

Appendix: Good Works

Rising in the Hierarchy of Light

While the main goal of a priest is to perfect faith in himself and others, his position in the Church greatly colors the means by which he does this. In other words, priests seek advancement in rank just like members of more secular societies or guilds, whether as a sign of triumph over hurdles of belief or as a more political means to spread the word of the Pancreator (and perhaps collect some healthy tithes along the way...).

Rising in rank involves impressing one's superiors with one's loyalty, dependability, faith or popularity among the faithful. Unless the priest is a mendicant, she is tied to a particular cathedral or Holy See, and falls somewhere in its hierarchy of ranks (even priests who are part of a noble's entourage belong to some See, probably that on the noble family's homeworld).

A priest of canon rank or above may ordain an applicant up to any rank below his own, as long as the applicant skips no ranks in between (i.e., all priests must begin as novitiates and work up from there). A priest must heed the orders given by the higher-ranking priests within his See, although he does not have to comply with orders given by priests from other Sees (he must give them respect, however). All priests of all sects must follow the orders of the Patriarch, who is the supreme head of the Universal Church and the center of all Sees, and many must also reckon with the metropolae who oversee conglomerations of planets.

While each world usually has one major Holy See, there may be monasteries or groups of smaller Churches that are not affiliated with it, and thus subject to their own hierarchies.

For players, gaining rank for their characters means becoming aware of the movers and shakers in their cathedral and the entire See. These may not necessarily be the highest ranking priests — the old and wizened bishop whom everybody adores may simply be too senile to aid the character in his quest for greater ordination, while the lower-ranked deacon may know every plot whispered in the pews and catacombs.

For gamemasters, this means knowing the NPCs of note, those who can grant greater ordination to a player character

and under what conditions they are likely to do so. Some priests are terribly conservative and rarely grant greater ordination, preferring to keep the same group of priests under them for their entire careers. Others are more liberal, and grant new ordinations on the condition that the recipient go forth to forge a new cathedral, spread the word with greater missionary work, or as a means to get a favored priest a position within a noble entourage (some nobles won't accept low-ranking priests).

Certainly, a cathedral's needs are the best determinate of a priest's chances: a growing region with new serfs coming in may need more priests to hold masses, or an Eskatonic novitiate may prove eerily central to important occult prophecies and thus come to the notice of his superiors.

Priests who are hampered in their quest for greater recognition (and thus greater responsibility) can petition to be placed elsewhere, within another cathedral or another See altogether. Such requests must be presented to a priest of equal or higher rank than the petitioner's own cathedral leader (the bishop of the desired cathedral or the archbishop of the desired See); these transfers are only granted if the individual shows some true merit and can add demonstrable value to his new home — or else gaining the priest will win the new post some political points against a rival.

Conversely, a cathedral or See can request a priest of special expertise from another See (or from the metropolae or Patriarch). Parishes that lack healers or scholars, or that suffer occult strangeness, might request an expert in such lore to come investigate or to be stationed at the new church. In addition, the offices of the Patriarch, the metropolae, and even many Sees, station certain priests in "troubleshooting" roles, whereby they are available to travel to places within the See or the Known Worlds on investigatory or missionary work, as representatives (or spies) for their offices.

While the Church is more unified than the royal houses, fractious politics can always get in the way of promotion. A priest who foils another See's plans to build a new cathedral near her own can raise the rival bishop's ire, and cause him to turn higher level priests' ears against her in Church convocations.

Missionary Zeal

Each sect of the Universal Church of the Celestial Sun has different duties it feels are the most important for its

holy mission. While some of these are rather universal per sect, regional parishes can have different views, depending on the local circumstances (an Antinomist-infected region will have even the Sanctuary Aeon priests concerned chiefly with sin and heresy). In general, each sect's main missions are:

Orthodoxy: Sermonize to the flock, tend to their spiritual needs, care for them, protect them from the worst excesses of the nobility. Seek new converts and be ever wary of schism.

Brother Battle: Gain and execute military contracts for the order. Defend the faithful (usually pilgrims), defend one's post, or seek out evil and destroy it.

Eskatonic Order: Study scriptures and lore, sermonize to all about the coming eskaton, root out occult phenomena and study it.

Temple Avesti: Beware sin in yourself and others. Sermonize against heresy. Root out sin and purge it.

Sanctuary Aeon: Heal the hurts of body and soul, make whole the wounds of Creation, offer compassion to all — even the sinful.

Workers of the Fiefs Unite

Priests in charge of a flock or See have a moral and holy duty to defend the faithful from harm — including noble and guild excesses. Sometimes, this involves working the populace up into an impassioned strike — a refusal to work — or even to create a riot against the harsh masters in the castle.

