

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Paralyzing Fear First Week in Ordinary Time Wednesday, January 11, 2017
8:15 AM **Heb 2:14-18;** **Mk 1:29-39** (Jesus came from heaven to fulfill this high priestly role in a new way because he didn't simply do earthly rituals but took his own blood into the holy of holies.)

Today's reading from the Letter to the Hebrews has two very important points. One is that **the world is in bondage by the fear of death**; that is something to contemplate, to meditate on what this means. **Fear can be paralyzing.** Now there is a point of fear that is absolutely right and necessary. **We need to have proper fear.** Sometimes we have children that don't have proper fear and they harm themselves. So we need fear to avoid injury or taking unnecessary risks. But fear also can be paralyzing. In that case it does not help us. It is not an instinct that comes to our aid to prevent harm, but in fact it does harm, this paralyzing fear. For example I have heard of people who are so frightened by an approaching train that they are simply dead in the tracks, so to speak—paralyzing fear.

Well, in a similar way **the very reality of death can paralyze people so that they don't do what they need to do because they are afraid of dying.** And that fear is not just about **dying in terms of utter death**, but it's **dying also within relationships they are afraid of losing**, which is a kind of dying, losing family or losing friends or losing this or losing that. So you could say **the fear of death and the fear of losing paralyzes and it's a kind of bondage.** And the redemption in this particular reading, the **redemption is seen as freeing the children of Abraham from this bondage to fear so that we can do what we have to do regardless of the consequences.** Why? **Because we have assurance of faith, that we already live the eternal life of God, and that cannot be taken away.**

Now of course all the great **martyrs** in the history of the Church exemplify this very truth. **They were not afraid to go to death because they were alive with a life that cannot be**

snuffed out. But we don't have to be martyred in that sense to live this freedom, but it does take faith.

The other point which I don't want to go into too much is this image of the faithful high priest. Don't forget **the high priest and the temple were all part of visions before they were physical realities on earth.** Moses saw the temple and constructed a tent out of the vision. The high priest was always part of the vision. So this **high priest always had this intercessory role** and what this author is saying is that **Jesus came from heaven to fulfill this high priestly role in a new way because he didn't simply do earthly rituals but took his own blood into the holy of holies,** the original vision of God's place, of God's temple, completing the circuit. So it's through this gift of Christ and his death on the Cross that we are freed from the fear of death and can live.