

**Salvific Death**    Third Week in Ordinary Time    Monday, January 23, 2017    8:15 AM  
**Heb 9:15, 24-28;**    Mk 3:22-30    Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children  
(St. Vincent, deacon and martyr)    (Jesus' saving death is not a saving from, but a saving through.)

Today we are considering in the Letter to the Hebrews the role of the death of Christ. **It is a fundamental article of faith that the death of Christ is salvific, but what does that mean?** In what way is Jesus' death a saving death? That's the topic of this particular chapter, and it is a fundamental topic in all of theology, only it has never been dealt with adequately.

**The Letter to the Hebrews uses a lot of ritual language from the temple** comparing Jesus' blood to the blood of the Atonement and so on. **St. Paul** takes a totally different tack in Romans. He **deals with the death of Christ in terms of crime and punishment**, Jesus suffering the punishment due to all crime of all times. **Neither of these are terribly explanatory in nature.**

What we have to keep in mind is that **the early Church experienced salvation and persecution.** So in many ways the Holy Spirit was alive and active. They experienced miracles. They experienced a profound sense of presence and serenity and peace that they took to be the gift of the Holy Spirit, and yet at the same time they were not preserved from persecution or bitterness or death. **So they came to conclude that Jesus' death itself is all part of the saving process, and also their deaths were,** all of them a form of martyrdom to the love of God, a way of witnessing what is the **actual power that Jesus embodies, which is the power of love, and it's the power to endure.** In order for that power to be released and manifested death has to occur; in fact **it is in death that it is manifested most powerfully, most clearly.** This is true both for Jesus' death and the death of the martyrs, so that **Jesus' saving death is not a saving from, but a saving through.** Jesus' death inaugurates **the believers** into a process involving their own death, not saving them from it, but **bringing them through it to the resurrection.**

So all of the **rituals of the Church, of the sacraments,** and so on are all supposed to **speak of this basic mystery** that is very hard to talk about. The problem is sometimes we don't ponder the meaning of the symbols and the images and the signs; we just use them. This letter is written that **we might start to ponder what we are doing.**