

In Their Midst

Session 8. A Kingdom of Priests

God did not bring Israel out merely to leave slavery behind. He brought the people to himself and gave them a covenant identity and way of life.

What We Found

At Sinai, grace comes before command. God reminds Israel that he defeated Egypt, carried the people, and brought them to himself before he gives any commandment. Obedience does not cause Israel's redemption; it is the fitting response of a people already delivered.

At Sinai Israel is named God's own possession, a priestly kingdom, and a nation set apart. These titles carry dignity and vocation together. Because all the earth belongs to God, election is not permission for superiority: God's people are set apart to belong to him, worship him, and make his saving deeds known.

The Church receives this priestly identity through Christ. Every baptized Christian truly shares in his priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission, while distinct forms of ministry within God's people all participate in the one mediation of Christ and never rival it.

Holy fear is not meant to leave us at a distance. It reveres God's majesty, trusts his purpose, takes his word seriously, and turns away from sin.

Voices of the Church

St. Justin Martyr, d. c. 165

Summary of his teaching: St. Justin argues that those who have believed through the name of Jesus, stripped of their sins as of filthy garments, are the true high priestly race of God, since God receives sacrifice only through his priests and a pure offering is now made among the nations.

Dialogue with Trypho 116.

How this is cited. Summary of St. Justin's argument in the cited chapter, not a quotation. The chapter applies Zechariah's vision of the high priest to Christians and leads on to the Eucharist as Malachi's pure offering.

For the group. Sinai's priestly identity is not left behind. Ask what it means that a whole people, and not only its ministers, is called priestly.

St. Augustine, 354-430

St. Augustine begins the Confessions by acknowledging that God made us for himself and that the human heart remains restless until it rests in him.

Confessions 1.1.1.

How this is cited. This is a faithful summary of the well-attested opening of the *Confessions*. Wording varies among English translations.

For the group. The deepest destination of deliverance is not merely a better circumstance, but communion with God.

St. John Paul II, 1920-2005

St. John Paul II teaches that through Baptism the lay faithful share in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. Their whole life becomes the place where this baptismal dignity is exercised.

Christifideles Laici 14.

How this is cited. This is a summary of the baptismal participation described in *Christifideles Laici* 14, not a direct quotation.

For the group. A royal priesthood is lived through worship, witness, holiness, work, relationships, and service.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. **Read before reacting:** On one day this week, slowly read Exodus 20:1-17. Begin with verse 2 and thank God for a specific act of grace before examining your obedience to any commandment.
2. **Practice a nightly covenant examen:** For three evenings, ask: Where did I receive God's gifts today? Where did I love God and neighbor faithfully? Where do I need mercy and a concrete change tomorrow?
3. **Exercise your baptismal priesthood:** Before work, class, caregiving, or service, deliberately offer that activity to God through Christ for one named person or need. At the end of the day, return it to God in thanksgiving.
4. **Choose reverence over avoidance:** If examination reveals serious or recurring sin, make a concrete plan to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation rather than remaining at a distance from God.

Scripture Memory

Exodus 19:4

"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself."

Exodus 19:4

Ready Response

Complete the sentence again after reading Sinai:

God brings his people out of slavery so that they can belong to him, live as his holy people, and share in his mission.

God's grace does not make obedience unnecessary. It makes covenant obedience possible and meaningful.

Go Further in the Catechism

- CCC 2056. The ten words belong to covenant revelation.
- CCC 2057. The Decalogue is read within the liberating exodus.
- CCC 2060-2061. The commandments belong to the covenant; moral life answers God's loving initiative.
- CCC 2062-2063. They express what belonging to God implies, spoken by God to each person.
- CCC 2066. Catholic tradition keeps the full Decalogue in St. Augustine's division.
- CCC 1546. All the baptized share in Christ's priestly office.
- CCC 1547. Common and ministerial priesthood differ and are ordered to one another.

Before next session. Read Exodus 20:22-24:18 before we meet again.