

## PRAYER OF MANASSEH

on mountains (cf. Matt 14:23; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 5:16) and prayed in preparation for the most decisive and important moments of his ministry and life, including his baptism (Luke 3:21), the calling of the Twelve (Luke 6:12), his Transfiguration (Luke 9:28), and his Passion (Luke 22:41–45; cf. Matt 26:36–44). At the Last Supper, Jesus offered a long prayer of petition (John 17:1–26), and in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed the same prayer three times in a row (Matt 26:36–44). On the Cross, he prayed the set words of the Psalms (Ps 22:2; cf. Ps 31:5 in Luke 23:46). (See also **Parable; Seven Words from the Cross**.)

### B. Familiarity with God the Father

The prayer life of Jesus is marked by his use of the term “Abba” (Aramaic for “Father”) to convey his intimacy and familiarity with God (Mark 14:36). Jesus thus serves as the supreme model of how to pray (Matt 6:5–15; Luke 18:9–14), especially in times of trial and suffering (Heb 5:7). When the disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1), Jesus replied by teaching his disciples the **Lord’s Prayer**. He emphasized the need to approach God with faith: “whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24). We should pray too with a disposition always to be obedient to the will of the Father (Matt 7:21) and thereby to cooperate with the plan of salvation. Jesus also taught that faith in the Son serves as the greatest means to enter into knowledge of the Father; for Jesus is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

The prayer life of Jesus did not end when

he ascended into glory; for even there, at the right hand of the Father, he lives to make intercession for the saints on earth (Heb 7:25).

### C. Prayer in the Early Church

Early Christian prayer was offered in the name of Jesus (John 14:13; 1 Cor 1:2), confident that he was present among his disciples (Matt 18:20). Praying was done in a variety of contexts, both public and private: in the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 24:52; Acts 3:1), in people’s homes (Acts 2:46), in prisons (Acts 16:25), and even on house-tops (Acts 10:9). Calling upon the name of Jesus is likewise an integral part of liturgical and sacramental worship (Acts 2:38, 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11; Jas 5:14–15), and prayers of thanksgiving are clearly associated with the Christian celebration of the Eucharist (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 11:23–26).

Apostolic catechesis teaches that prayer should be continual (1 Thess 5:17) and offered with confident faith in the Lord’s ability to accomplish all things (Jas 1:5–8). It is likewise understood that one’s prayer life is interconnected with one’s moral life, for the prayers of the righteous are powerful (Jas 5:16), while the prayers of a sinner can be hindered (1 Pet 3:7, 12).

Theologically, the divine adoption of the believer in the Son and *through* the Spirit gives him or her access to the Father (Eph 2:18), whom he or she addresses on intimate terms as “Abba” (Rom 8:15–16; Gal 4:6). Not only that, but both Christ and the Holy Spirit are said to intercede for the faithful according to the will of God (Rom 8:26–27, 34).

**PRAYER OF MANASSEH** See *Manasseh*.

## PREACHING See *Kerygma*.

**PRESBYTER** See **Elder**; see also **Priest, priesthood**.

**PRIEST, PRIESTHOOD** A priest is an authorized mediator who offers sacrifice to God on behalf of others. Christ is the perfect priest, for he is perfectly united to God in his divinity and fully united to us in his humanity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

*Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the “one mediator between God and men” (2 Tim 2:5). The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, “priest of God Most High,” as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique “high priest after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 5:10; cf. Heb 6:20; Gen 14:18); “holy, blameless, unstained” (Heb 7:26), “by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb 10:14), that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross. (CCC 1544)*

### I. The Priesthood in the Old Testament

- A. The Patriarchal Period
  - B. Israel, a Nation of Priests
  - C. The Levitical Priesthood
- ### II. The Priesthood in the New Testament
- A. The Priesthood of Christ
  - B. The Common Priesthood of the Faithful
  - C. The Ministerial Priesthood

## I. THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

We can see two principal periods of priesthood in the Old Testament: the patriarchal

and the Levitical. The patriarchal period is detailed mainly in Genesis, and the Levitical period is presented in the rest of the Pentateuch and extends until the coming of Christ.

### A. The Patriarchal Period

There was no professional class of priests in the age before the Levitical priesthood. The foundation for the religion of the patriarchs was the natural family order. In this context, authority passed from father to son, and sacrifices were offered not at designated sites, but at the discretion of the patriarchs, who practiced a form of natural religion. Sacred actions included building altars (Gen 12:8), planting trees (Gen 21:33), offering sacrifice (Gen 8:20), and erecting pillars (Gen 28:11–22).