Most priests are on their own when this happens, although some may be lucky enough to recruit a band of mercenaries to aid in defense in return for food. Well-connected priests can sometimes gain official permission from higher ups in the sect to invoke such civil disobedience. How well this succeeds usually depends on the power the sect wields with the local lords or with off-planet contacts. While the Orthodoxy rarely engages in such grass-roots rioting, it often wins such disputes and gains a surcease to the central problem (if not all the problems). The Amaltheans have garnered some successes through pure charisma, but other sects are rarely successful. At best, they attract the interests of the Orthodoxy, who lend a hand in return for more power in the region.

The retaliation a noble lord often brings against such disobedience is the chief reason strikes are so rare. Most nobles are merciless in their condemnation of what they consider criminal resistance, no matter the original cause for it, and bring military force to bear against the leaders of the opposition. House Hawkwood has the best record for good behavior in such instances, but it suffers the least such rebellions in the first place. While most believe the Decados are the worst offenders in their brutal retaliations, it is actually the Li Halan who are the most feared — when the mandate of heaven is broken, even if by the words of priests, the house responds poorly and often with massacres. For this reason, the Li Halan fiefs rarely witness peasant rebellions

(except on Rampart, whose populace has not been properly schooled in the Li Halan ways).

The main limiter of noble violence, however, is the power of the Church — the higher up the sanction for the strike goes or the greater the moral outrage caused by noble retaliation, the more the house will suffer from Church indictment should it respond too harshly or with too little concession. Besides increased visits by the Inquisition, the recalcitrant noble may be threatened with excommunication — a death sentence on his rule, for even the most cowardly serfs fear to serve one whose soul is no longer protected by the Church (many houses will strip such a noble of rank and place another to rule the fief).

In such a way does the Church prove its vital role in the Known Worlds, as the shepherd of all souls, for in the end it is the Pancreator who rules over the universe, not a mortal noble.

The case against Merchant League and guild excess is different. The Church usually responds if too many of its flock have been badly ripped off by guild traders, impoverishing the community, or else the guild openly traffics in proscribed technology. Illegal factories or those which cause too much pollution to a region are often targeted by priests in sermons. If they are truly dangerous, or the priest is well-connected, those factories will be targeted by the Inquisition, or their guilds will suffer Church embargoes, where priests demand that their parishioners refuse to purchase goods from members of the guilty guild. In extreme cases, guild representatives are threatened with excommunication. While this is not as damaging to them as to a noble, it means their days of selling to the masses are over, and they must retire to administrative duties or take up exploration missions to distant places.

Daily Rituals

Ministering to the people's spiritual needs is the core of a priest's duty. Listening to confessions, blessing crops or important affairs, performing marriages, presiding over births, deaths, rites of passage, etc. A priest is the linchpin of a community's connection to the wheel of the seasons and the cosmos. Without these everyday ceremonies, the chaos of the universe would engulf everyone's lives.

Personal Prayers

There are important prayer times throughout the day, each associated with types of prayer (the Eskatonics compile voluminous tables of correspondence for these prayer hours). The main ones are as follows:

Preces Matutinae (morning): Morning prayer, or the Daybreak prayer, is a thanks to the Pancreator for the dawn light.

Preces Vespertinae (evening): Evening prayer is a thanks for the good works done that day and the fulfillment of labor.

Preces Noctes (night): Night prayer (or Before Bed Prayer) is a thanks for oneself and one's loved ones, and a

plea to keep the soul safe in the absence of light.

Hora Lupinum (Hour of the Wolf): The predawn hours, most often viewed as 3:00 am to 4:00 am or 4:00 am to 5:00 am, are considered the worst for the safety of the soul. It is this time that thoughts of morbidity and despair can gain the most sway over the soul. Most people are asleep, and are thus protected, but monks often use this hour to pray for greater resolve in the face of night.

There are also numerous *Preces Per Diem Persolvendae*, or During the Day prayers, for a variety of reasons and purposes, varying from place to place and sect to sect.

Seasonal Rites/Festivals/ Events

There are a number of rites, festivals or religious events that are practiced each season, although their exact date varies from planet to planet, tied to a world's unique astrological or lunar rhythms.

Oration for the New Dawn (New Years)

This rite is performed at the moment the old year becomes the new — usually at or soon after the winter solstice. It is also called the “Return of Light,” the “Lessening of the Dark,” or the “Waning of Winter.” This rite is especially popular on ice worlds like Malignatius, where the physical changes associated with its winter solstice and spring are barely noticeable, making its symbolic entry into a new dawn even more important to the faithful of that world.

