

Priest as a Minister of the Liturgy and Sacrament of Holy Order

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Abstract

This article discusses about “priest as a minister of the liturgy and the sacrament of the Holy Order”. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the continuation of Jesus Christ's priesthood, which He bestowed upon His Apostles. This is why the Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the Sacrament of Holy Orders as "the sacrament of apostolic ministry." "Ordination" comes from the Latin word *ordinatio*, which means to incorporate someone into an order. In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, a man is incorporated into the priesthood of Christ at one of three levels: the episcopate, the priesthood, or the diaconate. This research method uses a library research approach with an analytical method which aims to deepen the study of the situation priesthood history in the Old Testament and in the New Testament priesthood. This article also contributes to strengthening the value of priest in Catholic religious teachings, thus encouraging the people that priest is the mediator between people and Jesus in society.

Keywords: Priest, Liturgy, Old Testament, New Testament

INTRODUCTION

“The Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus. As St. Jean Vianney said “When you see a priest, think of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Priesthood is the eternal power and authority of our Heavenly Father. It is the means where the Lord acts through men to save souls. One of the defining features of the Church of Jesus Christ, both anciently and today, is His authority. There can be no true Church without divine authority. Priests are privileged to act in the liturgy in the very person of Christ, on behalf of his people, pronouncing the most sacred prayers of our faith, presiding over the celebration of the sacred mysteries, explaining God's Word and feeding God's people on the body and blood of Christ. This article examines scripture as a source for inspiration and relation to the priesthood. We contain an exegesis of a key passage that, uses priestly imagery and then reflects on the passage in its context and looks for implications regarding Old and New Testament priesthood, especially the cultic, servant leader and apostolic dimensions.

First of all, I will explore the etymological meaning and historical development of priesthood in ancient context of both the Old Testament and the Christian tradition. The priesthood in Israel and the LXX uses various terminologies for priests such as: *heireus*, *kohen*, *kahin*, *seer*, *soothsayer*, etc. This view takes the development of the priesthood in the Old Testament. The task of the priests in Israel was originally not sacrificial service, but oracular divination (Judges 17:5, 18:5; 1 Sam. 14:36-42) and instruction in the Torah. The head of every family could offer sacrifices (Gen. 8:20, 31:54). I will focus on the description

of the Old Testament priesthood in relation to the parallel hidden story of the priesthood of Melchizedek. While part two will be an interesting to know about priesthood in the other religion of the world: where priest serves the altar in the temple or shrine as the representative of the community in his relations with the gods.

Old Testament priesthood, by examining the Letter to the Hebrews' depiction of Christ the high priest. This letter is the starting point for the Church's reflection on the identity of the priest. The author of Hebrews is concerned that, the community is falling away from the faith and so he describes the mediation of Christ the high priest in response. He depicts Christ as the high priest who makes himself a perfect offering that removes the guilt of sin so that the people can approach the throne of grace with confidence. The priest helps the people of God to have an access to the graces of Christ's self-offering through presiding at the Eucharist. Through the Eucharist, people approach "the throne of grace". Moreover, the example of Christ the high priest calls priests to make themselves a self-offering for the people of God.

The New Testament priesthood, The Epistle to the Hebrews presents Christ as a priest who offers himself on the cross for the whole humanity; this self-offering consecrates them for His mission. Jesus as the good shepherd is an example of servant leadership, patterned after the paschal mystery. He exercises this ministry through revealing the word of God, providing the bread of life and modeling humble service to the community. In our view, Jesus' commission to his disciples suggests lay and clerical collaboration in the work of evangelization. We conclude that priests should see themselves as shepherds to a community of disciples, with whom the priest collaborates as a servant leader. Hebrews considers that apostolic work is a "priestly service". The picture of the paschal mystery reflects the self-giving love of Christ the high priest and encourages us to imagine priestly ministry beyond the boundaries. We conclude that he is a particularly good model for religious priests in apostolic Holy orders, because his mission takes place at the frontiers of belief as does the mission of many religious priests.

THEORY

A. Priest: Origin and Identity

The English word 'priest' is an abbreviation of the Greek presbyteros. In itself, this word has no religious connotations. Literally, it stands for somebody who is an elder, by age or by some reason of status in a community. But have strong religious connotations. In practice, if we used as comparison of the Latin Sacerdos, the Greek hieres, and the Hebrew kohen. All these suggest religious, sacred and cultic functions, these words have been captured which gives the related meaning. In this chapter, the word 'Priest' will be used with its religious connotations, rather than as it compared to the more neutral word 'elder' (Lane, 1993, p.38).

The priesthood was limited by Pentateuchal law to the Levites that is members of the family of Levi, one of the sons of Jacob. According to the book of Deuteronomy, all the Levitical families had a right to the priesthood since they did not receive an inheritance of land like the other tribes (Deut. 10:8-9). Aaron and his sons exclusively received the anointing oil and were attired in special clothing of the priesthood (Exod. 28:29). The families of Eli at the Temple of Shiloh (1 Sam 14:3) Zadok in Jerusalem (Ezek. 40:46), and Amaziah at Bethel (Amos 7:10-17) were not specified as Aaronides but were of Levitical descent (Levine, 1993, pp.104-105).