The origins of the priestly office, then, can be traced to the unique spiritual authority, representative function, and religious service of the father in the family. At the same time, the office of kingship was the embodiment of the father’s secular duties, most notably his role in leadership and governing. Thus priesthood is inseparable from fatherhood (cf. Job 1:5).

The archetype of the royal priesthood in the patriarchal period is **Melchizedek**, priest-king of Salem (i.e., Jerusalem; Ps 76:2). This mysterious figure is the first person in Scripture to be called a priest (Gen 14:17–20); he offers bread and wine to Abram (**Abraham**) and then gives his blessing to Abram and his men.

### B. Israel, a Nation of Priests

The OT traces the progress of sin and its terrible impact upon the human family—from Adam’s fall to Israel’s enslavement in Egypt,

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which is described in the beginning of Exodus. We see a consistent pattern throughout the story: tragedy and sin lead to firstborn sons being disinherited (e.g., Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, Er, Perez, Manasseh). The pattern in individuals would be repeated in Israel as a nation. Moses was told at the burning bush: "Israel is my firstborn son" (Exod 4:22). The importance of the firstborn is revealed in stark terms at Passover when Israel's firstborn sons are redeemed by the blood of the Paschal lamb. Thereafter, firstborn sons are consecrated to the Lord's service (Exod 13:2; 22:29).

God commands Israel, his "firstborn son," to embrace its unique vocation and mission to be a "holy nation and a royal priesthood," to be a mediator between the Father and the family of nations. That status, however, is entirely conditional (as the earlier examples of disinherited sons demonstrate) upon the adherence of Israel to the covenant: "If you obey my voice and keep my covenant you shall be my special possession" (Exod 19:5-6). The Israelites soon broke their fidelity to God by worshipping the golden calf, and the blessing of the firstborn was forfeited to the Levites when they avenged the Lord at the command of Moses (Exod 32:25-29; *see* Lev 1). This event signaled the beginning of a second period of the priesthood in the OT, the Levitical priesthood.

### C. The Levitical Priesthood

As the book of Exodus reveals, Israel's apostasy with the golden calf at Sinai required a renewal of the covenant—first with Moses alone (Exod 33-34), but then extended to Israel with

the command to build a **Tabernacle** and consecrate **Aaron** as high priest (Exod 35-40). God only then commanded Moses to speak to Israel about the types of sacrifice (burnt, sin, peace) that Aaron and his sons would be instructed to offer on the people's behalf according to the priestly code (Lev 1-16). Finally, the holiness code was given for the Levitical priests to instruct the twelve lay tribes of Israel (Lev 17-26).

The result was an elaborate system of priestly mediation based on the hierarchical order of Moses, Aaron (and his sons), the Levites, and the twelve tribes of Israel. In the OT, this same priestly hierarchy (high priest, Aaronic priests, and Levites) continued (with some minor variations) throughout the history of Israel: the wilderness period, the conquest and settlement of Canaan, the monarchy, and the period after the Exile.

The result of Israel's second lapse into idolatry at Beth-peor (Num 25:1-13) was the imposition of the Deuteronomic covenant on the twelve tribes on the plains of Moab, the site of their new apostasy (Deut 3:29; 4:3). When the Deuteronomic covenant was ratified, a two-covenant structure was instituted over the twelve tribes (Josh 8:30-35). By its terms, Israel was placed under the administrative supervision of the Levites (Deut 27:9-26). The Levites for their part were bound by "the covenant of Levi" (Jer 33:17-26; Mal 2:4-8), which was made with them by Moses at Sinai after the incident of the golden calf. The Levitical covenant was then renewed with the grandson of Aaron, **Phinehas**, at the end of Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Phinehas was granted a "covenant of a perpet-

ual priesthood" in recognition of his righteous zeal in avenging the second generation's idolatrous worship of Baal of Peor (Num 25:13).

In the time after the settlement of Canaan, the renewed covenant continued to exercise influence on the shape of the OT priesthood, climaxing with the collapse of Eli's priestly house (1 Sam 2:27-36), the expulsion of Abiathar as high priest (1 Kgs 2:26-35), and the subsequent elevation of **Zadok** as high priest in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 2:35). Crucial in this development was proving genealogical descent from Phinehas, something possessed by Zadok (1 Chr 6:4-8) but missing in Eli and Abiathar (1 Sam 22:9-20). The Zadokite high priesthood in the Jerusalem Temple became one of the most distinctive features of the Davidic monarchy, at which time the Levites were given specialized ministries within the Temple (as liturgical musicians, singers, guardsmen, treasurers, etc.; 1 Chr 9:22-34; 23:2-28).

