

Second Hand Preacher

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 8, 2015

Hebrews 9:24-28

The Hebrews are a priestly people steeped in Jewish tradition. The author, who would have followed St. Paul, used examples from Judaism to make his points. This group must have been converted to Christianity. They must have been intrigued by the story of Jesus and were curious about his way. The author, who like Paul, must have been a part of the Jewish faith at first, because he knows how to write in Jewish categories. The letter talks of a High Priest. This would have been a part of temple priesthood. The High Priest is in charge and he has the special distinction of being able to sacrifice in the Holy of Holies once a year. This was seen as a very important act. It was a real high point in Judaism. This was a real sacrificial offering. The blood of a blessed sheep or goat is used to make the sacrifice

The author wants to compare this to Jesus. Jesus was a sacrificial offering. Instead of not using his own blood and once a year like the High Priest, Jesus is the new High Priest, who sacrifices once and for all with his own blood. The Jewish High Priest does his action as ritual, but Jesus does his action for our salvation. Jesus takes our sins and by his action washes the sins clean with his blood.

The Jewish High Priest uses a manmade sanctuary and Jesus uses a sanctuary in Heaven. This is the goal of Christian life to be part of the communion of saints in heaven. When we follow Jesus we are on a path to Heaven. We believe that one day Jesus will come again and lead his children to Heaven. For now we hold to seeing death as a passage into new life. I have done many funerals in my priesthood. I do not like human suffering, but I do gain strength from the promise of Heaven. The passion, death and resurrection of Jesus is our safe passage to eternity. So hopefully we can look at a funeral as a celebration of this life and an introduction to the life to come. We mourn, but we also hope. We believe our prayers can be linked together to pray for a soul passing from this life to the next. I pray that I will always hope in Jesus.