

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Take-Home · Session 4 · The Throne of Grace · Hebrews 4:14–5:10

A Catholic Journey Through the Letter to the Hebrews

What We Found

Sympathy without sin, on a throne of grace. Tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning: he knows temptation's full weight because he never dropped it. Therefore: draw near with confidence (parrhēsia, bold and frank speech; the Catechism hears in it the confidence of a child at home, CCC 2778), for mercy and timely help.

A priest has a job description. From 5:1–4: chosen from among men; appointed to act for them before God; offering gifts and sacrifices for sins; dealing gently with the ignorant and wayward; and never self-appointed: called by God, as Aaron was.

The psalm contains an ordination. Psalm 110, read whole at last: the King enthroned in verse 1 is sworn a priest for ever in verse 4: two offices Israel's law kept firmly apart, from an order older than Levi, under a name from Genesis. The mystery stays sealed a little longer.

Gethsemane was already liturgy. In the days of his flesh he offered up prayers with loud cries and tears: the garden's agony described as a priestly offering, begun in the olive press and consummated on Calvary, and he was heard: through death, in resurrection.

Confession is the throne's embassy. The risen Christ sent men to forgive in his name (John 20:21–23); the confessor is the sacrament of the High Priest's gentleness: 4:16 with an address and office hours.

Voices of the Church

St. John Chrysostom *On the Priesthood*

To men God has given a power he gave neither to angels nor archangels: what priests do below, God ratifies above. The wonder is that the great High Priest shares his work with clay.

St. John Vianney *Catechetical Instructions*

The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus: when you see a priest, think of our Lord. The Catechism itself hands him the last word on the office (CCC 1589).

St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae*

On the cross, the offerer and the offered are one: Christ is both priest and victim, which is why his priesthood, sworn for ever, remains forever active. It did not retire at the Ascension; it reigns.

Live It This Week

1. Pray Hebrews 4:16 each morning as your approach: I draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, bringing the day's actual need, in time of need.
2. Go to confession this week if you can, or make the plan concrete: parish, day, time. Bring 5:2 in with you.
3. Read Hebrews 5:11–6:20 before next session, all the way to the last verse. Fair warning: the preacher will scold us, and then say something that has frightened readers for two thousand years. Read it anyway.

Scripture Memory Verse

HEBREWS 4:16 (RSV2CE)

“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.”

Before Next Session

Read Hebrews 5:11–6:20: the rebuke, the warning, and the anchor.

Catechism Connections

CCC 2778 (the boldness of children) · CCC 1465 (the priest, sign of the Father's mercy) · CCC 1589 (Vianney on priesthood) · CCC 612 (the agony in the garden)