

# Priests & Priestly Abilities v3.1

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## Playing a Priest

We hope that playing a priest will be a rewarding and exciting experience. It is very important to realise that, unlike many games, priests do not receive any spell casting powers, instead their faith manifests itself in other ways.

### Priestly Dress and Vestments

A priest should always be ready to perform the rites of his faith. As such he should make sure that he has appropriate paraphernalia including suitable vestments, holy water and oil (both physreped by water), candles and a bell as well as his holy symbol. A holy symbol may be substantial but is generally small enough to be worn around the neck. (If you intend to hold it in hand during combat it must either be small or a combat safe physrep).

Priests should dress appropriately to show their station as priests. This generally means robes appropriate to their order, though in the case of some priests (such as those who follow Electra) armour may be appropriate. They should openly display the symbol of their patron power and should not seek to hide their nature and allegiance. This is true of priests of all faiths, even Tameris and Nysa.

It is not appropriate for all priests to go about dressed for war. This will depend upon the patron power and the nature of the priest's business but it is not the business of most priests to fight. This does not mean that it is inappropriate to go armed when there is trouble or that a sheathed weapon could not be carried but purely military weapons (such as two handed weapons and polearms, crossbows and shields) are generally inappropriate. Thus priests will not generally be seen in metal armour, with shields or heavy, military weapons.

Priests who do not follow the tenets of their faith may loose the faith of the powers that they serve. This includes the following:

- ☞ Failing to make their allegiance obvious at a glance;
- ☞ Carrying or wearing armour or weapons inappropriate to the situation (generally heavy weapons, armour, military missile weapons and shields);
- ☞ Failing to show proper respect for the powers generally (all the powers not just their patron);
- ☞ Failing to properly support their local congregation (priests will seek to promote community efforts and mutual support); and
- ☞ Failing to act properly with respect to their patron power.

Loss of powers is usually temporary but may become permanent in extreme cases.

### Priestly Attitudes

#### The Powers

While a priest is dedicated to the service of their patron power, faith is faith in the powers as a group. It is important for a priest to remember that he has faith in the existence and authority of the entire pantheon and not just his patron. A patron power will not permit their priest to be disrespectful of the other powers and no priest would think of such. When the powers are in conflict (for example, Tamaris and Electra) their priests may not be entirely friendly to each other, however, this will usually fall short of active conflict. It is unthinkable that a priest of Electra would be rude to Tamaris as Electra would punish him severely for such action.

The churches of the powers are political entities and as such are frequently in conflict. There may even be machinations going on within a particular church but this is generally internal and to the outside world and the congregations the churches will strive to be seen as (largely) united.

#### Another Power

*The information set out in this section is only in character knowledge for ordained priests and should not be passed to other player characters in character as it is part of the secrets of the priest's faith. No priest would just announce this information and would be unlikely to give it even to close colleagues unless absolutely necessary.*

As a graduate of a formal religious seminary you are aware of a legend regarding the powers that is not common knowledge but is a secret known only to the upper ranks of the priesthoods.

The legend concerns a power known as Xanthos, a sibling of Rhianan and Rhianos and born at the same time to the First. Where Rhianan and Rhianos are a balanced pair who's existence ensures the continuance of the cycle of life and death, Xanthos is their opposite, representing the absence of life. Some say Xanthos was born mad, some say it was driven that way by its brother and sister, although this is considered heresy by many.

References to Xanthos exist only in the oldest of religious texts. There is no evidence of the power or authority of Xanthos. The legend speaks of it being cast to the earth by the other powers who joined together to achieve this. In

some versions of the legend it is said to have been destroyed as it fell but in others it is said to have been imprisoned far beneath the earth. Whatever the truth is, there is little evidence for the existence of Xanthos. Occasionally a group of cultists will arise who claim to worship this dark power but they are swiftly put down by the combined might of the churches of the powers. Wherever these people get their power from there is no doubt that some of them do exhibit strange abilities.

