

Second Hand Preacher

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 15, 2015

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Sin is a part of life. Even Pope Francis, when asked who he was, said he was a sinner. We shouldn't be overly scrupulous, but each of us from time to time should examine the sin in our lives. Alcoholics Anonymous has the 5th step to give the opportunity to recall to God and someone else the exact nature of our wrongs. I have been privileged over the years to hear a number of 5th steps. For Catholics, it can often be one very long confession that looks at the entirety of one's life. AA has the 4th step to prepare the person going through the steps by having people list their sins by type and impact. The purpose is not to feel guilty, but to feel forgiven and to honor the one who has the power to forgive sins.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews continues to use the image of the High Priest. This is the comfort zone of his audience. The author recognizes the important role of the High Priest who offers sacrifice, but notes that they cannot forgive sins. He introduces Jesus, the great High Priest who sacrifices once and for all for the forgiveness of sins. The one offering makes perfect forever the one who follows. Jesus justifies the disciple if they live according to the love of the law. This person doesn't earn the salvation but is offered the free gift and has the capacity to accept salvation.

The sacrifice of Jesus is the only way our sins can be forgiven. It is the only way we can hope to be entered into everlasting life. This is why confession is so meaningful. We confess our sins to free ourselves from their burden and increase our ability to love more deeply. The priest fills in as the person of Christ in order to put a human face on the great High Priest. The priest does not have to be perfect for the sacrament to work. What makes the sacrament work is openness by the penitent and the ability to cooperate with God's grace on the part of the confessor. God makes the sacrament happen. He is really in charge and all of what I advise is under his influence. I give all the sins I hear to him and he blesses me with holy forgetfulness. I can hardly recall what I have heard over the years and the seal prevents me from revealing what I do remember. This week pray that the great High Priest blesses you abundantly.