

A GREAT HIGH PRIEST

Take-Home · Session 12 · We Have an Altar · Hebrews 13

A Catholic Journey Through the Letter to the Hebrews

What We Found

The summit cashes out at a front door. Brotherly love, hospitality (some have entertained angels unawares: Abraham at Mamre), prisoners remembered as if bound with them, marriage honored, and contentment funded by a promise: I will never fail you nor forsake you.

The hinge of everything. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever” (13:8): the Son through whom the ages were made, the intercessor appearing now, the priest for ever by oath. Leaders die and fashions mutate; the Priest does not.

The sin offering that became a meal. Yom Kippur’s sin offerings, the bull and the goat whose blood entered the sanctuary, were burned outside the camp, never eaten (Leviticus 16:27). Jesus suffered outside the gate, fulfilling the pattern: and gave his sacrifice as food, shattering it. We have an altar: the altar you eat from (CCC 1182).

Sacrifice did not end: atonement-by-us did. The road’s liturgy for the baptized priesthood: the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name: and doing good and sharing what you have: such sacrifices please God (13:15–16).

The inventory of a pilgrim people. A great high priest: an anchor behind the veil: a seated priest in the true tent: confidence to enter: a great priest over the house: an altar: and here, no lasting city. Everything for worship and pilgrimage: nothing for settling.

Voices of the Church

St. Ignatius of Antioch *Letter to the Philadelphians*

Be careful to observe one Eucharist: one flesh of our Lord, one cup, one altar, as there is one bishop. Within a generation of this sermon, the Church’s altar was a table she gathered at, and its oneness guarded her unity.

St. Augustine *The City of God*

Two cities, built by two loves: and the Christian a pilgrim of the city which is to come, using the earthly city’s peace without settling for it. Rome fell while he wrote, and the pilgrim people lost nothing truly theirs.

St. John Chrysostom *Homilies on Hebrews*

The sacrifice of praise needs no knife, no fire, no altar of stone: only a grateful heart and lips that confess: the one sacrifice a poor man can offer as magnificently as an emperor.

Live It This Week

1. Offer the two road sacrifices daily: praise out loud at least once a day, and one concrete planned act of doing good and sharing.
2. At Mass this Sunday, stand at 13:10 knowingly: the altar you have, the sin offering you eat: and bring the whole inventory to the rail.
3. Keep the multiplication commitment made tonight: leader, co-leader, study, start month: and pray Hebrews 13:20–21 daily for the ones who said yes.

Scripture Memory Verse

HEBREWS 13:8 (RSV2CE)

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.”

Before Next Session

There is no next reading: there is a next study, and some of you are leading it. Hebrews illuminated the sacrifice and the priesthood at the heart of the Mass; Revelation shows that worship from heaven's side of the veil.

Catechism Connections

CCC 1182 (the altar: cross and table) · CCC 1368 (the faithful's offerings united to Christ's) · CCC 2544–2547 (poverty of heart) · CCC 1544 (the study's first paragraph, now yours to teach)

THE STUDY'S LAST WORD · HEBREWS 13:20–21

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Twelve weeks, one Priest, and an altar you will stand at this Sunday. Go outside the camp: and take someone with you.