

**Clerical Organizations of Aarbat**  
**For the Circe Road Campaign**  
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**Introduction:**

The predominant religion in the Kingdom of Aarbat is The Way of the Cross. The religious organization is hierarchical, with an Archbishop in the capital Aahfundit, several bishops in the City of Selleze as well as certain important towns, and numerous priests in charge of local churches, one in each town. The larger towns get more experienced priests titled “Father,” while the smaller hamlets in some cases receive only a senior cleric with the rank of “Brother” or perhaps “Sister.” Most of the hierarchy is male, but often a senior female cleric with responsibilities at the town or city or holy order level will be titled “Mother.” It is this hierarchy which is responsible for routine religious services, administering the sacraments, collecting tithes and forwarding a portion up the hierarchy, and ensuring that there is clerical representation where needed in addition to the local churches. For example, many military units or posts have chaplains, who report through a Head Chaplain (with the rank of Bishop) to the Archbishop.

However, there are also “Holy Orders” which exist outside of this hierarchical structure, charged with particular missions. The purpose of this document is to list and describe in summary form what these organizations are and what they do. These are listed in an order of relative importance, or perhaps how well they are known perhaps.

**Holy Orders:**

**1. The Order of the Blessed Hands of Healing:** This organization runs a large monastery and associated facilities located in Bedrest. Its focus is on healing, often providing potions and utilizing alchemy and herbalism. The monastery also serves as a teaching institution, with many healer specialist clerics having trained there, and with other specialists conducting research seeking improvements to care and the healing of injuries. The Order is predominantly female, and is sometimes known as “The Sisters of Healing” and other similar names. There are a small minority of priests and brothers who share in this mission, especially some who serve as chaplains with Army units. (In D&D 5E terms, most clerics in this order are “Life Domain,” though many clerics are Life Domain without being in this order.) Most churches in larger towns will have a Priestess or Sister of this order on staff. The Order is largely supported by a premium paid on Healing potions and other restoratives, as well as gifts of appreciation from those who can afford to be generous. At least in principle, healing care is freely given by members of the Order.

**2. The Order of the Paladins of Aarbat:** This is the kingdom's formal Paladin organization, with headquarters located in the capital, Aahfundit. Paladins like Pargon (a noble of undeclared parentage based in Tonstol) and Sir Yuberry (on Lord Grantt’s staff) belong to this Order. The Paladins of Aarbat are a quasi-religious order, since they have both Religious and Military training and undertake mission that might be in either domain, or most often concern a combination of both. The Paladins are not exactly secretive, but do not make a practice of disclosing their business. The Head Paladin has his official office in Aahfundit. He reports to both the King and to the Archbishop, with the degree and domains of authority left somewhat ambiguous. The Paladins cooperate with The Queen’s Own Rangers to some degree, and with

local clerics as appropriate, for whatever mission they undertake. Usually this cooperation is a matter of sharing information. Most Paladin missions are individual missions either conveyed from the sources of authority to deal with known threats to the Kingdom or the Church, or a mission a Paladin is “Called” to, by some sign from Higher Authority. That term is generally reserved to meaning sent from God Almighty Himself by an angel, or in a dream, or in a compelling sense that a mission is worthy. All or almost all Paladins are of the “Oath of Devotion.” That’s what the Order officially takes as the standard for being a Paladin. Most Paladins have an origin from the nobility or as merchants or officials. One way or another they have important parents in the governance of Aarbat. These are often a second or third son with no prospects of direct inheritance of a landed fief or leadership in the family’s business. However, the Order has acknowledged as Paladins, occasional, young men and even women who seem to come from nowhere of importance, and yet have a sense of Devotion and Mission that is worthy. The Head Paladin usually wants to interrogate these himself thoroughly, or in some cases where he can’t, sends a trusted deputy to do so. Whatever the source, the Order is strict in the behavior expected, with a Lawful Good alignment and conduct required.

