

Second Hand Preacher

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 13, 2015

James 2:14-18

Put yourself in the shoes of St. James. He was leading a church and he was most likely seeing some of his members not working, but sort of spiritualizing what it means to follow the Christ. I'm sure he wasn't against spiritual practice, but James seems like a practical fellow. Some of the poor were not being served and he wanted to let his Church know that doing works was part of the life of a Christian, as well. Look at Jesus; when he preached, he often cared for the needs of the people first. He would do the work of healing and feeding. Then he would give the words of everlasting life. Jesus wants us to follow his example. In this letter, James emphasizes how the members of his Church can walk this path.

Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers went against the notion that works were necessary for salvation. They believe that salvation comes through faith alone. They try and pinpoint scripture that talks about the need to have faith or believe and say that it doesn't say works are necessary and they are quite strong in their beliefs. They believe that Luther wanted to discourage people from thinking that we somehow earn our way to Heaven.

Catholics do not believe that doing works earn Heaven. No, they see salvation as intermingling of faith and works. If one has undergone conversion, then they can't help doing works. It is part of what they do to sustain their faith. They believe that saving grace calls us to action. If one has accepted that grace, then they can't help but to do the work of the Father. We do not want dead faith; we want faith that challenges us to live in the light of Christ.