The importance of Israel's high priests after the Exile is foreshadowed in Ezekiel's visions of the restoration of Jerusalem under the (Zadokite) high priest (Ezek 43-45). This situation is one means of explaining Zechariah's seemingly incongruous description of the royal crowning of the high priest **Joshua** (Zech 6:9-13), instead of **Zerubbabel**, the Davidic descendant who played a pivotal role in the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 5:2).

Further, this view is seen in the praise reserved by Sirach for the priestly figures from Aaron down to the high priest of his day, Simon, who is honored as "the leader of his brothers and the pride of his people" (Sir 50:1). Sources outside the Bible further portray the Messiah as a combination of Davidic kingship

and high priestly authority (7 Sir 7:13; *T. Lev* 2:10-11, 5:2, 8:2-15; cf. Ps 110:1-4). Messianic expectations and views of first-century A.D. Jewish Christians were seemingly influenced by this outlook, and the author of Hebrews makes it the basis of his argument concerning Christ's royal high priesthood "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 7).

The Zadokite high priesthood endured in Jerusalem until Antiochus IV Epiphanes (*see* Seleucids) deposed Onias II in 175 B.C. and replaced him with **Jason** († 175-172 B.C.). The Seleucid rulers then appointed non-Zadokites until they were defeated in 153 B.C. by the Hasmoneans, who continued the non-Zadokite rule until the Roman conquest in the first century B.C. The subsequent appointment of high priests was done only with the approval of the Herodian kings and the authority of Rome. This custom lasted until the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in A.D. 70. With that event the last vestiges of the Levitical priesthood—and the Old Covenant—were extinguished (CCC 63, 1539-43). (*See Redemption: Sacrifice*.)

## II. THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

With the coming of Christ as God's firstborn Son (Heb 1:6), and royal High Priest (Heb 2:2-17; 5:1-10), the division of royal and priestly powers was brought to an end. By establishing his Church as "the assembly of the firstborn" (Heb 12:23), Christ reunited the offices of priesthood and kingship and restored the "royal priesthood" (1 Pet 2:9) of God's people, who now constituted the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16).

The priesthood of Jesus must be seen in

light of the OT priesthood, and the full understanding of the New Testament priesthood should begin with the patriarchal period and the place of the firstborn son. Luke 2:7 refers to Jesus as the “firstborn,” which indicates that Jesus is entitled to receive all of the rights and status of the firstborn under Mosaic Law (cf. Exod 13:2; Deut 21:15–17). It may be significant that, when Jesus was presented in the Temple (Luke 2:22), the redemption fee of five shekels (by which a Levite replaced a firstborn son in service to the Lord; Num 8:15–16) is not mentioned. If so, it indicates that Jesus is consecrated to the service of the Lord instead of being “bought back” by his parents. We would then see Jesus in the role of a priest by virtue of being a first son in the patriarchal sense.

#### A. *The Priesthood of Christ*

The Letter to the Hebrews gives us the fullest treatment of Christ’s priesthood in the NT. According to its author, the priesthood of Jesus is defined in relation to the Levitical priesthood of Aaron, to which it is superior in every essential respect. Jesus is the *sinless* priest (Heb 4:15), whereas the Aaronic priests are sinners and must offer sacrifices for themselves as well as the people (Heb 5:1–3). Jesus is the *everlasting* priest (Heb 7:24), whereas the Aaronic priests are mortal and must be replaced by an endless line of successors (Heb 7:23). Jesus is the *heavenly* High Priest (Heb 4:14; 8:1–2), whereas the priests of the Old Covenant ministered in a sanctuary on earth (Heb 8:4–5). Jesus is the *royal* priest promised by oath in the Messianic Ps 110:4 (Heb 5:6; 7:17), whereas the Levitical priests took office without any oath at all (Heb 7:21).

As the more perfect priest, Christ offers the Father a more perfect sacrifice than any priests of the Levitical order could. Christ’s sacrifice was offered once for all (Heb 10:10), in contrast to the continual cycle of sacrifices required under the Old Covenant (Heb 10:11). The reason is that Christ’s sacrifice brought about a true remission of sins (Heb 9:11–14, 28; 10:12–18), in contrast to the Levitical offerings, which served as reminders of sin but were incapable of removing sins (Heb 10:4, 11).