B. Presbyters as Priest

The doctrine of the Catholic Church describes the priest as Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Christian community. His functions are therefore tripartite in nature, consisting respectively of teaching, sanctification and governance. The priesthood is God's gift for the Church. It is one of the seven sacraments of the Church, which not only confers grace but power to preside over the holy sacrifice of the Eucharist and to forgive sins (Kubi & Korsah, 2020, p.43). For many Christian readers of the Bible, "Priest" is a word that gives us the images of sacrifice, altars, vestments and mysteriously powerful communion with God. Some of the contradictory indications linked with priesthood are: he is human but particularly different; a servant who rules and ruler who serves; leader, listener, healer and companion. Even though we use "Priest" as an ordained Christian leader. The early third-century described that the primary function of the presbyters is to assist the bishop, who is pastor of the local community. With him they share a role in certain liturgical actions, such as celebration of the Eucharist, but their pastor activity seems quite limited (Mitchell, 1982, pp.15-16, 241).

C. Etymology and Meaning of the Word "Kohen"

The Greek translators of the Bible give the Hebrew word "Kohen" a very common word in the OT. It symbolizes that person attain religious functions. This term was used for pagan priests as well as for Israelite priests. The first person to whom the Bible gives the title of kohen is Melchizedek, king of a town in Palestine in the time of Abraham. In the book of Leviticus, this title often occurs 55 times in a single chapter, Lev. 13 (Vanhoye, 2009, p.19).

The Greek word hierous is connected by its origin with the notion of the word "sacred" (hieros); the priest is the man of the "sacred". Some relate it to an Akkadian word, Kanu, which can have the sense of "bowing." The Kohen is the one who bows before the divinity, the one who adores. On the other hand, it gives a verbal root which means "to stand up" (Kun) and see the Kohen is the one who "stands in the presence of God," as a text of (Deuteronomy 10:8) says of the tribe of Levi. The Kohen, the Old Testament priest, is the one who attains success, because he is the man of "blessings". This is very positive view it does not lack anything but acknowledges that it is quite biblical (Vanhoye, 2009, p.20).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses the library research method. The library method means study the problematic topic using books, articles and online literature. The objects of research in this article are books, texts of the Holy Bible and Church documents. To complete this article, the author used descriptive analysis methods.

DISCUSSION

A. Biblical Understanding of the Word "Kohen"

The Biblical text shows that, the word kohen covers the wide range of areas. The Kohen may be viewed as the man of sanctuary, the one who has the right to touch the sacred vessels, who is authorized to enter into the presence of God and offer sacrifices for him. Explicitly utter oracles, gives blessings, and take matters of ritual purity. The role and functions of the Old Testament Priest had been discussed throughout the centuries. Most of the author had stated that they had sacrificial function because the word kohen related to the OT and hierousto the New Testament gives the meaning as "sacrifice." The term archiereus was translated as "supreme sacrifice" instead of "high priest". Moreover, this belief does

not correspond with the understanding of the Old Testament concept. Main function of the priesthood was not only to offer sacrifices but to have a close connection with the sanctuary (Vanhoye, 2009, p.20).

B. The origin of the Hebrew Priesthood

The Hebrew priesthood was hereditary and was transmitted exclusively to descendants of Aaron of the tribe of Levi. In Old Testament the Hebrew name for the High Priest is the (Kohen Gadol) headed a priestly hierarchy in Jerusalem. He had many privileges but also bound by numerous restrictions. The High Priest had to be married to one wife that was a virgin when they married. The Levites are called the family of Priests. Both Moses and Aaron were from the family of Levi, but Aaron was the High Priest of the Temple, and Moses only functioned outside the Temple sanctuary. The priestly narrative (P) is continued immediately after the arrival of Israel at Sinai. As soon as, Moses ascended to the sacred mountain for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 24:15-18) to receive the divine ordinances concerning the setting and furnishing of the cultic sanctuary (Ex. 25-28). The relative ordinances are received by Moses no longer on the sacred mountain but, according to the book of Numbers, in the ‘tent of meeting.’ The tent was the place where Yahweh met Moses, and Moses came to consult Yahweh in order to know his will (Ex. 33:7:11; Num. 12:8). The Tent of Meeting was, therefore, a great symbol of God’s abiding presence among his people. The carrying out of these ordinances, probably recorded in (Exodus. 39:32, 42, 43; 40:17) provided the necessary initial information for the offering of Israel’s first sacrifices which is recorded in Leviticus. 9. (Allen, 2008, pp.16-17) (Pinto, 2001, p.66) (Noth, 1965, p.13).

