

## **Your Duty as Priests**

‘Pat went to confession. He told the [Catholic] priest that he had committed adultery. The priest asked him who with. Pat wouldn’t answer. “Was it the widow Kelly, Katie O’Brien, or that young O’Leary girl?” Father Mulcahey asked. Pat assured the good Father that it was none of these. Later in the day, [Pat’s friend] Mike asked, “Pat, did you get absolution from the priest?” “No, but I got three good prospects”.’

Somehow, I don’t think that’s how it’s supposed to work. Priests aren’t in the business of providing sin options. “Pat” allegedly went to the priest for absolution. Seems like he went on false pretenses. We’ll give poor Father Mulcahey the benefit of the doubt, but we should know what priests actually do. For, we just read clearly in I Peter 2:9, “You are royal priests”. I don’t know how much each of you thinks of yourself this way, but as I look over the lot of you, at first glance there doesn’t appear to be much priestly material out there! But in my mirror, I don’t see much there, either! Yet that is what Peter audaciously declared. Of course, it wasn’t him, but Holy Spirit speaking through him. Thus if we need someone to blame, we can’t take it out on Peter, for he was just the messenger! We have to blame God!

But even our own church bulletins, every Sunday no less, in

the top line of the duty roster they say: “Ministers: The People of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church”. Unbelievable it seems, yet it’s no mistake. But that’s not the end. For I Peter 1:9 doesn’t stop there. Before and after it says: “you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession”. Several critical things here we need to note before we go on.

First, Peter says we’re a chosen people. Now, we know who the Chosen People are, right? The Jews, the descendants of Jacob, the son of Abraham’s miraculous son of God’s promise, Isaac. God renamed Jacob, Israel, and now this entire people group is called “Jews”. But here it seems that God has chosen us, too. No way do we displace the Jews as the Chosen People, but we are brought into them, to add to them, as God’s Chosen.

Then, because we are a chosen people, we have certain duties and characteristics as befits God’s chosen. Peter next cites the most important duty—royal priests. Meaning we’re a royal priesthood. Compare and contrast us, God’s new royal priesthood with the priesthood God established in Moses and his brother Aaron. In the first four centuries, God Himself was king over the Israelites. And the priesthood itself encompassed the entire tribe of Levites. Unlike the other tribes of Israel, the Levites were unique. They received no land grants. They did not farm or raise livestock. Their sole duty was to minister to God. All the work and affairs of seeing to the people’s worship of God fell on them. They set up and took down the Tabernacle, they transport-

ed it, they maintained it. They managed all the rituals of worship in the later Temple. They led the worship, the music, the singing. They received the offerings, the sacrifices. They assisted the priests in everything. The priests were also Levites, but only direct descendants of Aaron could serve as priests. And among the priests, the point man was the chief priest, who oversaw all the other priests and the rest of the Levites in all the work of the worship of God. The whole tribe of the Levites did nothing else. It was up to the other eleven tribes of the Israelites to support the Levites. The other eleven tribes provided the Levites their food, housing, protection, and living. It was part of the people's worship of God, to support those who ministered to God on their behalf.

But the Levites were not "royal". The chief priests, all descended from Aaron the first high priest, were not "royal" either. When God granted through the last judge, the great prophet Samuel, Israel's first king Saul, there was no monarchy. No royal family. There was a clear distinction here. Priests were not kings, and kings, royalty, were never priests. One of King Saul's most noteworthy sins was when he handled the offerings of God, work which only the priests could do. Saul was reprimanded for it. It became one of the reasons why the kingship was wrested away from his line and given to David. After Saul's death, the kingship passed to David, and the Davidic dynasty physically lasted for the next four hundred years. Though no longer ruling over an independent Jewish kingdom, David's royal line continued, and, as we

know, the descendants culminated in the Messiah, Jesus. So, when Pontius Pilate put the sign on Lord Jesus' cross, identifying Him as the "King of the Jews", it was actually true. Though not politically so, not in worldly affairs, it was nonetheless the true reality. For King Herod the Great was not of the royal line. Lord Jesus, was truly the restoration of the royal line of King David. And since Christ Jesus lives forever, He is the final and forever king of the royal line of David. So, Christ Jesus is King, eternally.

Which is why Peter then calls us a "royal" priesthood, meaning that we, having been bought, covered, washed, immersed in, and partakers of, the Blood of Christ, indeed every Sunday during Holy Communion, are revealed to be "descendants" of Christ Jesus the King. So we are royal! We are "of the blood"! So that means that we're of the royal court, the royal household. We live, will live eternally, in the King's palace. That's why He told us that He is preparing places for each and every one of us.

But Peter says we're a royal "priesthood". If we get our roy-  
al-ness, our "blue blood", from Christ Jesus, then it follows that we must also receive our commission and ordination as priests from Him as well. But if so, then how was Christ Jesus a priest? We've seen how from the beginning of the Hebrew Israelites, there was originally only a priesthood. Only later came a monarchy, and they were strictly separate. How is Christ both the forever king, as well as a priest? As priests were intermediaries between the people and God, it's plainly obvious that Lord Jesus

acted as our high priest forever, but how could He be one if He wasn't a descendant of Aaron? Well, the answer to that is that He couldn't. What? Why? Because the priesthood of Aaron was part of the Old Testament, the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant required the continual offering of animal sacrifices to *cover* the ongoing sins of the humans. But Christ was not an animal. He was one of us. He sacrificed Himself, shedding His blood, willingly, to become the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin, for all who will repent of their sin, forever. Christ Jesus, by virtue of His death and resurrection, inaugurated the New Testament, the New Covenant. The New Covenant totally fulfills the Old Covenant, so that the Old Covenant is now over and done with. It is replaced and consummated by the New Covenant. Since the need for the covenants arose because of the original sin of the first man, Adam, which is *before* the Chosen People ever came to be, Christ Jesus' actions as priest had to also predate the Old Covenant.

Which is why, we see plainly in the Book of Hebrews 7:17, 21, 24-25, that Lord Jesus is proclaimed to be of a much older order of priests, not of Aaron and the Levites which wouldn't exist for another six hundred years, but a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek". That statement itself is quoted from Psalm 110:4. So Christ Jesus is our high priest and king of all, forever and ever. Which explains why Peter describes us as "royal priests". He goes on to declare that we are "a holy nation", "God's very own possession". Which, incidentally, also describes the

Jews, the Chosen People of God, specifically those who believe and trust in Him. To be “God’s very own possession” is an immensely comforting state of being. To belong to God means that nothing can harm us. God will protect His own for all eternity. What does Christ Jesus call us in John 17:9-11, while praying to Father God? He said, “My prayer is not for the world, but for those You have given Me, because they belong to You. All who are Mine belong to You, and You have given them to Me, so they bring Me glory. Now I am departing from the world; they are staying in this world, but I am coming to You. Holy Father, You have given Me Your name; now protect them by the power of Your name so that they will be united just as We are”. So Lord Jesus is here praying for us. Just as Hebrews 7:25 says of Him, “He always lives to make intercession for them”, that is, us.

If Christ Jesus, as forever high priest, is always interceding for us, then we, as priests in His order, must be doing likewise. Namely, always interceding for each other, and most especially, for those Christ Jesus came to die to save: those who have yet to accept His gift of salvation. And if we’ve been watching the news for the last week or so, we can see just how many of them there are, and how very confused and blinded they are. Their need of being prayed for is immense. Our number one duty, then as priests for them, is to pray, to intercede, for them. Truly, if peaceful streets serve our own self-interest, then we will, by all means, pray for them. Now, in 2020, more than ever. It’s your duty.