The backdrop for these claims is the belief that Jesus belonged, not to the priestly order of Aaron, but to the patriarchal order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6; 6:20). This idea is developed in Heb 7, and is based on Psalm 110, which envisions the *Messiah* both as an enthroned King (Ps 110:1) and as a Melchizedekian priest (Ps 110:4). The idea is that Christ belongs to the original order of priesthood that was exercised in pre-Levitical times.

This explains why the author of Hebrews puts such stress on the sonship of Jesus in relation to his priesthood (Heb 2:10; 5:5–10). In particular, he emphasizes that Christ is the “firstborn” of the Father (Heb 1:6), who stands in relation to believers as both a brother (Heb 2:11–12) and a father figure (Heb 2:13–14). It is even possible that Melchizedek, who is both a forerunner and a *type* of Christ, was viewed in such terms by the author and original readers of Hebrews, who would have known that Jewish tradition identified Melchizedek with *Shem*, the firstborn son of Noah (see *Melchizedek*).

Other aspects of Melchizedek’s priesthood point to Christ as well. For instance, Melchizedek was the priest-king of Salem (Heb

7:1), which is an ancient name for Jerusalem or Zion (Ps 76:2). This priesthood-kingship of Melchizedek prefigures the royal priestly ministry of Jesus in the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22). So, too, just as Melchizedek the priest brought forth bread and wine (Gen 14:18), Christian reflection sees a prefiguration of the Eucharist, the sacrificial meal that Christ offers believers under the appearance of bread and wine (Matt 26:26–29).

#### B. *The Common Priesthood of the Faithful*

Christ, as High Priest and mediator, has made the Church “a kingdom, priests to his God and Father” (Rev 1:6). He has restored and fulfilled in himself the family priesthood of the firstborn, the vocation to which Israel was called, by sharing in that firstborn sonship and priesthood (cf. Exod 4:22; 19:6).

The people of God thus share in the dignity of Christ’s priesthood through their baptismal participation in his mission as priest, prophet, and king, according to their individual vocations (1 Pet 2:5–9). By grace, the Church shares in the sonship of Christ, and thus shares also in his priestly mission. The Church is entrusted with the vocation that had been intended for Israel among the nations (CCC 897–903).

#### C. *The Ministerial Priesthood*

The second participation of the faithful in the priesthood of Christ is through the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood. The two forms of participation are ordered one to the other, as *Lumen Gentium* teaches (§10), but they are essentially different (in kind and not simply in degree). The common priesthood of the

faithful is exercised through baptismal grace, whereas the ministerial priesthood serves and sanctifies the faithful and is passed on by the sacrament of holy orders.

Jesus chose the twelve apostles to serve as the heads of the new People of God (Matt 19:28; Rev 21:12–14). As sharers in the one priesthood of Christ, itself of the order of Melchizedek, the apostles were to serve as the priestly firstborn sons, acting as elder brothers and fathers to the communities under their charge (cf. Acts 15:23; 1 Cor 4:15). In turn, the apostles appointed to succeed them elders or presbyters over the churches they had founded (Acts 14:23). Strictly speaking, the NT does not refer to Christian ministers as “priests” (Greek *hierais*) but as “bishops” (Greek *episkopoi*) and “presbyters” (Greek *presbyteroi*). Nevertheless, it is from this latter term that the English word “priest” is actually derived.

By virtue of the sacrament of holy orders, the priest acts in the person of Christ, the Head of the Church. As Thomas Aquinas wrote, “Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ” (*Summa theologiae* III 22. 4c). Ordained ministers make the presence of Christ as Head of the Church visible to the community. As Pope John Paul II wrote in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*:

*In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd, authoritatively proclaiming his Word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation, particularly in Baptism, Penance and the*

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*Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock . . . In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the Head and Shepherd. (S15)*

From the very beginning, bishops and presbyters of the Christian community offered the sacraments, taught and proclaimed sound doctrine, and governed as shepherds. By their ordination, they participated in the universal mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. They were empowered not only to be at the service of the community but also to participate in the universal mission of salvation for the whole world (Acts 1:8). The exercise of priestly ministry is always measured against the supreme model of Christ (Mark 10:43-45; 1 Pet 5:3) (CCC 1544-68). (See also **Eucharist: Sacrifice**.)

**PRINCIPALITIES** A translation of the New Testament term *archai* used by Paul to designate angelic beings, usually in close conjunction with powers. Principalities are one of several angelic orders mentioned in Scripture, including *exousiai* ("authorities"), *archontes* ("rulers"), *thronoi* ("thrones"), and *kyriotates* ("dominions"). According to Eph 6:12, principalities and powers are numbered among the evil spirits that pose a threat to believers. They are enemies of humanity, but their influence has been shattered by Christ. Similar notions appear in Eph 1:21, Col 2:15, and 1 Pet 3:21. Traditional names for angelic beings also appear in Old Testament pseudepigrapha such

as 1 Enoch 61:10; 2 Enoch 20:1; and T. Sol. 20:15. (See also **Demon**.)