C. The Emergence of Israelite Priesthood

It is during the period of Exodus that we begin to see evidence for the emergence of a recognizable class of Israelite “Priests”. In (Exodus 19:5-6) the LORD appoints a nation of Jewish priests:

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my Covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

This historical synthesis of the priestly tradition is dominated by the idea that Israel is not like any other people or race. They are a “community” “a sacred assembly” brought together by Yahweh for his greater glory and set apart for his service. The Israelite priesthood was a religious institution that emerged slowly developed locally during the period of settlement in Palestine after the exodus, became part of the royal establishment during the monarchy, and achieved considerable power in the era of the second temple. Initially, the priests were little more than oracular consultants and sanctuary servants. The Israelite Priesthood was not a vocation a “charism” a “call from the community” or a “pastoral ministry”: it was a religious function strictly related to one’s genealogy. Their ceremony of “ordination” arises during the second temple period, it was still hereditary and their exercise of function that made one a priest (Noth, 1968, pp.129-131) (Grelot & Pierron, 1966, p.61) (Mitchell, 1982, pp.69-70).

Israel’s conviction about God’s presence in its midst was “tabernacling”. For Israelite priesthood the cult was a gift through which God gave Israel appropriate means for responding to His divine presence. To live appropriately in the divine presence of God was to abide by the requirements of ritual purity. Likewise, the priesthood and ritual sacrifices were necessary points of meditation between Israel and the Holy one. The Legislation of Holiness causes to such matters as sexual relations, economic justice, and other requirements of an ethical lifestyle. In other words, this was grounded in the very person of Israel’s God, the One who is Holy. (Burns, 1983, pp.189-191). Israel is told:

You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy. (Lev. 19:2)

And again, You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and have

Separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine. (Lev. 20:26)

D. Primary Functions of the Priests

There were many different and distinctive functions performed by the priest in Israel. The common denominator of these functions was priest who was an intermediary between God and men, the bridge uniting them in a two-way (Pinto, 2001, p.77). The role of the priests in the life and worship of the people of Israel is clear and functioned as:

E. Man of the Sanctuary

Though there were many sanctuaries in Palestine, and even the ‘high places’ were recognized as lawful institutions but this does not mean that these several places of worship were all having equal importance. We have no detailed information about the priest who served in these sanctuaries. In these sanctuaries people met their God very tangibly. Often, since the heights of the mountains reached up to heaven, they were considered as the dwelling place of God (Deuteronomy 33:19). Mount Carmel, for example had a long history as a place of worship (1 Kings. 18: 20-48). Such sanctuaries are often called “high places” in the Bible (1 Kings. 12:31; 2 Kings. 23:19). Every priest was chosen and installed to serve in a sanctuary, to care for it, and to conduct the various consecrations. The priests served the sanctuary in the desert, when the Temple was built at Jerusalem. They played their prestigious role in the central sanctuary (1 Chr. 23:4) (Pinto, 2001, pp.63-77) (Vaux, 1961, p.331).

F. To Offer Sacrifices

In the Sanctuary the priests perform cultic ceremonies, the most important of which is sacrifice. Speaking to God about the priests of Israel, the blessing of Moses says of them:

They are the ones who cause the smoke to rise up to your nostrils
and they lay the holocaust on your altar. (Deut. 33:10)

Sacrifices were the central rite of Israel’s worship. They were the signs of the honor and expressing thanks to God. It was a quest for union with God. In some sacrifices there was a purpose to re-establish the broken relationship between God and his people. The sacrificial victim or offering was a gift to Yahweh. The gift was destroyed by fire so that it was only for Yahweh and could no longer be used by the people or the offeror. The most important thing that matters in it was the ritual purity. Since the priest was in charge of offering the sacrifices in the name of the community, he had to take care that no one would participate in the worship who was not in a state of ritual purity. The presence of an “impure” man could only displease God and refuse the offerings (Tickle, 1978, pp.39-40), (Vanhoye, 2009, p.25) (Pinto, 2001, p.85).

1. Liturgical Functions of the Priest

In the ancient religions the priests are the ministers of worship, the guardians of the sacred traditions and guardian of the ark, the spokesmen of the divinity in their capacity as divines. The functions of the priests are mostly connected with the tabernacle, temple sacrifices and worship. Who were authorized to undertake cultic and sacred functions in the sanctuaries? There were many different and distinctive functions performed by the priests in Israel. When we come to the Epistle to the Hebrews, “Christ having offered one sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:12). Jesus commanded the Apostles to ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ (Lk. 22:19), referring to the Last Supper and the Holy Eucharist. The priest in the New Testament becomes a “minister of the Word” and “minister of the altar”, the roots of which go back to the Old Testament (Pinto, 2001, pp. 77-78) (George, 1988, p. 459-61), (Durrwell, 1960, p.136).

1.1. Priest as Mediator between God and People

The common denominator of these functions was the priest who was mediator between God and men, the bridge uniting them in a two-way. The High Priest had deep symbolic value to enter into the Holy of Holies: (1) He was the only person who served as a mediator between God and His people. However, the priest first needed to be sinless in order to start serving his people. (2) No one who is sinful could enter this place since his sin would lead to death in the presence of God. The priest had a rope tied to his ankle; in case if he was killed by God's hand so that he might be dragged out. This reveals how much God actually hates sin (Clark, 2017, p.138).