Ode to Fecundity (Spring)

This rite to welcome spring emphasizes the Pancreator's gift of life and growth each year. It has roots to ancient Urth and Diaspora-era fertility festivals (including some Gjarti rites), and in some places still retains its old associations with bodily (rather than spiritual) rebirth and resurrection or reincarnation.

Canticle for Summer

At this time of maximum light, rites are made to emphasize joy and happiness — not the riotous partying often associated with spring, but a warm and content happiness earned through good works and hard labor. In many regions, it is a time when the cathedrals and parishes bring in large blocks of ice, to provide relief from oppressive heat, causing throngs to pack into the churches.

Autumn Hymn

The rite of the harvest, a time for community and a sharing of both labor and yield. As the light begins to withdraw, it is time for all souls to contemplate the spiritual light that still shines, unseen by mortal eyes but illuminating the reflective soul.

Universal Rites/Festivals/ Events

Cosmos Carnival (late February-early March week)

A sort of Feast of Fools, descended from pagan rites such as Mardi Gras or Carnival. Serfs, freemen and even nobles throw caution to the wind and party hard for a week, often adopting elaborate masques and costumes to hide their identities and protect themselves from shame (or notoriety). This is the League's favorite holiday, for its merchants sell more booze, magic lantern holovids, and all sorts of toys during this week than any single other time of the year (even more than Lux Splendor, where handmade crafts are the most popular).

The Church long ago failed to stamp out this ever-popular festival. Instead, it adopted it and allows — for this week only — a more lax view of sin and even heresy. On some worlds, the Inquisition is forbidden from operating for this week (except against the most heinous crimes, like anti-nomy); its members are expected to join in the celebrations or retreat to a monastery. This rarely stops the more fanatic from acting against what they believe to be rampant immorality.

In the Kurga Caliphate, the first day of this festival is recognized as the birthday of Sata Natura.

Urth Day (May 1st)

An ancient holiday commemorating humanity's cradle, this was popular among Diasporan colonists far from their ancestor's birthplace, although its origins are said to have begun in Urth's preinterstellar era as some sort of terraforming reform holiday. The Church has sanctified the day as a time to remember Holy Terra and humanity's long history on that orb. Some worlds extend this celebration to Urth's stellar neighbors, such as Mars (the alleged birthplace of the Prophet) and the jumpgate.

First Jump (July 4th)

Originally a secular celebration, celebrating the day of the first manned trip through Urth's jumpgate in 2306 (the year following its discovery), this day was ordained as a Church holiday by Saint Palamedes in his effort to stamp out its Sathraist connotations. It is now mainly observed by the Charioteers and those who make their living among the stars.

Saint Ramos Day/Colony Day (August 10th)

A holiday consecrating the trials and triumphs of Saint Ramos, a colonist of the early Diaspora who was adopted as a saint by the Second Republic Church even though he lived in prereflective times (before the Prophet). Ramos, a popular colonist rights activist, was martyred before the guns of zaibatsu police. Colony Day was later declared by the Second Republic in memory of Ramos and all colonists.

League iconoclasts snicker at this holiday, claiming its origins begin as a zaibatsu loyalty ceremony forced onto corporate employees and transient workers, involving chanting company songs and clapping to a single beat. It was during one of these ceremonies that Ramos led his ill-fated revolt.

Santa Flamma Dies (September 17th)

Rites celebrating the day the Prophet saw the Holy Flame and changed the course of human history. The second-most important holiday celebrated by the Church (the first being Lux Splendor, below), this is a time for prayer and thanks to the Pancreator for His grace, and a thanks to the Prophet and all his saints for carrying the Pancreator's message. Plays recreating this legendary moment and the gathering of the disciples take place across the Known Worlds on this day, and popular holovid movies about the Prophet are shown in magic lantern theaters in the larger cities.

Mortos Diablos (October 31st)

The old Urth Day of the Dead and Halloween holidays were carried by Diaspora colonists and workers to new worlds, recreated on many different days throughout the universe, but most often in mid to late autumn, as winter creeps in.

During the Second Republic, Patriarch Orrin, recognizing that the pagan associations of this holiday had grown greater as humanity spread throughout the stars, tried to

co-opt it as a Church holiday, a time wherein priests would perform rites to hold back the Dark and protect the souls of the faithful from the demons which rode freely that night. Called Mortos Diablos and enshrined on October 31st (the traditional old Urth Halloween), its rites became a tradition across the universe. Mortos Diablos was eventually co-opted in turn by a megacorp marketing firm as an excuse to party.

Nonetheless, the pagan associations remained and still do at the beginning of the 50th century. Even devout parishioners often sneak to the edge of town at night, seeking protection charms and amulets from wandering Zuranist bishops. Indeed, Zuranity, the religion of the itinerant Children of Zuran, is given a degree of respect at this time, for its followers seem to have real luck at holding bizarre Mortos Diablos misfortunes at bay.