The priesthoods of the other gods, especially Rhanan and Rhianos, guard all knowledge of Xanthos closely, and its name is never mentioned for fear of attracting its attention. It is the policy of the churches of the powers that knowledge of Xanthos not be published to the general population in order to prevent heresy and panic. The powers are all essentially cooperative and work together while Xanthos does not. The existence of such a legend is at best likely to cause dissention and at worst crisis of faith or religious panic amongst the faithful.

### Outsiders

Outsiders is the term used to refer to creatures or beings that come from outside of the mortal realms. They live outside of the blessing of the powers and are not subject to them. While the existence of outsiders is not denied it is clear that they do not appear to trouble the lands of men, at least for the most part.

It seems likely that they only appear when summoned or drawn to our world by the designs, intentional or not, of the colleges of sorcery. It is this kind of activity which caused the great cataclysm.

Many of the more modern seminaries and teachers point out that even if Xanthos does not exist or is dead, the cults who claim to worship it could be obtaining their powers from outsiders.

### The Mark of Evil

The churches charge their priests to be on the look out for the mark of evil. When a person submits to the worship of Xanthos, it is said that they can be granted great power. The exact form that this power takes is unclear. Such an occurrence is extremely rare and there is some evidence that the trials of such persons may have seen people convicted on rather flimsy evidence. However, all of the churches agree that when the mark of evil is on a person it is certain that that person will have entered into a pact with the evil one.

As a result, priests are charged to be on the look out at all times for people who have strange marks on their person. Most especially those who develop such marks as this is a sure sign that a pact has been entered into. Most priests have never seen such a mark but all are required to keep on their guard. *(As an OOC note, PC priests will never have come across changelings before which may generate some issues between changeling characters and priest characters.)*

### Sorcerers

Sorcerers are not generally appreciated by the churches of the powers. The powers themselves disapprove of sorcery because magic could be used to convince the people that a sorcerer was capable of miracles and either was a power or represented a power. As a result no man of faith would use sorcery and any sorcerer who gained faith would forswear his sorcerous abilities forever.

The churches disapprove of sorcerers but do not hold them to be evil. They should be watched as they are capable of performing terrible evil, especially because they are incapable of faith, but they are not inherently evil and may perform much that is good. In general priests do not have any particular issues with sorcerers who prominently display their allegiance to their college, as they are making it clear to all that they are a sorcerer, and as such would find it difficult to imitate a priest or Power of any sort. Sorcerers who attempt to operate outside of the structure of the colleges find themselves not only in trouble with the colleges but also with the churches and the faithful, who will take matters into their own hands if the colleges do not deal with the problem swiftly enough.

The main exception to this is the college of Xadamos. The members of this college are intensely disliked by the priesthood who generally refuse to work with them except in the most extreme of circumstances.

Sorcerers who seek to summon or bargain with outsiders are most definitely not to be trusted and should be dealt with most severely. They will often carry the mark of evil.

# The Power of Faith

## Rites

Priests have the power to perform various minor rites which have in game effects, some of them deceptively important. In order for a rite to function, the priest will generally require various paraphernalia.

The following minor rites have been set out in the core rules or have been uncovered by priests operating in the Bladelands:

