

Homily

I am sure you are familiar with the sayings; “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it”; or “change for change sake”.

In this morning’s reading from Hebrews the writer (?Paul) refers to a new or replacement covenant between God and his people. In verse 7 we read: “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one”.

In verse 13, which for some unaccountable reason the compilers of the Lectionary decided to omit for today’s passage, reads:

In speaking of 'a new covenant', he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

As we know a covenant is a binding agreement between two parties. It has both a legal and a moral dimension. People speak of covenants in a variety of circumstances.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Christ initiated a new covenant between God the Father and we his people.

The old covenant was broken so it need to be changed. It wasn't change simply for changes sake. This Paul makes clear in when he writes:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need to look for a second one

The covenant referred to in the Old Testament known as the 'old' covenant, had failed, due in a large part to God's people thinking they knew better than God. They rejected the prophets and judges and instead turned to the ways of the people among whom they lived.

So through the birth, death and resurrection of Christ, a new covenant was established. In the Thanksgiving Prayer in the Eucharist we hear these words:

"This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins".

We are linked to Christ in a unique and amazing way.

The new covenant places us in a wonderful relationship with God in Christ built on grace which promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Every baptized Christian is a party to such a covenant.

In some ways for me the highlight of this passage is contained in the following words:

*for they shall all know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.*

*For I will be merciful towards their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more.'*

Surely this is the basis of the Good News. A personal relationship with Christ and the assurance of sin forgiven. A unique covenant relationship indeed.

In the gospel reading Marks recounts for us the calling of the twelve disciples. He tells us Jesus went up the mountain to perform this task. Symbolically a reference to ascending a mountain gives a divine imprimatur to the calling of the twelve.

Mark states the reason for their calling:

And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons.

We too are called to be messengers of the gospel.

We are sent out into a troubled, hurting world to proclaim the message of repentance, forgiveness and restoration.

Being set implies action. It is about being active rather than passive parties to the new covenant.

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