**PRISCA** See **Priscilla**.

**PRISCILLA** Also Prisca, the wife of Aquila, both of whom were associates of the apostle Paul. Prisca and Aquila were early converts to the Christian faith and moved to Corinth after being expelled from Rome by a decree of Emperor Claudius (Acts 18:2). They gave welcome to Paul in Corinth, and the apostle labored alongside them as a tentmaker (Acts 18:2-3). Eventually the couple moved on to Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19) and then back to Rome (Rom 16:3-5). Prisca and Aquila were known to have generously opened their home to host Christian assemblies (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19).

**PRISON** In the ancient world, being held in prison was not usually a punishment in itself; rather, a prisoner was detained in prison while he awaited trial or execution. The first prison mentioned in Scripture is the one where Joseph was confined in Egypt (Gen 39:20). Joseph's brothers were also detained in a similar manner (Gen 42:17, 19). Samson was held in prison by the Philistines (Judg 16:21, 25).

Prophets who earned the enmity of rulers were placed under various forms of detention. Jeremiah was held in the guardroom of the palace (Jer 37:2; 37:21), the dungeon of the secretary of Jonathan (Jer 37:15), and an outdoor cistern, filled with sludge (Jer 38:6). Hanani was also imprisoned (2 Chr 16:10), as was Micahiah (1 Kgs 22:27; 2 Chr 18:26). For the vanquished, including kings, defeat was

followed by a period of incarceration: Hoshai was held by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17:4), Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 25:27), and Zedekiah by the Babylonians (Jer 52:11).

In the New Testament, John the Baptist was imprisoned before his execution, probably in the fortress of Machaerus (Matt 11:2, 14:3; Luke 3:20). The apostles were held in a public prison at the command of the chief priests (Acts 5:18-19). Paul was held prisoner at various places (Acts 16:24; 22:24; 23:35), but once he had arrived in Rome he was permitted to live in his own lodgings, although a soldier was chained to him at all times (Acts 28:16; 30). Paul wrote that being an apostle brought the danger of imprisonment (2 Cor 6:5).

**PROCHORUS** One of the seven men who were chosen to care for the poor widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1-5).

**PROCONSUL** The governor of a Roman province; by the time of the New Testament, the proconsul was normally the governor of a senatorial province (as compared to the governor of an imperial province, which was under the direct authority of the emperor). Senatorial provinces were so designated under the imperial reorganization undertaken by Augustus (r. 27 B.C.-A.D. 14); these provinces did not require a Roman military presence. Several proconsuls are mentioned in the NT: L. Sergius Paulus of Cyprus (Acts 13:7-12) and L. Junius Gallio of Achaea (Acts 18:12-17).

**PROCURATOR** The governor, usually of equestrian rank, who was posted to a province

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of lesser rank in the Roman Empire (originally called a "prefect"). The most notable such provinces were Judea, Thrace, Rhaetia, Noricum, and Mauretania. A procurator might also be a financial officer or a personal representative of the emperor; hence the etymology of the word from the Latin *pro*, "on behalf of" and *curro*, "to care for." The procurator was usually under the authority of the nearest provincial governor; in the case of Judea, the procurator answered to the governor of Syria. The duties of the procurator included maintaining order, collecting taxes, and keeping tranquil relations with local religious leaders. In Judea, the procurator also had direct authority over capital cases and was responsible for appointing the high priest. Three procurators are mentioned by name in the New Testament: Pontius Pilate (Matt 27:2), Antonius Felix (Acts 23:26), and Porcius Festus (Acts 24:27).

### PROCURATORS OF JUDEA (A.D. 6-66)

Coponius (r. 6-9)  
M. Ambivivus (r. 9-12)  
Annus Rufus (r. 12-15)  
Valerius Gratus (r. 15-26)  
Pontius Pilate (r. c. 26-36)  
Marcellus (r. 36-37)  
Marullus (r. 37-41)  
Cuspius Fadus (r. 44-46)  
Tiberius Alexander (r. 46-48)  
Ventidius Cumanus (r. 48-52)  
Antonius Felix (r. 52-60)  
Porcius Festus (r. 60-62)  
Albinus (r. 62-65)  
Gessius Florus (r. 65-66)