

The other night during the vice presidential debate one of the questions had to do with racial profiling. Bernard Shaw, the moderator, who is African American, asked the two white candidates to imagine that they were black and to tell the audience how they would feel if someone apprehended them just because of their skin color. One of the candidates said, "I would be outraged." The other said, "I am white. I have never been a minority in my life. I cannot pretend to know how that would feel."

One of the problems in being human is that we cannot know how someone else feels, especially if they have a different skin color, a different sexual orientation, a different country of origin, or a different sex. It's hard to know how someone else feels, because you can't become like them -- unless you are a power ranger or a wolverine or something. Our inability to transform causes misunderstanding, prejudice, and outright rejection. The world would be different if we could actually feel what someone else does. That's one reason support groups work well. If you have the same illness as somebody else, whether it's alcoholism, depression, or colon cancer, you can really bond with other people who have the same thing and who know how it feels.

Today we're beginning a series of readings from the Letter to the Hebrews. It will supply the text for our second reading from now until Advent begins. Nobody knows who wrote the book. It doesn't appear to be a letter because it's not from anybody to anybody. Even the name "Hebrews" came long after it was written. It's probably an early Christian sermon for listeners who knew the Jewish scriptures. Beyond that, we don't know too much about the origins of the Letter to the Hebrews.

Today's text puts Jesus up front. It's commenting on Psalm 8, which says in all of creation, God put human beings way up there, only a little less than angels. Hebrews says that God made Jesus a little less than angels, meaning that in Jesus God became human. Now, why? This is one of the great questions in the history of Christianity: Why did God become human? Hebrews answers very simply: God became human in order to die. When Jesus became human, suffered, died, and rose, God found a way for us who suffer and die also to rise to glory. God wants our glory. By suffering like we do, Jesus allows us to rise as he did.

To do all this, God became like us and felt like us. Unfortunately, we cannot do the same. We cannot feel what it is to be someone from a different race, but God did feel what it is to be human. What we can do is imitate God's example of sacrifice. We cannot think like someone with a different existence or opinion, but we can act humbly before them. We can treat them with tolerance and charity.

Do grownups ever keep kids from doing things?  
Do kids keep grownups from doing things?  
Bring one another to Jesus, especially in eucharist