

The Ninth Sunday of Ordinary Time
Homily ~ March 6, 2011

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Davison, Michigan

I read a quirky little item sometime back. It seems that the main library at the University of Indiana sinks over an inch every year. When it was built, engineers failed to take into account the weight of all the books that would occupy the building, and so the library is sinking. Obviously, some heavy reading takes place at the University of Indiana.

It is a foolish person who does not take into account both the weight of a structure and its contents, as well as the foundation on which it will stand, before beginning construction.

On more than one occasion Jesus used the example of constructing a building to make a serious point: “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. It did not collapse! It had been set solidly on rock!”

Of course, Jesus wasn’t talking about building a library or a skyscraper. No, he was talking about building lives. Wise people build their lives on a solid foundation. Where do you find that something that is unshakably certain upon which to build a life? We find it, of course, in Jesus’ teachings. Jesus said, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on rock.” The Word of God is the foundation upon which we build our lives. Jesus is the Word which became flesh. Both Old Testament and New testify to him. Fill yourself full with the teachings of Scripture.

There’s a story told by a medical doctor, James Brown, about a patient of his. The patient was a five-year-old boy named Bobby. Bobby had been diagnosed with cancer at age four. His cancer was now in remission. Still, he had to come for more tests and procedures.

Bobby had experienced numerous painful procedures and this day was to be no exception. Dr. Brown explained to him what they were going to do and the why and the importance of him remaining very still. Bobby assured his doctor that he would be very still and he promised that the nurses and technologists would not need to hold him down.

As they began, Bobby asked, “Dr. Brown, would it be okay if I said the Twenty-third Psalm while you stick me?”

“Of course, that would be fine,” Dr. Brown said. And they began the procedure.

Bobby recited beautifully. There were no tears and he stayed perfectly still. The procedure went well. Afterward Bobby said, “Dr. Brown, that really didn’t hurt much.” The doctor and the nurses knew better.

Then Bobby caught the doctor by surprise. He asked, “Dr. Brown, do you know the Twenty-third Psalm?”

“Well, sure,” Dr. Brown answered.

“Can you recite it like me?”

“Well, I don’t know. I think so,” Dr. Brown said, realizing he was going out on a limb.

“Let’s hear you.”

So Dr. Brown proceeded to stumble through the Twenty-third Psalm. In comparison to Bobby, his performance was quite shabby and he didn’t have a needle sticking in his back like Bobby did. As he recited the Psalm, Dr. Brown noticed all the other white coated professionals in the room trying to disappear as they feared being called on next. Bobby sincerely said, “You know, you really should know the Twenty-third Psalm by heart because when you say it out loud, God hears you and he lets you know inside your heart that he is being strong for you when you can’t be strong for yourself.”

Wow! There’s a little person whose life is built on a strong foundation. The first step is to fill yourself full of the Word of God. Many people have found strength in that Word.

Secondly, we build a strong foundation when we put Christ’s teachings into practice. “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on rock.”

We can read the Bible from cover to cover or go to church every day, but if we do not practice Jesus’ teachings, we are building on shifting sand.

Shifting sand...we live in a world of shifting sand!

Look around and look within. We are people who prefer the easy way. Values like honesty and fidelity that used to be standard are now sliding into the pit of relativity. It may be that the biggest challenge we face as a society—more than our fading economy or the threat of terrorism—is our loss of personal and corporate integrity. We need to ask ourselves what our children are learning. Are we helping them build on a solid foundation? Do you see a commitment to right living and integrity on our part?


In a sense, all of society depends on people who put Jesus' teaching into practice. Society needs people who can be depended upon.

Our Church needs people who can be depended upon.

Little children and teens need people who can be depended upon. We need people who not only hear the Word, but people who live by that Word.

So what kind of foundation are you building for your life and for those you love? Fill yourself with God's Word; then put that Word into action.

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