The role of the priests in the life and worship of the people of Israel is clear. There is a foundation for all of these different functions. When the priest gave an oracle, he was transmitting a response from God; when he gave a Torah, and later when he explained the Law, the Torah, he was transmitting and interpreting instruction that came from God; when he brought the blood and flesh of the victims to the altar or burned incense on the altar, he was presenting to God the prayers and petitions of the faithful. He served as an intermediate in the first two roles, representing God to men, and in the third role, serving as an intermediary between God and men (Vaux, 1961, p.357).

Every priest fulfills the role of high priest, as described in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Every high priest who is taken from among men is assigned to intervene on behalf of men with God" (Heb. 5:1). Just like the king, the prophet, and the priest served as a mediator. Now no one takes the honor for himself but is invited by God, just as Aaron also was. Thus, also the Christ did not exalt himself to become high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him:

"You are a priest for the age according to the order of Melchizedek."

He became a source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him; he was declared by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

1.2. Service at the Sanctuary

Though there were many sanctuaries in Palestine. We have no detailed information about the priests who served in these sanctuaries. The Temple at Jerusalem was the richest and the most frequented center of worship; it was the official sanctuary of the kingdom of Judah, and its priests who were serving there were the only priests who played any part in the political life of the nation (Vaux, 1961, p. 372).

2. Priest as Purifier and Agent of Holiness

Cleanliness is very important to God. He cannot tolerate the filthiness of sin in his presence. To help us to understand this, God instructed the people of Israel to do an annual cleaning on the Day of Atonement a day set aside to cleanse his dwelling place, the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle, by making sacrifices for sin. It wasn't dust and dirt that God wanted cleaned out, but the uncleanness of his people's sinful attitudes and actions (Guthrie, 2010, p.362).

On the tenth day of the appointed month in early autumn, you must deny yourselves. On that day offerings of purification will be made

for you, and you will be purified in the Lord's presence from all your sins (Lev. 16:29-30).

Only on this day once a year the high priest enters the Most Holy Place. To prepare himself to step into God's presence, he carefully bathed himself, put on sacred linen garments, and presented a bull as a sin offering to purify himself and his family. The people of Israel fasted and prayed to God for forgiveness. The sacrifices offered would cover the impurity of their sins for another year, yet provided no permanent solution to the problem of sin. Christ's priestly ministry in heaven is the reality that Jesus is the

conqueror of sin (Heb. 9:11-14). Christ has come as the high priest of the true blessings, by his own blood, not by the blood of goats and calves, he enters once and for all into the sanctuary, having found eternal redemption. If the blood of goats and calves and the ashes of a cow, when they are sprinkled, can sanctify those who are defiled, sanctifies them for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will not Christ's blood purify our conscience from lifeless deeds, so that we can serve the living God; he offered himself through the eternal Spirit, as an immaculate offering to God (Guthrie, 2010, p.362), (Neusner, 1996, p.521), (Schierse, 1969, p.54).

This day of cleansing foreshadowed and expected a greater cleansing of God's people and of his dwelling place the hearts and lives of believers. A special Priest, Jesus who did not need a cleansing ceremony for himself would accomplish the day of cleansing to come. He was already perfectly clean (Guthrie, 2010, p.362).

He is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin.

He has been set apart from sinners. The law appointed high priests who were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed his Son with an oath, and his Son has been made the perfect High Priest forever (Heb. 26, 28).

When the high priest entered the sanctuary area on the Day of Atonement, he put on a white linen tunic and linen undergarments reserved for that holy day (Guthrie, 2010, p.365).

The purification ceremony will be performed by the priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as high priest in place of his ancestor

Aaron. He will put on the holy linen garments and purify the Most Holy Place, the Tabernacle, the altar, the priests, and the entire congregation (Lev. 16:32-33).

The high priests in the line of Aaron put on white linen garments to symbolize purity. These men were not pure in themselves, so they washed themselves in the water that represented the cleansing blood of Christ, and they covered themselves in this special linen garment that represented the perfect, all-encompassing righteousness of Christ (Guthrie, 2010, p.365) (Connell, 1953, p.127-128).

3. Priest as Teacher of Torah

The Mosaic legislation of Genesis through Numbers is the first to indicate that the priests were to be teachers. (Leviticus 10: 10-11) says that the priests' responsibilities were to teach the sons of Israel all the statutes that Yahweh has spoken to them through Moses. Thus, the priests were to carry on the task of instructing every Israelite all of the statutes that Yahweh had given to Moses (Ex. 24:12; Lev. 1:2) (Betts, 2005, p.21).

