

**11/15/15 ..... 33 B**

-- Even if you've been coming to Mass faithfully, you could almost miss the fact that, since the beginning of October, our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading has been from the book of Hebrews. I know I've been preaching primarily on the gospel, and I suspect most preachers have.

-- But it's an important book, and it shouldn't go unnoticed. And I believe it shows us how we should look at our other readings this week.

-- As its title suggests, Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians. They would have known about how priests offered sacrifice, and how the High Priest would go once a year into the Holy of Holies in the Temple.

-- This letter spends quite a bit of time comparing Jesus to the High Priest. Of course, Jesus was not born into a priestly family, yet he offered himself as a sacrifice, and that was a perfect sacrifice.

-- The Jewish priests had to offer sacrifices again and again, because they were as sinful as their people. But Jesus did not sin; so he only needed to make one sacrifice for all.

-- That is the point of today's reading. We don't need another savior. Jesus has triumphed over sin and death. In that sense, the victory is already won for us. We know that good will win over evil in the end.

-- But we still have to feel the full effects of that victory. As Hebrews says, "He now waits until his enemies are made his footstool." We know the victory is won, but we still face the reality of evil in the world and the effect of sin in ourselves.

-- That was true when these words were written. It continues to be true almost 2,000 years later. Evil is pervasive in our world. Violence abounds. In many areas of the world Christians suffer persecution, as do other religious people.

-- We wait for that final victory. At the same time, we struggle to free ourselves from the effects of our personal sin.

-- In these uncertain times, there's the temptation to think that the answer to the uncertainty we face is certainty. So may well-meaning Christians probe readings like our gospel to get a prediction of exactly when Jesus is coming to make all things right.

-- But, in the words of one good preacher, the antidote to uncertainty is not certainty, but courage. And courage involves perseverance. We are called to remain faithful, even in uncertain times. We are called to support each other as believers, in prayer and in faithful living.

-- That is the message the book of Hebrews gives us. We must hold faithfully to our confession of faith. We must encourage each other to continue to express our love in good works.

-- For the victory is ours, not because we have won that victory, but because Christ has won it for us. But we must accept that love and honor he's given us by being faithful to his promises.

-- God does not want people who give him a shout out when all is well, then go their own way when living out their faith is difficult. He asks us to persevere in this task.

-- We do not know when the end will come. But each and every one of us will certainly face an end, when God calls us to himself. Then we will face the four great realities of death, judgment, heaven and hell.

-- For those who persevere in living their faith, the verdict is certain. The question remains: Will we be faithful to the Lord until the end?