

Take-Home 8: A Priest Forever

What We Found

Before Levi ever existed, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, brought out bread and wine and blessed Abram (Genesis 14:18-20). We were precise: Genesis says brought out, not sacrificed; the Church's ancient tradition, prayed aloud in the Roman Canon, reads the gesture as the offering of your high priest Melchizedek. Psalm 110 then swears the Messiah into that order: you are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, the very psalm Jesus quoted about himself (Mark 12:35-37).

Hebrews 7 crowns him: a priest not by genealogy but by the power of an indestructible life, able for all time to save those who draw near through him, who offered up himself once for all. And we drew the inference with our own mouths: Hebrews sums up the old atonement offerings as the blood of bulls and goats (10:4); the Church has read Melchizedek's bread and wine as the mark of the Messiah's order; and on the night he was betrayed, the priest for ever took bread, and then the cup.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258)

In summary of *Letter 63*: the order of Melchizedek is seen in the sacrament of the Lord's sacrifice; as Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, offered bread and wine and blessed Abraham, so our Lord offered his own body and blood.

St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

In summary of the *City of God*: in Melchizedek there first appeared the sacrifice now offered to God by Christians throughout the whole world; for Augustine, that worldwide offering is Psalm 110's oath kept before the world's eyes.

The Roman Canon (the most ancient Eucharistic Prayer of the Roman rite)

Preserved in the Roman rite for well over a millennium: after the consecration, the priest asks God to accept these gifts as once he accepted the offering of your high priest Melchizedek, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim.

Live It This Week

- Pray Psalm 110 once this week, slowly, as Jesus's own psalm, and pause on verse 4 long enough to hear God swear.
- At Mass, when the priest extends his hands over the gifts, silently pray: priest for ever, offer me with yourself.
- Bless someone out loud this week, by name, invoking God, and mean it.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." **Psalm 110:4**

Before Next Session

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, St. Paul's fullest treatment of the Supper, and notice how seriously he takes what happens at that table.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1333, 1410, 1544.