3.1. Torah: Source and Origin

It has been suggested that Torah comes from the verb *yarah*, meaning 'to throw' and occasionally 'to cast lot' (Jos. 18: 6); consequently, this role of the priest has been linked with his role as a man who gives oracles, and a comparison has been drawn with the Assyrian *tertu*, which means 'an oracle.' But the way in which the word is used and the verbs which are used it indicate that its root is rather *yrk*, which means, 'to teach'. The torah is, therefore, in the strict sense 'instruction' and the usual translation of this word as 'law'. The Hebrew word Torah is sometimes translated as "law" but the popular understanding of "law" is "a rule to regulate behavior," it is too narrow and restrictive. Torah refers, more openly, to instructions, guidance, or teaching. The old Law had been promulgated on Mount Sinai and commemorated in the celebration of the feast of Pentecost. The new Law was promulgated on Sion (the hills of Jerusalem). As the Law had been promulgated to the assembly of Jewish believers, so too the

new Law was promulgated to the gathered assembly of the Lord's disciples (Vaux, 1961, p.354) (Williamson & Allen, 1991, p.25) (Tickle, 1978, p.58).

3.2. Priestly Laws

The 'laws' came from God, but he entrusted it to the priests (Deut. 31:9, 26). According to (Deuteronomy 33:10) the priests are to teach the toroth of Yahweh to Israel and the priest as a teacher is a messenger of Yahweh Sabaoth (Mal. 2: 7). Naturally, these instructions were delivered in the sanctuary by the priest, where men came on pilgrimage, to offer sacrifice, or simply to consult the man in charge of the sanctuary: as a result, the teaching of the torah was, in pre-exilic days, confined to the Temple, and texts like (Is. 2:3; Mic. 4:2; Deut. 31:10-11) reflect a most ancient custom. The Old Testament came to its complete fulfilment in the person of Jesus. This, too, was the case with the old law. Jesus told the people in (Mt. 5:17): "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. I have come, not to abolish them, but to fulfil them." The Epistle to the (Hebrews 8:8-12), proclaims that the new Law is not only an expression of God's will but the inner means of achieving it. The prophets had promised that God would give a new Law written in his people's hearts. Jesus fulfilled that promise; he is our new inner Law (Vaux, 1961, p.354) (Watson, 1969, p.190) (Tickle, 1978, p.57).

4. Priest as moderator of the Ritual of Sacrifice

Sacrifice was the principal act in Israel's cult. If we see the meaning of sacrifice it is connected with the rites. The following conditional definition: sacrifice is any offering, animal or vegetable, which is wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar as a token of homage to God. The study of the ritual is complicated by the fact, several terms are used for sacrifice. They are not always clearly explained: one and the same word can denote several kinds of sacrifices, and one kind of sacrifice can be described by a variety of terms. The vocabulary reflects an historical development and the fusion of various practices, similar to one another, but originating from different backgrounds. We shall start with the latest and most complete ritual, and we shall then endeavor to retrace the history of sacrifice to its origin. The memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a Sacrifice. The Sacrifice of Christ and the Sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice: In the New Testament Jesus offered himself in sacrifice, shedding his blood on the cross in order to establish the new and everlasting covenant and to bring about forgiveness of sins. This sacrifice surpasses all other sacrifices to the extent that no other sacrifice is now necessary (Vaux, 1961, p.415) (Ronzani, 2005, pp.106-113).

4.1. Peace-offering

The ritual of the peace-offering was similar to that for the burnt-offering, except that here only the fat, which the Israelites considered the best portion was burnt on the altar, and the meat was eaten by the worshippers and their families. Since God also shared in the sacrifice, it was also thought of as a friendship meal with God. In Old Testament times, animal sacrifice was understood in many different ways. It was often used as an expression of repentance through which a worshipper could make peace with God. Same like Christ, he loved his Father and all of us. He loved with complete devotedness and a deep concern for the individual. He loved with a passion, even to the point of death. The false shepherd takes the life of the sheep, but the good shepherd gives his own life for them. The stress is on the sacrifices involved in shepherding. Yet, it is a freely willed sacrifice. The sacrifice does not go in vain. It generates life and life in its abundance (Drane, 1998, p.163) (Carter, 2002, p.1).

5. The Analogy of Christ's Priesthood and the Old Testament Priesthood

Jesus is never called a priest, nor does he ever speak of priesthood or priests when describing the role of his apostles or defining their identity. This seems to contrast with the fact that the Church credits to Jesus the high priesthood and gives to the successors of Jesus' apostles the priestly orders. Jesus abstains from using the title of priest; the reason is that the priesthood he claims is not like the Jewish priesthood then in existence. Jesus had no priestly ancestry. He was not born into a priestly family. He is from the "house of David." He does not belong to the tribe of Levi but to that of Judah. Consequently, there is a profound difference between Jesus and the Jewish priesthood. Christ's priesthood excludes participation in the hereditary priesthood and membership in the priestly caste as it was in the Old Testament priesthood (Vellanickal, 2010, pp.99–100).

