Death Domain Cleric 12

> **Your Role:** Necrotic spellcaster and necromancer. Melt enemies with Spirit Guardians, raise undead armies, and ignore necrotic resistance entirely. You still have the full Cleric healing and support toolkit as backup.

At a Glance

Race: Wood Half-Elf (Darkvision, Fey Ancestry, extra speed + skill) or Drow (Superior Darkvision)
Background: Folk Hero (Animal Handling + Survival, both WIS-based)

Stats: STR 8 / DEX 14 / **CON 16** / INT 8 / **WIS 17** / CHA 10 Wisdom powers your spells. CON keeps you alive and Concentrated. DEX 14 caps medium armor AC contribution.

Key limitation: Death Domain only gets medium armor proficiency (no heavy armor). You'll need to either build around medium armor + DEX or take the Heavily Armored feat at level 4.

Level-by-Level

Level 1 -- Cleric 1 (Death Domain)

You gain:

- **Reaper** -- Your Necromancy cantrips that target one creature can target an additional creature. This means Toll the Dead and Bone Chill both hit two targets. At level 1. This is absurd cantrip value.
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** False Life (7 temp HP, no Concentration), Ray of Sickness (2d8 poison + can Poison the target)
- **Medium Armor + Shield + Martial Weapon Proficiency**

Cantrips: Toll the Dead (your primary damage -- 1d12 vs injured targets, hits two with Reaper), Bone Chill (prevents healing, hits two with Reaper), Guidance (essential utility), Sacred Flame

(radiant damage backup)

Prepare: Healing Word (bonus action ranged heal -- essential), Bless (Concentration, +1d4 to attack rolls and saves for 3 allies), Command (versatile crowd control), Shield of Faith (+2 AC to an ally, Concentration)

Gameplay: Double Toll the Dead is your bread and butter. Two enemies take 1d8 necrotic each (1d12 if damaged) as a single cantrip action, no spell slot cost. Bless your frontline, Healing Word downed allies as a bonus action, and use Ray of Sickness when you want to apply Poisoned.

Level 2 -- Cleric 2

You gain:

- **Channel Divinity: Turn Undead** -- Force nearby undead to flee. Situational but very strong in Act 2 (full of undead).
- **Channel Divinity: Touch of Death** -- When you hit a creature with a melee attack, spend a Channel Divinity charge to deal bonus necrotic damage equal to 5 + (2x Cleric level). At level 2 that's 9 extra necrotic on a melee hit. This scales to 29 at level 12. Very strong burst.
- **1 Channel Divinity charge** (recharges on short rest)

Prepare: Spiritual Weapon (bonus action summon that attacks independently for 10 turns, no Concentration)

Tactics: Touch of Death is your burst tool. Walk into melee, hit an enemy with a weapon or Booming Blade, then Channel Divinity for a big chunk of necrotic on top. Then step back and Toll the Dead from range on subsequent turns.

Level 3 -- Cleric 3

You gain:

- **2nd-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Blindness (CON save, no Concentration -- blinded enemies have Disadvantage on attacks and your party has Advantage against them), Ray of Enfeeblement (halves target's weapon damage)

Prepare: Aid (permanently boost max HP of 3 allies by 5 per slot level, no Concentration, lasts until long rest), Hold Person (paralyze humanoids for auto-crit setup), Silence (shuts down enemy casters in an area)

Level 4 -- Cleric 4

You gain:

- **Feat or ASI:** Pick one:
  - **Heavily Armored** -- +1 STR (8 -> 9), gain heavy armor proficiency. Lets you wear the Adamantine Splint you forged in Grymforge for 18 AC + shield = 20 AC. Solves the "no heavy armor" problem permanently.
  - **+2 WIS (17 -> 19)** -- Higher spell save DC and more prepared spells. Better if you're comfortable in medium armor (16-17 AC with shield).
  - **War Caster** -- Advantage on Concentration saves. Critical if you plan to maintain Spirit Guardians in melee constantly.
- **New cantrip:** Bursting Sinew (Patch 8 necromancy cantrip that explodes corpses) if available, benefits from Reaper.

Level 5 -- Cleric 5

The build comes online here.

You gain:

- **3rd-Level Spell Slots**
- **Destroy Undead** -- Turn Undead now also deals 4d6 radiant damage to turned undead. Devastating in Act 2.
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Animate Dead (raise a corpse as a zombie or skeleton to fight for you, lasts until long rest, upcasting to 4th level summons 3), Vampiric Touch (Concentration melee spell, deal 3d6 necrotic and heal for half the damage dealt, lasts 10 turns)

Prepare:

- **Spirit Guardians** -- THE Cleric spell. Creates a damaging aura around you (3d8 radiant or necrotic per enemy per turn, their speed is halved). Concentration. **Choose the necrotic version** so it benefits from Inescapable Destruction at level 6. This spell alone carries entire runs.
- **Revivify** -- Resurrect a downed ally in combat. Must have.
- **Mass Healing Word** -- Bonus action ranged heal for up to 6 allies.
- **Glyph of Warding** -- Place a trap. Sleep variant is extremely strong CC.

