



Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest



Date: Thursday, June 12, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C

First Reading: Hebrews 2:10-18

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:2-3, 5, 6 | **Response:** Psalm 23:1

Gospel Acclamation: Ezekiel 36:25a, 26a

Gospel Reading: John 17:1-2, 9, 14-26

Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia.

Today we pause to contemplate a mystery both intimate and everlasting: the priesthood of Christ, not bound by lineage or temple walls, but sealed in mercy and suffering, in love poured out and victory over death. Christ, our Eternal High Priest, does not offer the blood of goats or bulls, but his very self—a priest and a lamb, an altar and a sacrifice. This is the priesthood we celebrate today.

The Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest, is a relatively new liturgical observance in the Church—first celebrated in Spain in the 1980s and gradually adopted more widely, it found a place in the universal calendar in 2012 and was placed on the Thursday after Pentecost. Why then? Because Pentecost is the birth of the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and this feast follows to remind us that Christ, as our High Priest, remains the source and sustainer of that Church. He pours out the Spirit, yes—but he also prays for us, stands with us, and leads us in the ongoing offering of our lives.

This priesthood is not distant. It is near. It is not ceremonial alone—it is personal. It is, as I said earlier, intimate and everlasting. Christ's priesthood reaches into the middle of our lives—not just into the sanctuary, but into our homes, our hospitals, our classrooms, our worries. It walks with us through the morning light and the quiet fears that come with night, sanctifying suffering, redeeming what is broken, and calling us brothers and sisters.

The Letter to the Hebrews gives us a clear and comforting word. Jesus was made “perfect through suffering”—not because he was ever incomplete, but because he chose to draw near to our pain. He entered our human condition fully. He shared our flesh, our temptations, our frailty. And in doing so, he made suffering a place of grace, not shame. The One who overcame death knows what it means to be tired, to be tested, to cry out. And that is why he can help those who are being tested now.

This is the heart of the priesthood we celebrate. Christ’s cross is not just a symbol of sacrifice—it is his altar. His compassion is not theoretical—it is born of experience. And because he has walked our path, he walks with us still. For every student burdened by silent pressure, every parent anxious about their child, every consecrated person striving for deeper fidelity—he is close. He calls you his own.

Psalm 23 puts this mystery into words we’ve known since childhood: “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” The valley may be real—but so is the Shepherd. His rod and staff comfort us. He prepares a table in the presence of our enemies. He anoints our heads. He restores our souls. This is the priesthood of presence, not absence; of accompaniment, not avoidance. He does not shield us from every hardship, but he refuses to leave us alone in it.

Then, in John’s Gospel, we overhear something astonishing—Jesus praying for us. He prays not for our removal from the world, but for our protection within it. He prays for unity, a desire beautifully captured in the motto of Pope Leo XIV: *In Illo Uno Unum*—“In the One, we are one.” Jesus prays that we would be made holy in truth, “that they may all be one,” as he is in the Father and the Father is in him. This prayer is not just poetic—it is priestly. It is the prayer of the one who knows the cost of love and the depth of division. And it is a prayer that still echoes in our own time.

And that prayer includes us. By baptism, we were joined to Christ—not only as disciples, but as participants in his priestly mission. The Catechism teaches that all the baptised share in the priesthood of Christ: not by offering bread and wine on the altar, but by offering our lives—our time, our love, our efforts toward justice, our quiet acts of faith and forgiveness. We are a priestly people. Each of us, in our own vocation, has a part to play in lifting the world toward God.

To “live priestly lives” doesn’t mean pretending we are ordained or taking on roles that are not ours. It means allowing the character of Christ to shape how we speak, how we work, how we serve. It means offering our ordinary lives as holy ground. When we forgive instead of holding grudges, when we listen with compassion, when we stay faithful in hidden sacrifices—these are priestly acts. They transform the world from within.

It is a call to live priestly lives not by title, but by witness—to be people who stand in the gap when others stay silent, who lift others in prayer, who offer our work and our wounds to God. To serve quietly, to forgive generously, to speak with honesty, to act with justice.

And what does it mean to “stand in the gap”? It means choosing to be a bridge where there is brokenness. In the Scriptures, to stand in the gap is to place yourself between danger and the people you love; between despair and the promise of hope; between suffering and the comfort of prayer. It is what Moses did for his people, and what Jesus now does eternally. And we, by grace, are invited to join him—by praying for those who cannot pray for themselves, by advocating for those without a voice, by refusing to walk away when others turn aside. A teacher standing in the gap for a struggling student. A neighbour intervening to protect a vulnerable child. A young person giving time to care for an elderly relative. These are priestly moments. These are sacred offerings.

While the priest leads us in the sacred liturgy, it is Christ, our Eternal High Priest, who is its true centre—and our companion in our ordinary time outside of Mass. He walks with us through the morning light and the quiet fears that come with night. He prays for us when we forget how to pray. He strengthens us when we are too tired to try. Through the priest’s ministry, we encounter the living Christ, who is always with us.

So let us draw near to him. Let us approach the throne of grace, not with fear, but with trust. Let us hold fast to hope, because He is faithful. And let us encourage one another—not with empty words, but with lives that reflect his love.

Eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, you who know our weakness and remain with us always—pray for us. Teach us to live with courage, with compassion, and with hope. Guide us in your way, and help us to become your presence in a world that needs healing.

This week, I invite you to reflect on these questions:

- Where in my life do I most need to let Christ be my High Priest—not just in theory, but in trust?
- Where is God calling me to stand in the gap—through prayer, protection, or service—for someone else?
- How can I live out my baptismal call this week by offering something of myself as a living sacrifice of love?

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.