<b>Bless ... (object)</b>	This rite is used to bless water or oil to create holy water and holy oil. It can also be used to bless holy symbols, vestments etc. All of these are required to perform other ceremonies and rites. (+) Holy water and holy oil should both be represented by water in small clearly marked bottles or vials.
<b>Bless ... (weapon)</b>	This rite takes advantage of the magics of the islands and the power of Pente (a gold powder used in holy rituals). It causes a weapon to be blessed so that it becomes more effective when used in battle against evil. The next time the weapon is used (that day, after that the blessing wears off) it strikes for "blessed" damage. The weapon also becomes immune to shatters, warps and heat spells. This rite can only be performed by a priest with Faith II and the weapon must be a complex one. Lastly the wielder of the weapon must also have Faith II. (*)
<b>Bless ... (armour)</b>	This rite is similar to bless weapon and also requires the use of Pente to be effective. The next time the wearer of the blessed armour is involved in a fight (that day, after that the blessing wears off), the blessing takes effect, preventing the penetration of arrows and crushing blows (they still do one hit) and rendering the armour invulnerable to spells such as heat metal. As with bless weapon the priest needs Faith II as does the armour wearer. The armour must be metallic (chain or plate) for the rite to be effective. (*)
<b>Bless ... (person)</b>	This rite is used to prepare a person for other involvement in rites or religious services. (+) It has been noted that when a person is blessed with Pente and provided that both the priest and the blessed have at least Faith II, the blessing has an increased effect. The next time that the blessed person would be affected (that day, after that the blessing wears off) by black channels or possession or the spells or psychic effects dominate, pact, charm, befriend, command, obey, fear, terror or death fugue, the blessing takes effect and the blessed is protected for the rest of that fight against those effects. (*)
<b>Anoint the wounded</b>	This rite is used on the battlefield. It freezes the character's life clock and prevents death once they have been anointed until the priest ceases to pray over them. A priest may only perform this for a single person without True Faith but may perform it for two people lying next to each other (within arms reach) if they both have True Faith. If the priest has True Faith III, after 15 minutes of prayer the wounded will stabilise naturally (as if treated by someone with First Aid II) if they have True Faith themselves. It requires the use of holy water. (+)
<b>Anoint the sick</b>	This rite is used to pray over those who have been injured. It aids in long term treatment providing the recovery of 1 spirit strength per hour for one person if they have no True Faith or up to ten people who do have True Faith. This becomes two points if the priest has True Faith III and the wounded also have faith. It requires the use of holy oil. (+)
<b>Hold service</b>	A priest may hold a religious service either alone or with others. This is a very effective way to arrange for a group to seek a miracle from one of the powers as it focuses the attention of the patron power upon the priest. It is said that when two or three gather together in this way the patron power actually walks among them. (*)
<b>Burial</b>	A priest may hold a service of burial. This is important in order to ensure that the spirit of the departed moves on to the after world properly. While this is particularly the remit of priests of Rhianos any priest may perform this service. It requires the use of holy water. (*)  It has been noted that such a service will disrupt the unquiet spirits of the walking dead. It is not, however, very practical to do this as the services takes some time to perform (several minutes).
<b>Consecrate</b>	A priest may consecrate ground, dedicating it to their patron power, in preparation for

using it for some religious purpose. This requires holy oil, the ceremony takes some considerable time and usually involves a service (\*)

### Marriage

A priest may conduct a ceremony of marriage. (\*)

### Births

A priest may bless children (of any age up to ten). This is said to grant them the protection of the priest's patron. (\*)

### Deaths

A priest is able to offer succour to the dying, blessing them as they depart to ensure that they receive rest. (+)

### Exorcism

A priest (possibly working together with others of faith) can seek to drive evil spirits or possessing forces out of mortal hosts. This is a difficult and potentially very dangerous activity (it requires the attention of the magic ref and a bead draw). An exorcism will definitely require the use of the candle and the bell as well as full vestments (and Pente wouldn't hurt ...).

Those who claim that the aid of sorcerers who are expert in spirit magic helps must surely be overstating the case .....

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, players may contact referees about other types of rites that they may wish to perform.

A priest will generally require his holy symbol and suitable vestments to conduct many of these rites effectively. Vestments generally consist of robes and a scarf but may vary from church to church (please contact the Character Ref). Those marked (\*) require vestments while those marked (+) only require a holy symbol.

## Non-rites

In addition to the rites noted above, priests and the faithful generally have noted the following powers and effects to be useful when combating the forces of darkness:

### Force of Faith

If someone with faith presents their holy symbol forcefully it is possible to dismay the enemies of the powers (undead, outsiders, evil spirits etc). This appears to be more effective the more faith you have and more effective for priests than the laity (so far True Faith II as a minimum seems to be required).

It can only be assumed that a group of the faithful working together would become significantly more powerful if they did this in a unified fashion.