In Jesus' time, the Jewish priesthood was a powerful institution, a class that claimed descent from Aaron. They had exclusive control over a sacrificial liturgy. They had a high priest as a head. Under his leadership there were a few hundred chief priests (drawn from the powerful priestly families) thousands of priests and more or less an equal number of Levites. As mentioned above, compared to the OT, Jesus did not belong to a priestly family. The cult and the figure of the priest are very rare in the teachings of Jesus. In fact, Jesus often took positions on various matters of religious laws and cultic practices that brought him into sustained conflict with the priestly establishment (Malipurathu, 2010, pp.121–122).

5.1. Jesus as the Priest of the New Testament

Jesus was never called a 'Priest' in his earthly life. Christ is explicitly called a priest only in one book of the NT, according to the epistle to the Hebrews. Even in this epistle he became a priest not in his earthly life but in his death. Jesus became priest only at his death when with his own blood he entered the heavenly sanctuary. The High Priest Jesus Christ eternally exercises his priestly function in heaven: Hebrews 7 and 8. "If then he was on earth, he would not be a priest" (Heb. 8:4) (Perera, 2003, p. 41).

The cornerstone of the priesthood of the New Testament lies in the Last Supper, which Jesus defined and served with these words, "Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:19-20). Then we read about the offerings that priests make in the temple. "Zechariah, a priest from the Abijah priestly order lived during the reign of King Herod of Judea. Once, while he was acting as a priest before God and his section was on duty, he was chosen by lot in accordance with the priesthood's norm to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and present incense. His wife was Elizabeth, an ancestor of Aaron." (Luke 1:5, 8-10). The Old Testament priesthood is fully actualized in the New Testament. What has been fully realized is the priesthood of Christ. The mystery of the Incarnation serves as the foundation for the priesthood of Christ, in the fullness of His person. The fundamental purpose of the sacerdotal office is the union of God and man in Christ. He is both a merciful, Transcendent High Priest at the same time. Moreover, Christ's essential priestly function is fulfilled on the altar of the Cross through sacrifice. Where Jesus perfected everyone, He is sanctifying for all eternity (Heb 10:14) (Haffner, 1999, pp.164-166).

Jesus Christ, having entered the sanctuary of heaven once and for all, intercedes constantly for us as the mediator who assures us of the permanent outpouring of the Holy Spirit (CCC. 667).

5.2. The Official Priesthood of Christ

The official priesthood of Christ was immersed in Jewish and pagan cult. The Hebrew priesthood was

totally unknown to our Lord's perspective. Although he is not of the priestly class or tribe, he stands as mediator between the divine and the human, having offered his own life in sacrifice. Early Christians interpreting the passion and death of Jesus, related the Last Supper and crucifixion of their prophet to the sacrifice of the Jewish Passover lamb and the establishment of a new covenant (Mk 14:23-24). Related the Last Supper and crucifixion of their prophet to the sacrifice of the Jewish Passover lamb and the establishment of a new covenant (Mk. 14:23-24). They understood this meal as an anticipation of the messianic banquet about which Jesus had preached in parables (Mt. 22:1-14). What was prophesied as a new covenant had arrived in Jesus (Jer. 31:31). These NT images of Jesus as lamb, banquet host, and covenant giver should be placed in the context of the speculation about the priestly and royal character of the Messiah in Qumran literature and in the Gospel of (Mark 12:35-37) (Happel, 1992, p. 380).

6. Threefold Functions of Christ's Priesthood

Priest, prophet, and king are the threefold functions of Christ's priesthood. These three positions come from Jesus Christ. The letter to the Hebrews makes clear that Jesus' earthly mission consisted of these three aspects:

6.1 Sent with the Priestly Ministry

Letter to the Hebrew explains that, we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, namely, Jesus, the Son of God. Let's stick to our confession without wavering (Heb. 4:14). Since Jesus is the high priest, he performs the roles of both a priest and a sacrifice (Haffner, 1999, p.167).

6.2. Sent with the Prophetic Ministry

Christ's entire mission was prophetic. In the Gospel of St. John, a Samaritan woman refers to Jesus as a prophet. The women spoke to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet," (Jn. 4:19). In the same passage, Jesus titled himself as a "Prophet" when he says, "A prophet is not respected in his own nation" (Jn. 4:44). As a prophet, he proclaims the word of God to the people and condemns social evil (Haffner, 1999, p.167).

6.3. Sent with the Kingly Ministry

As the psalmist states, Christ's human nature is majestic, anointed with the Holy Spirit, which is a manifestation of the third attribute of priesthood. For the Lord are the greatest God and king of all kings (Ps. 95.3). As a king, he governs and guides the people of God toward the kingdom of God (Haffner, 1999, p.167).

7. Jesus-The High Priest

No one takes this honor of high priesthood on their own, rather, each person is chosen by God, just as Aaron was. Furthermore, Christ didn't claim the honor of being the high priest for himself; rather, he received it from the one who addressed him as "my son" and "now I have become your father," as well as "you are a priest of the order of Melchizedek, and forever," Even though he was the Son, he had to go through pain in order to learn to obey. Yet, after he was made complete, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obeyed him, and God claimed him with the title of high priest of the Melchizedek order (Heb. 5:4-10) (Brungs, 1968, p.41).

