

(B29) SUNDAY 29 OF THE YEAR

(OCTOBER 17<sup>TH</sup>, 2021)

**Readings:** *Isaiah 53:10 – 11; Ps. 32 (33):4,5,17 – 21; Hebrews 4:14 – 16; Mark 10: 35 – 45.*

Both the Old Testament Reading from Isaiah and today's passage from the *Letter to Hebrews* are read during the Solemn Liturgy of the Passion on Good Friday which links with the last verse of today's Gospel Reading: *The Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

With the verses which form today's reading the author of *Hebrews* begins an exposition of the role of Jesus as *the supreme high priest*. Over this and the next four Sundays we shall hear parts of this exposition, which is based on a contrast between the role of the Jewish high priest in the Jerusalem temple and the saving work of Jesus.

There is an implied contrast in today's reading which says that Jesus *has gone through to the highest heaven*, whereas the Jewish high priest only went through the physical veil into the Holy of Holies, which we are told in chapter 9 *was a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one* – by which the author means worship offered in heaven.

But the author also points to a similarity between Jesus and the Old Testament high priests. They were *chosen from among men* (5:1), and Jesus too was human. As we heard two Sundays ago, he and those he came to sanctify *are of the same stock* – he and we have a single origin. That means that, having experienced human life and *feeling our weaknesses*, he is *compassionate and trustworthy* (2: 17). Even though he is *without sin*, he knows what it is to be tempted. He can be relied on to understand whatever situation we have been placed in – or have got ourselves into. So we can approach him with confidence – as we do in every mass – knowing that *when we are in need of help* we shall find *mercy* to deal with our past and *grace* to deal with our future.

The Old Testament Reading and the Gospel in today's mass remind us strongly of what we should remember at every mass – that the price Jesus paid to gain the role of the *compassionate and faithful high priest* was his passion and death on the cross.

As a eucharistic hymn says, Jesus our priest is interceding for us in heaven and on earth:

*His Manhood pleads where now it lives on heaven's eternal throne,  
And where in mystic rite he gives his presence to his own*

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*Once, only once, and once for all his precious life he gave.*

*Before the cross in faith we fall and own it strong to save*