This is where the build transforms. Spirit Guardians (necrotic) + walking into packs of enemies is your primary combat strategy for the rest of the game. Wade into melee, let the aura shred everything around you, use Touch of Death for burst, and Healing Word downed allies as a bonus action.

Level 6 -- Cleric 6

Your necrotic damage becomes uncounterable.

You gain:

- **Inescapable Destruction** -- Your spells ignore resistance to Necrotic damage. This is enormous. Many enemies in Acts 2 and 3 resist necrotic. You now bypass that completely. Spirit Guardians (necrotic), Toll the Dead, Vampiric Touch, Touch of Death -- all hit for full damage regardless of enemy resistances.
- **2nd Channel Divinity charge** -- Touch of Death twice per short rest, or mix with Turn Undead.

Level 7 -- Cleric 7

You gain:

- **4th-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Blight (8d8 necrotic single-target nuke, CON save for half -- ignores resistance via Inescapable Destruction), Death Ward (place on an ally before a fight; first time they'd drop to 0 HP, they go to 1 instead, no Concentration)

Prepare: Banishment (remove a dangerous enemy, CHA save, Concentration), Guardian of Faith (spectral sentry dealing 20 radiant per enemy entering, 60 total, no Concentration), Freedom of Movement

Upcast tip: Animate Dead at 4th level summons 3 undead instead of 1. Start building your army.

Level 8 -- Cleric 8

Melee power spike.

You gain:

- **Divine Strike: Necrotic** -- Once per turn, your melee weapon attacks deal an additional 1d8 necrotic damage. Stacks with Touch of Death (Channel Divinity), your weapon damage, and Booming Blade.
- **Feat or ASI:** +2 WIS to reach 20 (if you took +2 at level 4) or 19 (if you took Heavily Armored). At 20 WIS: +5 to spell save DC, spell attacks, Perception, and all WIS skills. If WIS is already 20: Resilient (CON), Alert, or Sentinel.

Melee combo: Booming Blade (weapon + thunder + movement punishment) + Divine Strike (+1d8 necrotic) + Touch of Death (5 + 2x12 = 29 necrotic from Channel Divinity). That's a devastating single hit.

Level 9 -- Cleric 9

You gain:

- **5th-Level Spell Slots**
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Cloudkill (5d8 poison AoE cloud per turn, repositionable, Concentration -- many enemies resist poison though), Contagion (apply a disease via melee touch, niche but flavorful)

Prepare: Insect Plague (4d10 piercing AoE per turn), Greater Restoration, Mass Cure Wounds, Flame Strike (8d6 fire/radiant burst, no Concentration)

Upcast opportunities: Spirit Guardians at 5th level = 5d8 per enemy per turn. Animate Dead at 5th level = 5 undead. Blight at 5th level = 9d8.

Level 10 -- Cleric 10

You gain:

- **Divine Intervention** -- Once per campaign (not per rest, once ever). Options:
  - **Sunder the Heretical** -- Massive radiant AoE nuke. Great burst.
  - **Opulent Revival** -- Resurrect all fallen companions and fully heal them. Emergency button.
  - **Golden Generosity** -- Camping supplies, potions, scrolls.
  - **Arm Thy Servant** -- Devotee's Mace (legendary weapon). **Give this to your Life Cleric instead.** Take Sunder the Heretical or Opulent Revival.

Level 11 -- Cleric 11

6th-level spells. The endgame power tier.

You gain:

- **6th-Level Spell Slot** (one per long rest)
- **Domain Spells (always prepared):** Harm -- 14d6 necrotic damage to a single target (CON save for half). Ignores necrotic resistance via Inescapable Destruction. Average 49

damage, up to 84 on a failed save. Your delete button.

Prepare: Heal (70 HP to one creature), Heroes' Feast (party-wide immunity to poison/fear, Advantage on WIS saves, bonus max HP), Create Undead (summon a mummy), Blade Barrier (wall of spinning blades, 6d10 slashing, no Concentration)

Level 12 -- Cleric 12

You gain:

- **2nd 6th-Level Spell Slot** -- Double Harm, or Harm + Heal, or Harm + Heroes' Feast.
- **Feat:** Alert (+5 Initiative), Resilient (CON), Tough (+24 HP), or Sentinel

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Gear to Grab

Act 1

Necromancy of Thay (book) *Where:* Blighted Village, Apothecary's cellar (hidden lab behind bookcase). Requires the Dark Amethyst from the Whispering Depths spider cave to open. Read it and pass the WIS checks (DC 10, 15, 20). *Why:* Eventually unlocks Danse Macabre (summon 4 ghouls per long rest) once you get the Tharchiate Codex in Act 3. Even partially read, you get Speak With Dead. **Do NOT skip this.**

Hollow's Staff *Where:* Zhentarim Basement, locked chest in a cell *Why:* Heightened Necromancy -- your necromancy spells that require saves impose Disadvantage on the saving throw. Massive accuracy boost for Toll the Dead, Blindness, Ray of Sickness, etc.

