

Take-Home: Session 12

A Kingdom of Priests · A Kingdom of Priests

What We Found

We ended in heaven, and everything was there. John opens the Bible's last book singing our first memory verse over the persecuted Church as accomplished fact: he "made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father." In the throne room: the Lamb **STANDING**, as though slain, the risen Lamb bearing the marks of his once-for-all sacrifice at the center of a liturgy that never ends; twenty-four **ELDERS** (presbyteroi, the word we traced through Acts) enthroned around the throne; and golden bowls of incense "which are the prayers of the saints": your prayers, arriving as liturgy. The new song gathers every thread: ransomed from every tribe and tongue, "made them a kingdom and priests to our God." And the last two chapters return to the garden: the river, the tree of life, no more curse, gates that never shut because "nothing unclean shall enter": the serving and the guarding this study traced from Eden, kept at last in the Lamb, and his servants "shall see his face." We tested our whole method one final time and found that at every load-bearing joint, Scripture drew the connections and we discovered them with the texts open: "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." And we were sent: a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Teaching the newly baptized, St. Cyril says in substance: when the priest cries "Lift up your hearts," answer truly, for in that most awesome hour the heart belongs with God on high; and the Holy, Holy, Holy is the seraphim's own hymn, so that our song and heaven's are one. The Sunday liturgy participates in the heavenly liturgy (CCC 1090). (A summary of his mystagogical instruction.)

Mystagogical Catecheses

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Irenaeus of Lyons

"The glory of God is a living man, and the life of man is the vision of God." The end of the whole priestly story, from Eden's first charge to the last page, is a face seen, and human beings fully alive in the seeing.

Against Heresies, Book 4

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine

"There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end." The final sentence of the City of God describes the final state of the kingdom of priests: rest, vision, love, praise, without end.

City of God, Book 22, chapter 30

Live It: From Here On

- Keep the one practice you named at the commissioning for the next ninety days. Priesthood is a daily office, not a study topic.
- Next Sunday, enter Mass through Revelation's door: the throne, the Lamb standing as slain, the bowls of incense. Arrive early enough to remember where you are.
- Hand it on: invite someone specific into the next study, or lead one. "Entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2) is now yours, and the relay belongs to the whole priestly people, women and men alike.

Memory Verse

"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 for ever and ever. Amen."

Revelation 1:5 to 6 (RSV2CE)

Where to Go from Here

Read the Letter to the Hebrews straight through in one or two sittings; after these twelve weeks, it will read like a letter written to you. And keep the first memory verse where you can see it. It was never just Israel's vocation. It is your name: a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Catechism References

CCC 128 to 130; CCC 1090; CCC 1137 to 1139.