

Readings: 1 Kings 17: 10 – 16; Ps. 145 (146); Hebrews 9: 24 – 28; Mark 12: 38 – 44.

In chapter eight and the beginning of chapter nine the author has made three main points. First, he quotes the words of God to Moses in the book Exodus: *See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain.* Secondly, he has reminded his hearers that the prophet Jeremiah had taught that the LORD would establish a new covenant to replace the one which the people had broken. Thirdly, he has described the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement when the high priest entered the Holy of Holies alone to do away with the sins committed by the people over the past year.

In today's reading the author teaches that Christ has fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy and has replaced the Old Testament ceremonies of the Day of Atonement once and for all. The Old Testament high priest entered *the sanctuary year after year with blood that is not his own*, but this earthly sanctuary was only a copy of the true sanctuary in heaven.

So the offering made by Christ differs from the Old Testament offering in three ways.

First, he has entered, not an earthly sanctuary, but *heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God.*

Secondly, because he has died on the cross, he has been able to present his own blood, rather than the blood of animals – *doing away with sin by sacrificing himself.*

Thirdly, rather than having *to suffer over and over again*, he *offers himself only once to take the faults of many upon himself.*

In every Eucharist this once-for-all self-offering of Christ is re-presented, that is, it is made present for each congregation of the faithful. So the sacrifice of Christ in his death, resurrection and ascension and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one and the same. What Christ, our Head, offered alone on Calvary and in his Exaltation to heaven, he now offers with us, the members of his Body.

'One offering, single and complete' with lips and hearts we say;

But what he never can repeat he shows forth day by day.

So there can be no better way to bind ourselves to the self-offering of Christ than to share in the mass – not only on Sundays but as often as we can.