

Take-Home: Session 2

A Kingdom of Priests · A Kingdom Interrupted

What We Found

We stepped inside the priesthood God gave Israel. The high priest wore the names of the twelve tribes engraved on his shoulders (Exodus 28:12) and set over his heart, "to bring them to continual remembrance before the LORD" (Exodus 28:29): he never entered the sanctuary alone; he carried everyone. In the priestly blessing God dictated in Numbers 6, we found our garden word again: "The LORD bless you and keep you," shamar, the guard-word of Eden. The Levites kept guard around the sanctuary so that wrath would fall on no one. And on the Day of Atonement we heard the system quietly confess its own limit: the high priest had to offer for his own sins first, and the whole thing happened "once in the year," every year, with no finish line anywhere in the text. God gave it and honored it, and by design it never finished. We also faced the prophets' fire against empty ritual, and found Psalm 51 answering itself: God rejects worship without the heart, and still promises delight in "right sacrifices."

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Gregory the Great

In his Pastoral Rule, St. Gregory lingers over the high priest's breastpiece and teaches, in substance, that it is a standing lesson for every shepherd of souls: the one who goes before God for others must carry them engraved on his heart. (A summary of Gregory's teaching.)

Pastoral Rule, Book 2

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine

"A true sacrifice is every work done in order that we may cling to God in holy fellowship." What God rejected was never the altar; it was the ritual emptied of the offered life it was meant to carry.

City of God, Book 10, chapter 6

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas teaches that the ceremonies of the Old Law were true worship for their own time and prefigurations of Christ: nothing in the Levitical system was fake, and nothing in it was final. (Summary of his teaching on the ceremonial precepts.)

Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 102

Live It This Week

- Write down the names of five people you are responsible for or responsible to, and carry the list with you all week. Pray for them by name once a day. You are practicing Exodus 28.

- When your heart drifts into routine at Mass or prayer this week, stop and pray Psalm 51:17: "a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."
- Ask God's blessing over one person out loud this week using the words of Numbers 6:24 to 26.

Memory Verse

"The LORD bless you and keep you: The LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace."

Numbers 6:24 to 26 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Genesis 14:18 to 20 one more time. Keep your guess sealed.

Catechism References

CCC 1539 to 1541; CCC 433.