

In Their Midst

Session 11. Holy to the Lord

God orders worship, work, ministry, and rest so that a redeemed people may live in his holy presence.

What We Found

Aaron's vestments reveal responsibility rather than personal prestige. He bears Israel's names before the Lord, receives a ministry he did not invent, and must himself be washed, consecrated, and supported by sacrifice.

The sanctuary's incense, washing, sacred oil, and artistic work show that material creation can serve holy worship. God gives real skill to human craftsmen, but even sacred work remains under his command and must yield to Sabbath rest.

Aaron's priesthood was real but bounded, and it points beyond itself to Christ, whose priesthood does not end and whose offering is never repeated. Through Christ, the baptized become a priestly people. Ordained ministry does not compete with that priestly people. It serves them, sharing in Christ's one priesthood in its own way.

The purpose remains God's presence. Everything in these chapters serves one end. Israel was not freed merely to be elsewhere. God led them out in order to live in their midst, to hallow them, and to teach them that labour and rest are alike received from him.

Voices of the Church

St. Gregory the Great, c. 540-604

St. Gregory teaches that a spiritual shepherd should be exemplary in conduct, pure in thought, discerning in silence, helpful in speech, compassionate toward others, and rooted in contemplation. This is a summary of the chapter's portrait of pastoral holiness.

Pastoral Rule II.1-5.

How this is cited. This is a close summary of the portrait of the pastor drawn across Pastoral Rule II.1-5, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Sacred office is not permission to seek status. It calls the minister to a life shaped by the holiness he serves.

St. Leo the Great, c. 400-461

Summary of his teaching: St. Leo teaches that all who are reborn in Christ and signed with the cross share a royal and priestly dignity through the Holy Spirit.

Sermon 4.1.

How this is cited. Summary of the sermon's teaching on the royal and priestly dignity of all the baptized, not a quotation. St. Leo does not draw the common-and-ministerial distinction in this passage; that distinction is carried by this session's Catechism references instead.

For the group. Take the common priesthood of the baptized on its own terms here. The distinction from ordained ministry is made by the Catechism entries below, not by St. Leo in this sermon.

St. John Paul II, 1920-2005

St. John Paul II explains that the Sabbath recalls not only God's work of creation but also his saving liberation of Israel. Rest becomes remembrance, praise, thanksgiving, and covenant fidelity.

Dies Domini 16.

How this is cited. This is a faithful summary of Dies Domini 16 and its treatment of the Sabbath in relation to creation and the Exodus.

For the group. A holy day is more than recovery from work. It makes room to remember whose saving work gives us freedom.

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Prepare for Sunday Mass before arriving. Read the Sunday Gospel, choose clothing before the last minute, silence your phone, and arrive at least ten minutes early for prayer.
2. Keep a concrete period of Sunday rest. Set aside at least one hour from unnecessary work, shopping, or digital noise, and use it for worship, a shared meal, mercy, friendship, or quiet gratitude.
3. Offer one skill to God in service of another person or your parish. Choose a specific task, complete it carefully, and do not seek public credit.
4. Pray once this week for a priest by name, asking Christ to make him holy, humble, courageous, and faithful in serving God's people.

Scripture Memory

Exodus 31:13

"You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you."

Exodus 31:13

Go Further in the Catechism

- CCC 1539, 1541. God set apart the tribe of Levi for liturgical service, and the liturgy sees in Aaron's priesthood a prefiguring of ordained ministry.
- CCC 1546-1547. The common and ministerial priesthoods participate differently in Christ's one priesthood.
- CCC 1562-1563. Priests are co-workers of the bishops, sent to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate divine worship.
- CCC 2170-2171, 2175. The Sabbath recalls Israel's liberation from Egypt, is a sign of the covenant, and finds its Christian fulfillment in the Lord's Day.
- CCC 2502. Sacred art serves the mystery of God and leads toward worship.

Before next session. Read Exodus 32:1-34:35 before we meet again.