

Priest, Prophet, and King

May is a very sacrament-heavy time of year. So, if you happen to see a little second grader around who looks like they're dressed for First Communion, make sure to ask them if they've received their First Communion and congratulate them. They've been instructed that the first time they attend a Sunday Mass after First Communion, they are to wear their best. So if you see them around, make sure you ask, compliment them, and tell them what a great thing it is.

Likewise, we have a little over forty youth preparing for Confirmation. They had their retreat yesterday, along with about ten adults, and they'll be confirmed by the Archbishop in a combined celebration at St. John Vianney a week from Thursday. So please keep them in prayer as well.

Yesterday we had the Confirmation retreat for the youth, and I led them in a prayer experience in which I had them pray with and for each other. Let's just say some surprising things happened that surprised them. One of them at the end said, "Hey Father, do you have to be a priest to do that?"

I said, "Well, actually, I didn't do it. I led you guys, but you guys prayed with each other," which is very true. But what I should have said, if I were sharp enough in the moment—I was kind of tired—what I should have said, which would have been more of a banger, is: you are a priest.

Do you guys know that you are a priest? Every single one of you, by your Baptism, is a priest.

I'm going to explain more about what that means and how it relates to the challenge for today. But every single one of the baptized, as we hear especially when children are anointed with chrism on the top of their head toward the very end of Baptism, before they get the candle, are declared to be priest, prophet, and king.

Now, just briefly, because I'm going to focus on how and in which way you are a priest, and how you're called to exercise your priesthood: in general, the baptized is a prophet in that each of the baptized is called to preach the Gospel.

You guys may look at me and say, "Hey, Father, that's your job." I'm like, "No, no, no, it's really your job."

As a prophet, you are called to preach the Gospel. What that looks like is going to be very different for each one of us. We're members of the Body of Christ, which I'll get to in terms

of Peter's image today, but we're part of the Body of Christ. We all have a different role, but each of us has the obligation to preach the Gospel.

Certainly to one's children. If you have kids, you're called to inculcate the Gospel. But also in the community. How do you preach the Gospel? It's mostly shown by how we live and our openness to expressing the importance of our faith in public and in our workplaces. It's not so much that you're going to get up on a chair in your office building and start saying, "God so loved the world that He sent His only Son. Repent and believe in the Gospel." Probably not very effective in your workplace. You might get fired. But there are effective means by which all of us preach the Gospel.

The baptized is also a king in Christ. As king, it does mean that to some degree we have dominion over all of creation, including the evil spirits. In that way, you're king in the Lord Jesus. But mostly, the way this is lived out is that in the Old Testament, a king's primary duty, other than ruling, is taking care of the poor. That is one of a king's primary key responsibility areas: to care for the poor and the vulnerable. And so as a king or queen, if you want to think of it that way, you are called in a way proper to your calling to care for the needs of the poor and the vulnerable. The Church calls this the preferential option for the poor that we're supposed to have in our hearts.

Finally, priesthood: in what way you are a priest.

Living Stones in the Body of Christ

Before getting at it, let's talk about our letter from St. Peter, because the entire passage is talking about your priesthood, your baptismal priesthood.

Peter uses the image, if you heard it, of the stone that is rejected, which is the Lord Jesus, who is rejected but is raised up and becomes a living stone in His Resurrection: the cornerstone, the most important stone, and a stone in a way nothing else is. Then Peter goes on to say that by coming to the living stone, to Jesus, you go essentially from being a dead stone, nothing better than a piece of masonry somewhere, to a living stone.

As a living stone, you are shaped and placed into this building that God is building. We can call it the Body of Christ. It's a slightly different image, but it fits. And for a stone to be fit into a building, we're not talking about bricks that are pre-made. We're talking about stones. If you've ever seen buildings in the Holy Land, you know what this looks like. They're these huge stones that are fit.

So what has to happen before a stone can be fit? It has to be shaped. It has to be sanded. It has to be chipped away. It's not very fun.

But for us to really fit into the Body of Christ where we're supposed to be, we have to allow the Lord to work on us. We have to allow Him to chip away that which is not good. We have to be sanded. And it's not real fun. But if we're going to take our role in the Body of Christ—and all of us have a role that's unrepeatable—we have to submit ourselves to some degree to the Lord's gentle chiseling of us, which we do by works of virtue and by sacrifice.

That brings us to priesthood.

Again, living stone: raised up, rejected, but becoming the cornerstone, the living stone. We become living stones by coming to Him, being raised from death to life in Baptism. And then there is a process of fitting us into where we fit in the Body of Christ.

Then Peter takes it further and says within this building—he's kind of shifting the image, which happens in Scripture all the time—within this building, within this temple, the priests, which is all of you and me as well, but we're talking about the ordinary baptismal priesthood that I share with you, offer spiritual sacrifices to the Lord.

So what does a priest do? A priest offers sacrifice and intercedes for others. That's it. That's the job of a priest. He offers sacrifice—or she, in this case—and the priest intercedes to God for others.

That is your role as a priest. You make sacrifices, and you are able, as those Confirmation students experienced, to intercede for each other, because they were priests by their Baptism.

The Morning Offering and the Sacred Heart

What does this look like? It looks different for everyone, but I want to close it out by giving you a heads up about a major initiative that the Archbishop is undertaking as a spiritual thing for our diocese. This is going to start rolling out in a couple weeks, and it fits perfectly with what I'm talking about.

The Archbishop wants us, as an archdiocese, to focus on the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In particular, he wants the diocese to focus on devotion to the Sacred Heart by the recovering of the Morning Offering.

Older Catholics may remember the Morning Offering, which talks about consecrating all of our prayers, works, joys, and sacrifices through the Sacred Heart of Jesus in union with the Sacrifice of the Mass.

That's the way that I'm a priest that you're not. I lead this sacrifice so you can unite yourselves to the sacrifice. And I do the same on my baptismal level, even as I do it on a ministerial level: offering our prayers, works, joys, and sufferings to the Lord.

What are our prayers, works, joys, and sufferings? Essentially everything. It's all of our daily work. It's all of our prayer. It's all of what we care about with our heart. And as we offer ourselves to the Lord, He sands us very gently. He continues to shape us. As we offer ourselves to Him, He continues to shape us little by little and very gently into the living stone we are called to be in the Body of Christ, so that we, on behalf of the world, on behalf of our families, and on behalf of ourselves, may glorify God more and more.

Challenge for the week. You don't have to pray the Morning Offering if you don't already. Apparently, we're going to get inundated with prayer cards from the diocese—which is a good thing—with the Morning Offering. But simply this week, my challenge or ask is that just for this week, every morning you simply say: “Lord, I offer myself to You this day. I offer my life to You this day, and may I glorify You in all I do.”

Praise be Jesus Christ.