Each high priest is chosen from among men and appointed to represent them before God in matters pertaining to sin (5:1) and to offer sacrifices for sins. Jesus "offered both prayers and supplications" in his capacity as high priest. The fact that he accomplished this "in the days of his flesh" (5:7). Jesus, in

his capacity as high priest, was a human being who shared in their “blood and flesh” (2:14). He prayed and pleaded for them as his fellow humans (Heil, 2011, p.81).

Christ took his priesthood as a human. According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, it was his humanity that made him eligible for the position of high priest. At the moment of his conception, he had this humanity. This is not meant to indicate that Christ’s priesthood necessarily came to its full maturity and efficacy at the time of his conception. Scripture itself compels us to acknowledge that Christ grew in humanity. Jesus “grew in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man” (Lk. 2:52) (Brungs, 1968, p.41).

A new priesthood has come into existence with Christ. It is not an earthly priesthood but a heavenly one. It is precisely the kind of priesthood which the Son of God can possess, through the incarnation, he has made himself like us in all things, except sin (Heb. 4:15). The Epistle to the Hebrews sees the type of this new and sovereign priesthood in “the priesthood according to the order of Melchisedech,” which it considers as representing the heavenly order of priesthood. The Epistle explains how Christ has exercised this priesthood and it does so by referring to the liturgy of the Day of Atonement. On that day the high priest went alone and once a year into the Holy of Holies, after he had offered a sacrifice for the sins of the people and another similar one for his own transgressions (Congar, 1962, p.173).

8. Ordained Priesthood

The ordained priesthood of the new covenant must internally partake in the dignity of Christ’s priesthood. A close reading of *Lumen Gentium*¹⁰ makes it clear that there is a distinction between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. The difference consists in the fact that the ordained minister represents both Christ and the Church. He is not simply delegated by the community. Ratzinger rightly put it: “The sacramentality of the priesthood signifies above all the fact that the authority of this office is not in a delegation on the part of the community, but is a gift of the Lord”. The ordained priest participates very specially in the three functions of Christ. And “priests as coworkers with their bishops have as their primary duty to proclaim the Gospel of God to all” (PO 4). The priest authorized herald of the Word of God and by preaching of the Word he gathers God’s people and is called to a sacramental function. Ratzinger stresses that the proclamation of the Gospel has priority over all other functions. They are ordained and consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament (LG 28). The council adds: “The priest of the New Testament is, by their vocation and ordination, in some way set apart in the midst of the people of God, but this is not in order that they should be separated from that people or from any person, but that they should be completely consecrated to the task for which God chooses them” (PO 3). More precisely, it may be said that ordained ministers are the sacraments of Christ to the community. But in no way does this expression mean that they take the place of or substitute for Christ. Christ remains the only Head of the Church and the only priest (Cherianpanatt, 2009, 346-348).

In the encyclical, *Pastore Dabo Vobis*, St. John Paul II discusses about the ordained priesthood and states that “all the priestly people have a true ontological share in Christ's one and eternal priesthood.” In another point, St. John Paul stated that “discipleship sealed by baptism offers all members of the church a similar ontological foundation of priesthood from which varied vocations such as the ordained priesthood flow (John Paul II, 1992, n.13). In contrast, St. Peter said in his first letter, in verse 9, that “you are God's own people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a chosen race”. So that you can praise the great deeds of him, who called you out of darkness into his glorious light. The Scripture’s uses these

terms and points to the reality that each catechumen who receives the sacrament of baptism participates in the royal priesthood of Christ (Goergen, J. D, 2000, p.187).

This priesthood has some characteristics in common. A person is anointed with oil after a baptism, while a newly ordained priest is anointed with oil during ordination. Both have been given the responsibility of preaching, announcing, etc. The Catholic Church's ecclesiastical structure does not distinguish between ordained (bishop, priest, and deacon) and non-ordained (lay baptized) ministries; rather, they are both part of the single stream of living water that flows from baptism and makes all Christians eligible to participate in the priesthood of Christ (Risley, 2000, p.121).

9. The Common and Baptismal Priesthood

Jesus Christ is our priest, and we have only one priest, which is the priesthood of Jesus Christ. This one priesthood is shared by everyone who receives baptism and is thereafter incorporated into the body of Christ. It recognizes both the historical atonement made by Christ on the cross and the ongoing atonements of all Christians who have trust in Him and are connected to Him by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who have been incorporated into Christ make up the essence of giving to God. It is emphasized that every Christian serves as a priest (Dovaia, 1997, pp.333-337).

The Code of Canon Law # 204 (2007, p. 44) states that baptism is the means by which all the faithful are united to Christ. They are the God-constituted people, and they take part in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly offices in various ways. Each of us has been given the responsibility of carrying out the mission that God has given the Church to carry out in the world (204). Christian tradition asserts that each disciple of Jesus is baptized into the priesthood of God. According to St. Thomas, it is the result of an ancient inheritance. Through this sacrament, we partake in both Jesus' status as the divine son of God and His priestly anointing. We become Christians through baptism, which means "anointed ones" (Sullivan, 1946, pp.73-74).

Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men (Heb. 5:1), made the new people 'a kingdom of priests to God, his Father' (Rev1:6, 5:9-10). The baptized, by renewal and the anointing of the Holy Spirit are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, that through all the works of Christian men they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the perfection of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:4-10). Therefore, all the Disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God together (Acts. 2:42-47), should present themselves as a sacrifice, living, holy and pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1). They should everywhere on earth bear witness to Christ and give an answer to everyone who asks a reason for the hope of an eternal life which is theirs (1 Pet. 3:15) (John Paul II, 1979, p. 7).

10. Theology Implications of the New Testament Priesthood

The Catechism of the Catholic Church declares that the concept of priesthood as received in the New Testament is derived from Old Testament priesthood. The priesthood of the Old Covenant is considered a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant. The New Testament priesthood finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the 'one mediator between God and men.' The redemptive sacrifice of Christ accomplished on the Cross is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church, which is realized through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood (CCC. 1544-1545). The idea of priesthood in Hebrews is taken as a starting point. It is clear that New Testament authors such as Paul understood Jesus to be a priestly figure. They view Jesus' death on the

cross as a holy sacrifice. The New Testament's portrayal of Jesus as the One who bore the sins of many on his broken body and allowed his blood to be poured forth on behalf of others makes it clear that the idea of priesthood is universal (Philibert, 2000, pp.11–13).

The catechism explains that Christ, as head of his body, shepherd of his flock, and high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, provides for the church the ecclesial service of ordained ministers. The Church describes this by saying that “the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts in Persona Christi Capitis” (1548). The catechism then quotes the text of Aquinas: “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.” (The phrase in persona Christi derives much of its authority from its use in the theological writings of Thomas Aquinas) (Philibert, 2000, p.7).

Conclusion

There is ultimately connection in both the Testaments when it is looked from side either from Old Testament to New Testament or from New Testament to Old Testament, we can read and come to conclusion that, both the Testaments have relationship and the Old Testament continues its promises and covenant in New Testament. The literal sense of (Ex 24:1–11) historically presents the event that took place with Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses brings the covenant's terms and laws to the people of Israel. The people publicly declare their obedience to these commands at a ritual covenant ceremony, which is common for this time period but unique in its focus on Yahweh, the only real God. The ceremony consists of a stone altar and twelve pillars, one for each tribe of Jacob, and blood from a sacrificed animal is sprinkled on the altar. God's covenant oath is symbolized by the altar. The first-born sons, who are functioning as priests, the Israelites promise once more to follow God's instructions. Then the people and the twelve pillars receive another half of the blood. (Verses 9–11) describe the real ascent of Mount Sinai by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abibu, and the seventy elders who experienced a spiritual vision there, which is considered an actual meal celebrated to carry out the covenantal union.

Throughout Church history, the typology of (Exodus 24:1-11) has been thoroughly explained. Mount Sinai is a type of the Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Mystical Body of Christ. It is the place where a person can approach God with his actual presence. The Christian Liturgy of the Word is a prefiguration of the reading of the “word of God,” which is an example of a common covenantal ritual action. The Israelites swore an oath to serve as a type of witness for prophets and disciples, who in turn respond to God's message, which comes directly from the mouth of God. The subsequent priestly sacrifice of first-born sons' bull sacrifice offerings serves as a model throughout the Levitical priesthood, Davidic temple worship, and finally the new priesthood that Jesus institutes in Peter and the other disciples. Until his priesthood is given to the bishops of the early church and his sacrifice is continually celebrated in the Liturgy of the Eucharist, Christ will serve as Priest (the firstborn son of God) and sacrifice lamb (by unjust crucifixion) under the New Covenant. Christian history demonstrates that blood and water will pour from the side of Christ and the Jerusalem Temple veil will be torn in two, symbolizing the solemnization of the covenant by the sprinkling of blood on the altar and on the people.

On behalf of all humanity, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave his life in order to enter the heavenly sanctuary of God's eternal rest (1:3, 4:3, 6, 9-10). John and Hebrews seem to combine Christ's death and resurrection into a single act in which death brings in life. Hebrews emphasizes the shame of the crucifixion; the Gospel of John shows Jesus' death as the moment of his glory. By dying on the cross, Jesus Christ became the “pioneer” who would guide all believers into heaven (2:10-13; 13:20).

Everyone who follows Jesus on the path of faith will enter the heavenly sanctuary through his death. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, serves as both our perfect High Priest and the sin-atonement sacrifice. In contrast to Pauline and Petrine traditions that emphasize the community as the new temple or spiritual house that offers spiritual sacrifice, Hebrews focuses on Christ, the one in whom priest and victim become so perfectly united that there is no longer a need for a cultic priesthood and sacrifice. In order to save all of humanity, the Son of God took on human form as Jesus Christ. The incarnation and the atonement are both used extensively in the theology of Hebrews. If the Son of God had not taken flesh and blood, this redeeming work would not have been possible.

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