

Our Share in Christ's Priesthood

“This is how one should regard us (apostles), as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” —1 Cor 4:1

“But on some points I have written to you very boldly by way of reminder, because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” —Rom 15:15-16

“I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” —Rom 12:1-2

“Come to him (Christ), 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 Pet 2:1

“As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” —1 Pet 1:15-16

“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 forever and ever. Amen.” —Rev 1:5-6

Discussion Questions

1. **How is Christ a priest? What are some of the different ways we see Him living out His priestly mission?**
2. **What difference does Christ's priesthood make for us? How do we experience Him as priest?**
3. **How do we share in Christ's priesthood? How do ordained priests share in Christ's priesthood in one way, and all the baptized in another way?**
4. **How can we better live out Christ's priestly mission in our own lives?**

CHRIST THE PRIEST



Old Testament Background

God worked through three principal figures in the Old Testament to form His people: Priests, Prophets, and Kings. God forgave, blessed, and sanctified the people through priests. He exhorted and taught them through the prophets. He governed and served them through kings. In the Old Testament, then, we see that God Himself establishes the priesthood, in addition to later appointing kings and calling prophets. Melchizedek is an early priest of God Most High who blessed Abraham (Gen 14:17-24). Later on, the Levites, the descendants of Levi (one of the sons of Jacob, or Israel), were appointed to be a tribe of priests within the whole people of Israel (Ex 32:28-29). Within the Levites, the descendants of Aaron (brother of Moses) were appointed to be High Priests (Ex 39:1-30; Lev 8-9; 16:1-34). Priests offered worship to God on behalf of the people through animal and grain sacrifices, in the Tent of Meeting initially, and later in the Temple in Jerusalem. These sacrifices were a means for the people to find forgiveness and purification, to express adoration and thanksgiving to God, and to be faithful to, and grow in, their covenant relationship with God.

New Testament

Where do we see Christ's Priesthood being exercised?

- When He heals
- When He forgives sinners
- When He prays for His disciples and for us (Jn 17:20-21)
- In the Eucharist, at the Last Supper
- In the Cross, in offering Himself
- In the Ascension, He becomes ever-present to us as Priest
 - He is the principal priest at every Mass
 - He presides at every liturgy
 - He is present to us in the Sacraments and prayer
 - He heals, forgives, and sanctifies us through the Sacraments

Christ as Mediator:

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” —1 Tim 2:1-5 (see also Heb 9:15; 12:24)

Christ as High Priest:

“Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.” —Heb 2:17

“Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.” —Heb 3:1

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” —Heb 4:14-16

“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” —Heb 6:19-20

“The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” —Heb 7:23-25

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”
—Heb 10:14

“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with water. Let us hold fast the confidence of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

—Heb 10:19-25