

Take-Home: Session 1

A Kingdom of Priests · Before There Were Priests

What We Found

The pattern of priesthood is older than Sinai; we traced it into a garden. Adam was placed in Eden "to till it and keep it," and we found that same Hebrew verb pair, 'abad (serve) and shamar (guard), describing the Levites' work in the sanctuary in Numbers 3:7 to 8. Before there was ever a temple, fathers like Abel, Noah, and Job offered sacrifice for their households. And at Sinai, God named the vocation of the whole people: "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). After the golden calf, that calling was not revoked; in the reading we traced together, it was wounded: the tribe of Levi was taken, in place of the first-born of every family, for sanctuary service under Aaron's priesthood. A priestly people, with a set-apart priesthood inside it. Hold that tension; this study is about what God does with it.

The Sealed Guess

MY GUESS *(write it, seal it, tell no one)*

Tonight we read one strange verse and refused to talk about it: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High" (Genesis 14:18).

A king, and a priest, who brings out bread and wine, centuries before Moses. Write your guess below: who is this man, and why bread and wine? Then fold this sheet closed. We will open our guesses together later in the study, and no, we will not tell you when.

My guess:

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH **St. John Chrysostom**

"The priesthood is exercised on earth, but ranks among heavenly institutions." A human being, standing on ordinary ground, handling holy things on behalf of others: that pattern is older than every temple.

On the Priesthood, Book 3

VOICE OF THE CHURCH **St. Ephrem the Syrian**

In his Hymns on Paradise, St. Ephrem portrays Eden in the language of a sanctuary: a holy mountain ascending by degrees, with the glory of God at its height, and Adam placed within it as one set apart for communion with God. (A summary of Ephrem's imagery rather than a single quotation.)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Leo the Great

St. Leo teaches, in substance, that all who are reborn in Christ share a royal and priestly dignity: the sign of the cross makes them a kingly people, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit consecrates them as priests. He was preaching to ordinary baptized Christians, people like you.

Sermon 4 (summary of Leo's teaching)

Live It This Week

- Each morning, before your feet hit the floor, offer the day to God in your own words: your work, your family, your frustrations. This is the priestly act of the baptized (the Church calls it a morning offering), and it is Exodus 19:6 in miniature.
- Once this week, out loud and alone if you like, pray for your household by name, interceding for each person the way Job offered for each of his children (Job 1:5).
- Reread Genesis 2 and 3 once, slowly, with a single question in mind: what here looks like a sanctuary?

Memory Verse

"and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Exodus 19:6 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Skim Exodus 28, the vestments of the high priest, and notice what he wears over his heart.

Catechism References

CCC 784; CCC 1539; CCC 1546 to 1547.