

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Christ the High Priest Third Week in Ordinary Time Tuesday, January 29, 2019 **Heb 10:1-10;** Mk 3:31-35 (The Mass is a participation in the heavenly sacrifice of Christ and a form of ministry of the heavenly high priest.)

We have been reading from the Letter to the Hebrews which is a very deep piece of literature. One of the themes of this is **Christ the high priest**, which is the theme of today's Mass, a votive Mass in honor of Christ the high priest.

Now what is this high priest? Well if you go back to **Moses**, for example, **he had a vision of a heavenly temple and a heavenly minister in that temple**. From that vision he developed you may say the blueprints for the tent of blessing and later the temple, and the minister of the temple, the prime minister being the high priest. Before the time of Moses we have the image of **Melchizedek at the time of Abraham. He is priest of God Most High**; as it were he comes out of the blue, just like a visit of Yahweh. He has no parentage; he has no mother or father. He is not human. **He is either an angel or he is Yahweh himself**, Yahweh being the name of the God of the Old Testament, or one of the names.

So what the Letter to the Hebrews says is that **Jesus of Nazareth**, who is the Word of God, who has come into our lives and into our humanity, **is the fulfillment of this heavenly image**, model, or template that Moses saw in his vision and Abraham met in his life. **So Jesus really now is the heavenly high priest**. He was not of a priestly order; he was not of a priestly line. He was in the line of David. Priests are in the line of Levi, although there were other priests that were brought in at the time of David who were not actually even Israelites. Zadokites they were called; that's where we get the Sadducees. Well Jesus was not a Sadducee either. He was not a Levite; he was not a Sadducee, on earth. That's not the point.

The point of the Letter to the Hebrews is in his gift of himself on the cross, in the blood that he poured out of himself, he was established or **God established him as the actual, true**

high priest in the heavenly temple, the same temple envisioned by Moses, Isaiah, and many others, Ezekiel. And that role now is an eternal role. Earthly priests come and go. Christ is not going to come and go because Christ is eternal. **He is already the eternal Word of God, and now he is taking this role of the eternal intercessor for his brothers and sisters.**

This is the very central idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. **The earthly Eucharist on our table is a sacrifice because it involves the very same blood that Jesus is now pouring forth in eternity and in an eternal oblation, an eternal offering.** We don't duplicate the death of Christ. We reflect the gift, the heavenly gift, that is eternal; and therefore we share in it in a manner of foretaste and sign. **So the Mass is a participation in the heavenly sacrifice of Christ and a form of ministry of the heavenly high priest**—earthly priests merely sacramental signs, sacramental signs of Christ the heavenly high priest.

Now this teaching has been garbled, mutilated, and distorted throughout time. People just don't understand what this text is really saying. But I believe it is very important that we straighten this out and understand exactly what we are really doing.