

(B27) SUNDAY 27 OF THE YEAR

(OCTOBER 3RD, 2021)

Readings: *Genesis 2: 18 – 24; Ps. 127 (128); Hebrews 2: 9 – 11; Mark 10: 2 – 16.*

Today we start to read another New Testament book – the *Letter to the Hebrews*. Most scholars now accept that this is not one of Paul's letters, and indeed that it is not so much a letter as a theological treatise on the person and work of Christ and on its implications for the community for which it was written. That community may have been one of the 'house churches' in Rome, which included Jewish Christians. That is a possible explanation of the title *Letter to Hebrews*.

In the first chapter (which provides a reading at the mass on Christmas Day), the author argues for the superiority Jesus, the Son of God, over all the angels. At the beginning of chapter 2 he quotes Psalm 8, applying it to Jesus as *the Son of Man*, to whom all things are subjected. Writing to a minority congregation in an overwhelmingly pagan world, he points out that *we do not yet see everything in subjection to him*.

Our reading begins at this point: what we do 'see' – that is with the eye of faith – is *Jesus, who was for a short while* – that is during his life on earth which ended with his death on the cross – *made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and splendour*.

The reason for this *glory and splendour* is that *he submitted to death*. By doing this he co-operated with the gracious purpose of God, which was to *bring a great many of his sons into glory*. The author speaks of all human beings as 'sons', which here stresses the link with the one Son, by whom they are to be led through suffering and death to the glory for which God intends them.

For this to be possible the One Son must share the human nature of the many sons. *The one who sanctifies* – that is Jesus – *and the ones who are sanctified* – that is believing Christians – *are of the same stock*. He and we are equally human beings, *that is why he openly calls (us) brothers*.

The argument which our author puts forward in these first two chapters contributed to the classic exposition of the reason why our Saviour had to be both divine and human: only God could *destroy him who has the power of death, that is the devil*, but if this victory was to be shared by human beings the destroyer must himself be human.

He had to be made like his brethren in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God – a priest who could deal with *the sins of the people*.