRIFICE?

4. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him; they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:3-5)

4.1. Revelation 7:2-8

4.2. Revelation 14:1

5. "And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, '**Holy to the LORD** [*qadosh YHWH*]'...It shall be upon Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall take upon himself any guilt incurred in the holy offering which the people of Israel hallow as their holy gifts; it shall always be upon his forehead,

HOW DO YOU BECOME A PRIEST?

6. Forming “as it were, one mystical person” with Christ the head, the Church acts in the sacraments as “an organically structured *priestly community*.” Through *Baptism and Confirmation* the *priestly people* is enabled to celebrate the liturgy, while those of the faithful “who have received Holy Orders, are appointed to nourish the Church with the word and grace of God in the name of Christ.”

The ordained ministry or ministerial priesthood is at the service of the baptismal priesthood. The ordained priesthood guarantees that it really is Christ who acts in the sacraments through the Holy Spirit for the Church. The saving mission entrusted by the Father to his incarnate Son was committed to the apostles and through them to their successors: they receive the Spirit of Jesus to act in his name and in his person. *The ordained minister is the sacramental bond that ties the liturgical action to what the apostles said and did and, through them, to the words and actions of Christ, the source and foundation of the sacraments.* (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1119-1120)

7. *The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. Therefore all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.*

For Prayer

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: *each of them* in its own special way *is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ.* The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But *the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist.* They likewise exercise that priesthood in *receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.* (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, §10)

BAPTISM AND THE NAME ON THE FOREHEADS OF THE FAITHFUL

8. [The God of Israel] called to the man dressed in linen with the scribe’s case at his waist and the LORD said to him: Pass through the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and mark a Tau [x, τ] on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the abominations practiced within it. (Ezekiel 9:3-4)

9. The Tau is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet and has [more or less] *the form of a cross*...The person who bears *on his forehead* the sign of *the Tau* shows *in his way of life the splendor of the Cross*, who bears the Tau has *crucified the flesh with its vices and sins*; who bears the Tau affirms by this: *in nothing else do I wish to glory except in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ*...Who bears the Tau will find mercy, in this sign of a life converted and renewed in Christ...Therefore, be ye champi-

ons of the Tau and of the Cross! (Pope Innocent III, Homily to begin Lateran IV)

Notes

10. My dear children, the Church of God welcomes you with great joy. In her name *I claim you for Christ our Savior by the sign of the his cross*. I now trace the cross *on your foreheads*, and invite your parents and godparents to do the same. (*Rite of Baptism for Children*).

WHAT DO WE **OFFER** IN **SACRIFICE**?

11. They are a *royal priesthood* because they are united to the body of Christ, the supreme king and true priest. As sovereign he grants them his kingdom, and as high priest he washes away their sins by the offering of his blood. Peter says they are a *royal priesthood*; they must always remember to *hope* for an everlasting kingdom and to *offer to God the sacrifice* of a blameless heart. (St. Bede the Venerable)

12. How marvelous is the priesthood of the Christian, for he is both the victim that is offered on his own behalf, and the priest who makes the offering...with himself and in himself he brings the sacrifice he is to offer God for himself. The victim remains and the priest remains, always one and the same...

Paul says: "I appeal to you by the mercy of God to present your bodies as a sacrifice, living and holy" [Romans 12:1]...*Each of us is called to be both a sacrifice to God and his priest*. Do not forfeit what divine authority confers on you. Put on the garment of holiness, gird yourself with the belt of chastity. Let Christ be your helmet, *let the cross on your forehead be your unfailing protection*. Your breastplate should be the knowledge of God that he himself has given you. Keep burning continually the sweet-smelling incense of prayer. Take up the sword of the Spirit. **Let your heart be an altar**. Then, with full confidence in God, *present your body for sacrifice*. God desires not death, but faith; *God thirsts not for blood, but for self-surrender*; God is appeased not by slaughter, but *by the offering of your free will*. (St. Peter Chrysologus)

For Prayer

THE **OFFERTORY** AT MASS

13. A moment later the **Offertory** arrived...Suddenly some characters, whom I had not seen before, began to stand up. It was as if from the side of each person present in the Cathedral, another person emerged, and soon the Cathedral became full of young, beautiful people. They were dressed in very white robes, and they started to move into the central aisle and, then, went towards the Altar.

Our Mother said: "Observe. They are the Guardian Angels of each one of the persons who are here. This is the moment in which your guardian angel carries your offerings and petitions before the Altar of the Lord"...

Some of them were carrying *something like a golden bowl* with something that shone a great deal with a golden-white light. The Virgin Mary said: "They are *the Guardian Angels of the people who are offering this Holy Mass for many intentions, those who are conscious of what this celebration means. They have something to offer the Lord.*"

"*Offer yourselves at this moment; offer your sorrows, your pains, your hopes, your sadness, your joys, your petitions*. Remember that *the Mass has infinite value*. Therefore, be generous in offering and in asking."

Behind the first Angels came others who had nothing in their hands; they were coming empty handed. The Virgin Mary said: "Those are the angels of the people who are here but never offer anything. They have no interest in living each liturgical

moment of the Mass, and they have no gifts to carry before the Altar of the Lord"

Notes

At the end of the procession came other angels who were rather sad, with their hands joined in prayer but with their eyes downcast. "These are the Guardian Angels of the people who are here, but do not want to be, that is to say, of the people who have been forced to come here, who have come out of obligation, but without any desire to participate in the Holy Mass. The angels go forth sadly because they have nothing to carry to the Altar, except for their own prayers."

"Do not sadden your Guardian Angel. *Ask for much, ask for the conversion of sinners, for peace in the world, for your families, your neighbors, for those who ask for your prayers.* Ask, ask for much, but not only for yourselves, but for everyone else.

"Remember that the offering which most pleases the Lord is when you offer yourselves as a holocaust so that Jesus, upon His descent, may transform you by His own merits. What do you have to offer the Father by yourselves? Nothingness and sin. But *the offering of oneself united to the merits of Jesus, that offering is pleasing to the Father.*" (private revelation to Catalina Rivas, approved by Bishop René Fernández Apaza and given his *imprimatur*)

13.1. the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with *golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints;* (Revelation 5:8-9)

13.2. Beloved, *do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God;* for many false prophets have gone out into the world...Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (cf. 1 John 4:1-6)

13.3. "[E]ven Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (2 Cor 11:14)

14. Hebrews 13:15 - Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (Hebrews 13:15)

For Prayer

THE PRAYER OF JESUS & THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

15. In the liturgy of the hours the Church exercises the priestly office of its Head and offers to God "without ceasing" a sacrifice of praise, that is, a tribute on lips acknowledging his name. This prayer is "the voice of a bride addressing her bridegroom; it is the very prayer that Christ himself, together with his Body, addresses to the Father." "All who render this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honor of Christ's Bride for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church, their Mother."

When the Church offers praise to God in the liturgy of the hours, it unites itself with that hymn of praise sung throughout all ages in the halls of heaven; it also receives a foretaste of the song of praise in heaven, described by John in the Book of Revelation, the song sung continually before the throne of God and of the Lamb. Our close union with the Church in heaven is given effective voice "when we all, from every tribe and tongue and people and nation redeemed by Christ's blood (see Rev 5:9) and gathered together into the one Church, glorify the triune God with one hymn of praise. (*General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, §15-16)