### The Power of Prayer

Anyone of faith can seek the aid of the powers through prayer. As a general rule, the powers seek to avoid direct intervention in the form of miracles but they are prepared to offer their guidance to the faithful.

The best results are obtained when groups of the faithful gather together to do this, preferably in a holy place (such as a shrine).

It has been noted that the powers expect their followers to make their own decisions so clear answers are almost never received.

### Guiding Dreams

The powers have been noted to send dreams to the faithful. This seems to be a preferred method of communication when they wish to instruct their mortal followers. It is possible to contact the powers in this way: prayer before retiring for the night can lead to helpful information in the morning. It has also been noted that burning rare incense and sacrificing Pente is also helpful in making sure that the dreams are fully recalled.

### Miracles

Anyone of faith can call for the aid of the powers at any time. It is extremely unlikely that they will get it but in order to maximise your chances the following points are worth keeping in mind:

- ☞ A group of the faithful are more likely to attract the powers attention;
- ☞ Requests for appropriate aid are more likely to be granted (Rhannon is unlikely to slaughter your enemies);
- ☞ Miracles are more often granted once all possible mortal efforts have been exhausted;

- ☞ Those who rarely ask are more often answered when they finally do need help; and
- ☞ Do not forget to say thank you.

*As a practical game matter, it is a good idea to let the referees know in advance whenever possible as they may need to prepare appropriate props or monsters. Just shouting for aid in the middle of a battle will almost never work.*

As with so many areas related to the powers, it is very important to remember to give appropriate thanks, especially if you are lucky enough to receive the benefit of a miracle.

## Priestly Rituals

It has been widely observed that the islands are a place of tremendous magic. The priests of the powers have discovered that they too are able to harness these powerful effects and that they can perform ritual magic.

This is currently a somewhat embryonic art for the priesthood and results have been extremely mixed so far. It always involves groups of the faithful and the use of Pente. The ground should be consecrated and the ritual team should prepare with prayer.

*Any attempt to perform a ritual requires the attention of the magic ref who should be given advanced warning. It should be emphasised that this is extremely dangerous and could kill the entire ritual team.*

## True Faith III

It is very hard for a person to develop their faith to this level. A priest must hold a service, perform a major ritual successfully and defeat a significant enemy of their faith. They must also portray all the aspects of their power by actual deed. All of this must be observed by the Magic Ref or his appointed observer. A knight need not give a service but must be present at a great miracle and defeat three major enemies of the faith.

The benefits are significant: the power of your faith improves; you are more likely to obtain miracles, you may call upon other powers for aid in the name of your patron power; your rites are more effective (for example, prayers over the wounded now result in the faithful actually recovering from their wounds after fifteen minutes of prayer). You may also acquire various further powers (which cost DPs) and strive to become the Agent (knights) or Voice (priests) of your power.

## Modus

If you manage to obtain True Faith III (a difficult undertaking); you may purchase certain additional abilities at a cost of 2 DPs each. You must obtain the consent of the Magic Ref to buy these. The exact ones available vary from faith to faith.

The following are some examples:

<b>Weapon of Faith</b>	You are able to summon to you a weapon composed of your faith. This is a masterwork weapon, is always treated as blessed and may not be taken from you, dropped, disarmed etc. It will not break unless your faith does.
<b>Armour of Faith</b>	Your faith acts as plate on all locations. You are treated as if in head to foot plate armour at all times.
<b>Shield of Faith</b>	You are able to summon to you a shield composed of your faith. This is a masterwork shield and is always treated as blessed and may not be taken from you, dropped, disarmed etc. It will not break unless your faith does.

If you become an Agent or Voice you may buy others such as:

<b>Light Channels</b>	Once per day you may cast an effect 'Light Channels' which adversely affects creatures of evil (like Dark Channels).
<b>Lay on Hands</b>	Once per day you may heal yourself or another, this cures all wounds, poisons, diseases, restores one spirit strength and all armour and abilities (as if the encounter had reset).
<b>Faith Armour Mastery</b>	This allows the armour of faith to be improved as if you had the armour mastery skill for it.