

## **The House of God**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

When we read the writings of St. Paul, we are given insight into the ways and life of the early Church. We see how the first missionary communities established by the Apostles came to develop into the great churches they are today. We see the initial challenges and problems they faced, and we see how they overcame these hurdles.

And even though St. Paul wrote to many different churches, we still see certain common themes developing in his writings.

St. Paul talks doctrinal issues like the need to be filled with the Spirit rather than subject to the Law. He talks about moral issues like keeping oneself free from impurity and base deeds. He talks about charity, encouraging his brothers and sisters in Christ to support and care for those in need whether they be the poor on the street or those struggling within the community. And St. Paul talks about church building, encouraging the faithful to using the gifts or the talents which the Lord has given for the building up of the Body of Christ.

It is this last subject which we will speak about today – church building.

These past two Sundays we heard about two kinds of buildings and two different plans of construction.

Last week St. Paul gave us the image of the house. He said consider the house, how it is built, how it holds together. A foundation is laid and then stones are added to form the walls and the ceiling – each part of the house doing it's job to stabilize and complete the structure.

Well, St. Paul said the Church of Christ is no different. It has a foundation, it has a cornerstone, and it has walls and a ceiling. The foundation and cornerstone are Jesus Christ Himself, and we the faithful are the stones which are put together to form the walls and ceiling of the Lord's House.

In this way each of us forms an important part of the House of God, each of us is laid upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, and each of us helps support one another.

Now when we think of constructing a building made of stone, we know that it is not easy because not all the stones which go into the building are the same size or shape – some are larger, some are smaller, some smooth, others rough. And so the one who is building the house has to wisely choose how to arrange the stones so that they fit together perfectly.

And the same is true of the Church of Christ. The people who make up this House of God come from varied backgrounds, each with his or her own life story, each with his or her own different personality. Some male, some female, some young, some older, some rich, some not so well off, etc. Yet when the Lord assembles His Church, each person, each stone, no matter how different from the others, has an important place in the House of God. And the Lord, the great Master builder knows just where and how each person should fit so that the structure is strong and sure.

It's a wonderful image to consider. How the Lord has gathered us all together from our various backgrounds and walks of life in order to build His Church with us, using each of us as His building blocks, using each of us to support one another, and using each of us to complete and stabilize the assembly.

You know, just thinking about our own life as a Mission community, one cannot help but recognize the Lord's work and direction in our midst. When the Mission began some seven years ago, the Lord provided those who through their own dedication and self-sacrifice were able lay the foundation for the future. And now, as we continue our growth and move to another facility with high hopes, we see that the Lord has again provided the people to effectively make it happen.

Each time the work was great and required much sacrifice and labor, but each time the Lord directed it and brought it to completion. The cast of workers and the stones which the Lord is using for building have changed a little – and this is to be expected because the Church is a living building and life itself brings change. However, there are some constants, there are some things that never change – the Church is the Lord's House, He is the foundation and chief cornerstone, and He always uses His faithful people to bring the building to completion.

Now getting back to the other type of building which we mentioned earlier, and the other plan for construction.

In today's Gospel reading, the Lord gives a parable about a certain rich man who makes plans to tear down his barns and construct new larger barns in order to store more of his crops and goods so that he can take an easy, eat, drink, and be merry.

Yet, as the parable goes, the man did not get to construct his new building because that night his soul was required of him. This man who had such big plans for his future on earth had forgotten the most important thing, he had forgotten that his time was limited. And because of this the Lord says that the man was foolish. And then the Lord goes on to say, "And so is everyone who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Of course, the lesson of the parable is simple. And it's not: don't work and don't put your money in the bank. Rather the lesson is to work and to store up treasure, just not on earth because we can't keep it forever. Instead the Lord advises us to work for eternal things and store up treasure with God in heaven. He encourages us to make an

investment in the Kingdom, to “lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”

And so, brothers and sisters, as we continue to prepare our new church home, and as we continue to build up the House of God, one person and one stone at a time, let us remember that the Lord Himself sees our efforts and will honor our investment. Each minute of time, every drop of sweat, and every cent we give will not only be considered an investment in our Mission but it will also be an investment in our own eternal life.

The Lord knows that whatever we offer to Him for the building up of His Church, He will give us back doubled. And so He wants us to invest as much as we can in Him and in each other – our time, our talent, and our treasure – so that we can become wealthy.

But of course, not wealthy in a worldly way for the Lord doesn't want to offer us that fleeting life of ease that the rich man so coveted, that life of eating, drinking, and making merry. The Lord wants to offer us really happiness and real wealth, the kind that truly satisfies the heart of man and also lasts for all eternity.

Finally brothers and sisters, as we each consider what it is that we can offer to the Lord for the building up of His Church, let us remember this one most important thing. That what the Lord desires most, what the Lord really wants us to offer Him, is that one thing which the rich man was unwilling to offer but in the end was required of him anyway – our eternal souls.

And if we are willing to offer not only out of the abundance of what the Lord has given us, but go beyond that to the point of offering our very lives to His service, then we will see that the joys the Lord has stored up for us in the next age can even be tasted in this life. This is what it means to be a living stone in the House of God. This is what it means to be rich toward God. This is what the Lord is offering us right here and right now, let us not let the opportunity pass us by but rather let us capitalize on it with thanksgiving and gratitude.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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