Dies Lamentum (December 23rd)

The Prophet's Wake, mourning his death in the jumpgate accident (2849) while on embassy to the Vau. Some parishioners take this day too seriously, performing mortifications on themselves in attempts to recreate the Prophet's stigmata (usually conceived as an immolation in flame). More reasonable worshippers reflect on Zebulon's life and works, holding Omega Gospel readings.

Lux Splendor (December 25th)

The Radiance of Light, following the death of the Prophet, as his spirit cleansed the jumpgates and consecrated



them against the Dark, making the stars safe for humanity. The most important holiday in the Orthodox canon, Lux Splendor represents the bounty of grace available to all beings, not just the special grace gifted to saints alone. During this time, the faithful are expected to give presents to their loved ones and friends, representing the reflection of light from each soul to every other soul throughout the universe, a reminder of the Prophet's parting gift.

Some claim that the date of the Prophet's death, and thus the successive Lux Splendor, is factually incorrect, and that it instead represents a time of worship in the Prophet's own prereflective religion.

Theurgy

Theurgy is not a common discipline. In fact, for many of its practitioners, it is a solitary study, with effects only becoming apparent after years of meditation and prayer. Still, most are a direct outgrowth of worship, and especially from communal worship. A priest's first duty is to the Pancreator (via the Church), but his second one is to his flock. These rites reflect the different duties of the sects, and stem from true belief and worship.

Blessed Confession (Orthodox)

(Level 2, Extrovert + Empathy, L, sensory, prolonged, 1W)

Confession is a sacrament, and it does more than just give the priesthood blackmail information on people. It is a cleansing process, designed to clear people from the sins of misdeeds and leave them open to the Pancreator's grace. A confessor may use this ritual on someone who has voluntarily confessed a sin. The sinner now gets a +2 to all goal numbers involved in preventing that same sin, +1 per victory point from the theurgy roll.

Heaven's Axe (Brother Battle)

(Level 7, Faith + Fight or Melee, PG, touch, instant, 2W)

A Brother who invokes this asks the Pancreator to lend His hand to an attack. If the Brother Battle connects on his next attack, roll damage normally. A number of people up to the victory points on the roll +1 are effected, as well as the original target of the Brother's own attack. Thus, if three thugs attacked Sister Diana and she rolled a "7" for Heaven's Axe, she could strike one thug herself and the mystical force of her faith would strike two others. The one remaining hit from Heaven's Axe would be wasted.

Dreams of Eternity (Eskatonic)

(Level 5, Faith + Empathy, G, touch, special, 1W)

By gently tapping someone's crown point chakra (the top of the head), the Eskatonic can put her in a meditative trance from which only the most jarring disturbance will release her. The subject of this rite must roll Passion + Observe to take any action for the duration of the trance. It lasts for a number of turns equal to the Eskatonic's victory points + 1. This is best performed on willing supplicants or unwary targets, upon whose heads the theurge can place his palm without arousing suspicion. The theurge must make a Dexterity + Fight roll to touch the head of an unwilling and resisting target, who can dodge the attempt. (The theurge does not suffer a multiple action penalty for performing this rite and making an attack roll in the same turn.)

Blissful Ignorance (Temple Avesti)

(Level 4, Faith + Impress, PGL, sight, temporary, 1W)

Avestites have long sought ways to show people that learning is not only unnecessary but counter to the Good Life. This rite helps them demonstrate it. The Avestite can reduce any learned skill the target has by one per victory point. If this reduces the learned skill to 0, the target often cannot attempt to use that skill at all.

Health of the Congregation

(Sanctuary Aeon)

(Level 5, Calm + Focus, PGL, sight, prolonged, 1W)

A congregation draws its strength from the faith of its members. Health of the Congregation allows a priest to bolster all links in the chain of the community by bonding its members together to share in one another's suffering. A number of willing volunteers may divert the wounds of one another Congregation member to themselves in any combination. During the duration of the rite, each may take a number of Vitality damage points initially delivered to another member of the Congregation equal to his Faith score. Thus, if Scotan the Vorox and Father Haverson the Amalthean were linked to Sgt. Roc of the Muster, when Sgt. Roc gets hit by an assault rifle for five points of damage, Scotan and Haverson can elect to take some of this damage themselves; each can take up to their Faith in damage (1 for Scotan and 5 for Haverson).

This rite allows one congregationer plus one for every victory point to absorb damage for another. This damage is treated as normal damage of whatever type effected the target, be it fire, bullets, lasers, falling or whatever. (Mark this damage with an "F," to keep track of the total number a member's Faith allows.) Those linked by this rite elect to take damage, and do not have to take any damage that they do not choose to.

Credits

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