**3. The Brotherhood of the Rock Coast:** Focused on extending the faith into the south and west, specifically dealing with the hazards and non-human populations found in the Great Rock Mountains, and also the southern principalities (like the Kingdom of Prespurity, which worships Marduck). This brotherhood maintains small, rugged monasteries and missions in or near mountain settlements, often working directly with communities struggling against giants or competing dwarf clans. The Brotherhood maintains strong connections with the neighboring Kingdom of Xrune, which is also predominantly of The Way of the Cross, relying on Xrune for funding, relics, and experienced missionary clerics for this perilous frontier work. This connection to Xrune raises suspicions among the established Church Hierarchy in Aarbat. Since the money comes more from Xrune than from sources in Aarbat, the Order is more answerable to the Archbishop of Xrune than to the Archbishop of Aarbat. Still, since Xrune and Aarbat are usually allies, or at least at peace, there usually isn’t any problem in practice. Settlers in the Great Rock Mountains area do appreciate the extra help and support. The Kingdoms of Prespurity, Weatherpoint, and Upwind allow Way of the Cross clerics to establish “shrines,” but in the case of Prespurity, not temples or Churches. The clerics that take posts in these southern principalities are often of the Brotherhood. Only the bravest might try to find followers in Leeshr, and none dare go to Bonetown.

**4. The Sisters of the Mysteries of Life:** This is a religious order characterized by secrecy. The members are thought to be mostly members of the Nature domain, though not all are. They are somewhat like the druids in avoiding civilization, places like Selleze and larger towns, in favor of taking posts at smaller towns and villages where they usually function as healers. They almost never identify themselves as being members of this order. They are sometimes discovered, and in cases where the ruling cleric is strict, occasionally dismissed. Some follow an itinerate pattern of transient residence here or there between travels. Many members of the Order live in communities in either secret holds or as transient camps. There is definitely a coven somewhere in the vicinity of Gildegulch, likely in the forests to the south. There is a Mother Superior with an official headquarters in Aahfundit, so in principle she reports to the Archbishop, but the connection is questionable. The members of this order are held by some in the Church to follow heretical practices in the secret camps where they meet.

**5. The Order of the Scriveners of Saint Joel:** Named after Saint Joel, associated with the cathedral in the City of Selleze, this Order is dedicated to the careful preservation and documentation of Church doctrine, legal records, and divine mandates. The Scriveners operate a large scriptorium in Selleze, where the powerful guilds demand judicial rigor when it comes to issues that arise between the Church and businesses. These clerics specialize in deciphering and interpreting ancient texts and verifying documents (such as those needed for nobility appeals). To an extent they serve as the Archbishop's judicial arm, often providing notaries and expert witnesses during inquiries or trials concerning heresy or corruption within the hierarchy. Many of the clerics of this Order are of the Knowledge Domain, and are constantly seeking information about not just the practice of the Way of the Cross, but other religions as well. Occasionally members serve merchants, nobles, or even the King as consultants when negotiating trade proposals and treaties. Members of this Order are seldom encountered outside Selleze unless pursuing some mystery or question for the sake of knowledge, or to serve some interest who is paying for their service.

**6. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrines of the Faith:** This Order operates in great secrecy as enforcers of correct doctrine, especially in cases that seem beyond the ability of the normal hierarchy or the Scriveners of Saint Joel to handle. Members do not identify themselves outside the order. They communicate with each other only infrequently when a matter of grave importance comes before them. Members are supposed to be widely scattered among clerics and some even are said to be disguised as laymen. When a matter requires action, the members meet in a secretly arranged place and go together to set matters right. When they do this, they don black robes and wear masks to conceal their true identity. They typically arrive where the errant individual is found about dusk and proceed to force him into an outdoor trial where the subject must convincingly renounce his heresy or will suffer sentencing and execution, typically by fire, on the spot. The members then go resume normal lives afterwards. These trials and executions are rare, occurring perhaps maybe once in ten years. Still, the reports of such serve as a warning to the errant, which may be more important to maintaining conformity to the doctrines in question than the trials themselves. The words, "The Black Robed Clerics are coming!" usually is sufficient to send anyone who hears those words running.

**7. The Order of the Cleansing Light:** This international Order specializes in confronting extraplanar and malevolent supernatural entities, such as demons or devils, the necromantic cults implied by undead activity, and other particularly dangerous cults like the Cult of Seth or the Cult of Baileesh. Unlike regular clerics, who may be unfamiliar with such threats, the Cleansing Light trains members in protective rituals, exorcism, and identification of demonic sigils. They operate outside the normal clerical hierarchy, being called on to help directly by Archbishops or the Paladin Orders to address occult threats perceived as too sensitive or dangerous for common clerics to handle. Members frequently travel great distances to track and neutralize sources of great evil. The "local" headquarters of this Order is in Xrune, but the Head of the Order is said to answer only to the Holy C Himself. Some members are open about being of this order. More commonly most do so secretly, especially when confronting threats from other cultures.

### **Conclusion:**

Aarbat is a religiously complex place. Members of these orders sometimes cooperate, but often work at cross purposes. Sometimes members even spy or work against other Orders.