



Cathedral Alumni All Saints

November 11, 2008

I Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17

“For no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ.”

Paul is writing to the Church that he has established in Corinth. Our second reading is part of the letter in which he stresses unity. The members of the Church were struggling with what it meant to be followers of Jesus and pointing out the flaws, the misunderstanding of others. He wanted them to be a community so that they could withstand the temptations and distractions of the great city in which they lived. He tells them that their foundation is Jesus Christ. That God’s spirit lives in them (3:16b). How powerful is that, to be reminded that we are one because God’s spirit lives in us.

When I was asked what I would say today, I reminded a friend that it would be the Alumni All Saints Mass. That I would be with the John Carroll family off campus and that we would be remembering those we had lost and had been a part of us. It is that period in our Church calendar when we celebrate those who have gone before. It is so very important to remember those who ground us, who are a part of our foundation, those who are a part of our community.

Last month I was in Denver for the board meeting of another Jesuit University, Regis.

As some of you know, one way that Jesuit universities stay connected with each other is through the presence of Jesuits on each other’s boards. I also serve on Georgetown and St. Louis University boards. This helps me bring back new ideas for John Carroll.

At dinner, I began a conversation with a board member who had lost his wife. I asked him how he was doing. He told me that he was fine with the big things. I shared with him that I had lost my mother just after coming to John Carroll. That took our conversation to a different level. He said to me, “You know, the big things of getting through the day are no problem. What people have a hard time understanding is the loneliness for someone to share the small things.” That’s what makes us one with another person, the sharing and knowing that we are understood in the small things, knowing that we are loved.

Isn’t that true. We need someone in our lives who wants to hear about the small aches and pains. We need someone who understands the little discouragements that may overtake us, just for a little while. We need someone who reminds us that the day’s

disappointments and trials are not new and that we have gotten through them before. And that we will survive!

And isn't that the message for us? If Jesus Christ is our foundation, we are firmly grounded and will survive. To also know that we will be One with Him.

I have been thinking about today and being with you. I always enjoy the opportunities to connect with you and to learn about your experiences at John Carroll. I am sure that some of you are thinking about the friendships that you made at Carroll. For example, I remember hearing at reunion weekend about the guys who had carpooled from the West Side for four years, and the life-long friendship that had been created. That's one of the more straightforward stories. I have heard other stories of pranks and high jinks, of climbing in windows, and of getting caught!

But there are other stories as well. Perhaps some today are mourning an alum who has died. In part, the loss of someone to share wonderful memories with. This is part of what we are about today, called by Jesus Christ to be a community, open to sharing and hearing of those small but important memories.

Some of you will also be thinking about the foundation that was laid for your life while at Carroll. If I were a betting man, there is one sure bet I would take. I expect to hear from someone at brunch about their educational experience at John Carroll. Now here is where the bet comes in. More specifically, I expect that someone will tell me that when they were at Carroll, they did not understand why they had to take so many philosophy classes, the hallmark of Jesuit education. After they graduated, they discovered that those classes helped teach them how to think. John Carroll helped lay an important foundation.

Our Gospel reading today was Jesus driving out the money changers from the Temple. Let us imagine the reactions of others who were there and saw this. They might have asked what is going on. They might have said, "What's stopping Him from worshipping. Can't He just mind His own business?" They might have said, "I don't see a problem, the building is well maintained and there is room for all." They might have said, "I am glad that I can buy my sacrifices to offer here. It's so convenient." Jesus drove them out because they didn't belong! The buying and selling was not what worship in the Temple was about. It was a distraction. It confused what was important by placing money changing, buying, and selling in the Temple.

In our reading today from Corinthians, we skipped several verses. In those verses, Paul says there is another part to having God dwell in us. Yes, the foundation for our community must be Jesus Christ, but we also must use the right materials in our building. It must stand up to the fires and storms of life. Those who saw Jesus drive out the money changers marveled when Jesus said that he will destroy the Temple and raise it up in three days. They don't understand that he is talking about Himself and they tell him that the building took 46 years to build.

Do we understand what is important for us if Jesus Christ is to dwell in us? Certainly the materials are not greed and earthly things. In this last month, the economic news has reminded us how fragile our future is when we build our lives with material things. God certainly can't dwell in us; we will crowd Him out if distrust, anger, and resentment are guiding our actions. Certainly the materials are not success in life as others see it. Death is a great equalizer.

So what should the materials for our lives be? We are here today in community. That's a clue. We have stopped with the business of life to gather in worship. Just as Paul was advising those in Corinth, the scriptures remind us who we are:

Let us remember to remove the distractions,

Let us remember the lives of those who have gone before,

Let us remember those past experiences for which we are grateful,

Let us remember that God wants to live in us!

Amen