Abyss Beckoners (gloves) *Where:* Sold by Blurg in Myconid Colony (Underdark) *Why:* Summoned creatures gain resistance to all damage except psychic. Your Animate Dead zombies/skeletons become significantly tankier. Critical for a necromancer build.

Adamantine Scale Mail *Where:* Grymforge, Adamantine Forge (Scale Mail Mould + Mithral Ore). If you took Heavily Armored feat, craft Splint instead. *Why:* 16+DEX AC (up to 18 with shield), crits become normal hits.

Act 2

Ring of Exalted Marrow *Where:* Moonrise Towers rooftop *Why:* Grants the Exalted Marrow cantrip (melee necromancy + paralyze) and gives enemies Disadvantage plus -1d4 on saves against your necromancy spells. Huge.

Circle of Bones (helmet) *Where:* Looted from Balthazar (fight him in the Gauntlet of Shar or at the Nightsong) *Why:* Free Animate Dead per long rest (no slot cost) AND buffs allied undead within range. Best-in-slot helmet for necromancer builds.

Crypt Lord Ring *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar, sarcophagus in a side room *Why:* Free Create Undead (summon mummy) per long rest. Free powerful summon on top of your existing Animate Dead.

Callous Glow Ring *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar, Self-Same Trial reward *Why:* Bonus radiant damage to illuminated targets. Lets you proc Radiating Orb effects even with necrotic Spirit Guardians.

Boots of Stormy Clamour *Where:* Gauntlet of Shar or Last Light Inn vendors *Why:* Applying a condition to an enemy = they also gain Reverberation (-1 to attack rolls/saves, stacking). Spirit Guardians applies conditions constantly, so these boots give persistent enemy debuffs.

Act 3

Staff of Cherished Necromancy *Where:* Sold by (or looted from) Mystic Carrion in Philgrave's Mansion, Lower City *Why:* **Best weapon for this build.** Heightened Necromancy (Disadvantage on saves vs your necromancy spells) AND Life Essence Harvest: when you kill an enemy with a necromancy spell, gain Life Essence. Life Essence lets you cast a necromancy spell without using a spell slot. Free upcasted Inflict Wounds or Spirit Guardians refresh. Game-changing.

Quickspell Gloves *Where:* Sorcerous Sundries, sold by Rolan or Lorroakan's Projection *Why:* Cast a cantrip as a bonus action once per short rest. With Reaper, that's a bonus action double Toll the Dead. 4 enemies hit by cantrips per turn total.

Tharchiate Codex *Where:* Sorcerous Sundries vault (portal puzzle, same area as Markoheshkir) *Why:* Re-read Necromancy of Thay with this to pass a DC 20 WIS check and permanently unlock Danse Macabre (summon 4 ghouls per long rest).

Quick Tips

> **Spirit Guardians (necrotic) is your primary combat spell.** Walk into enemies, let the aura shred them. Inescapable Destruction means nothing resists it.

> **Toll the Dead hits TWO enemies every turn for free.** With Quickspell Gloves from Act 3, you can hit 4 separate enemies per turn with cantrips alone.

> **Touch of Death at level 12 = 29 bonus necrotic on a melee hit.** Combine with Booming Blade + Divine Strike for massive single-target burst.

> **Summon undead BEFORE fights.** Cast Animate Dead out of combat and enter the fight with 3-5 extra bodies on your side. Buff them with Aid to boost their max HP.

> **Staff of Cherished Necromancy is the endgame unlock.** Kill something with Spirit Guardians, get a free fully-upcasted necromancy spell in return. That loop is insane.

> **You're still a Cleric.** Keep Healing Word prepared always. Picking up downed allies is always your backup job.

Party Gear Assignments

This build gets: Staff of Cherished Necromancy, Circle of Bones, Crypt Lord Ring, Ring of Exalted Marrow, Quickspell Gloves, Boots of Stormy Clamour

Passes to others:

- Helldusk Armor -> Paladin/Hexblade. *Backup:* Adamantine Splint or Yuan-Ti Scale Mail.
- Viconia's Walking Fortress -> Paladin/Hexblade. *Backup:* Adamantine Shield.
- Helm of Balduran -> Life Cleric. Circle of Bones is better for you.
- Amulet of Greater Health -> Life Cleric. *Backup:* Spellcrux Amulet.
- Markoheshkir -> Shadow Sorcerer. Staff of Cherished Necromancy is better for you.
- **Divine Intervention:** Take Sunder the Heretical or Opulent Revival. Life Cleric takes the Devotee's Mace.

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