

**9<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – A**  
**1 June 2008**  
**Graduation Mass**

**LESSON: Built on Sand or Rock?**

One house built on rock – another house built on sand... which will survive the trials and tests?

This is the ultimate question of our lives...

As we gather to celebrate Mass today – the Lord’s Day – the day of the resurrection – we do so with a special mention of our young people who are graduating (someday...) from high school this year. It is a VERY good moment for you, in your lives, to do some reflecting – some goal setting – as you move on to college or enter the work force or join the military. The question on which I would suggest you reflect is this: where is my house built? Rock? Or Sand?

First of all, what’s the house you’re building? Your lives, of course. And not just your lives here on earth but, ultimately, your life in eternity. God, in His wisdom, has placed all this in our hands – in YOUR hands. How will you build your lives? On what will you base your lives? And how, based on your foundation, will your lives be?

What might be the “sand” on which we could build our lives? What things does this world tell us are important? Power. Wealth. Material possessions. Fame. Status. Personal freedom from every outside authority. Choice... Let’s look at them.

Power: what is power? Power, according to Wikipedia, is the ability to control or influence the decisions of other people. Who has power in this world? The President – but that’s about to come to an end (if it has not already been lost). Any influential person (Soulja Boy, for example – I never thought that every white kid in town would be dancing the Soulja Boy dance... - but he’s exerted quite a bit of power over young people today.). How did he get this “power”? You gave it to him. ANYONE in this world who has power over you has it because YOU gave it to them – whether that be legitimate power (like of the government) or of a celebrity. So, who do you ALLOW to have power over you in your lives? Soulja Boy? Your parents? Christ? And which of these “powers” will last? Which will ultimately be successful in exerting his or her influence over others? Only Christ – because in the end, He is the one, as Moses reminded us in the first reading, who will ultimately bring us great blessing or eternal death. His is the ONLY power that will remain? So, who do YOU want to choose to have power over your lives?

Wealth, possessions, fame, status... we can lump all of these together. Where will these things get you in your lives? A big house. Sure. Popularity. Yes. Friends. Possibly. Will these things sustain you in life? Think about all the famous, rich, successful people we know who

have had everything they could possibly want – end up miserable and suicidal. Heath Ledger, most recently, found his life so miserable – even though he had everything he could ever have wanted. But when the difficulties of life came along, he wasn't able to endure them.

And here is the real point for you today. Where have you built your home? On what or on whom have you based your lives and placed your trust? The things this world holds out? Good luck. Because the “rains will come, the winds will buffet your house – and it will all come crashing down.” The goods and the pleasures of this world will not endure the ultimate tests and trials of life. However, our faith in God, our belief and trust in His plans, in His laws, in His guidance WILL lead us through every difficulty.

In this present life, if you want to have security – don't place your trust in anything this world offers! What would be your greatest strength in life? It is living with security – not being easily overcome by any of life terrors (the winds and rains)? What could be better than this?! Talking about the rain and winds, Jesus is talking about all our human circumstances and misfortunes: false accusations, ;lots, death, loss of family members, insults, all the horrible things we could talk about in life. Jesus says that a soul that pursues the way of excellence does not give in to any of these potential disasters – because it is built on solid rock – on Jesus' teaching. His commands are stronger than ANY rock. They place us above all the human waves of life. If you guard and keep Christ's commands you will excel in life – not only over human beings when treated badly, but over the attacks of the devil as well.

Really, what could be more brainless than building your life on sand? You do all the work of building, of putting everything together in life to have it just as you want it, only to have it blown away such that you cannot enjoy the fruits of your labors. If your lives are not built on Christ, when the temptations come, when the trials of life come, your house will fall down! Rather, build yourselves on ROCK. Build your lives on Christ – and you'll find every happiness possible in life – maybe not the money and fame, but you will find every happiness of life – and total joy in eternal life as well.

If you choose to build your lives – to focus all the efforts of your lives – on the Rock – on Christ, it will NOT be easy or comfortable.

Through his Church, God is constantly **guiding** us along the path to personal fulfillment and to social betterment – he always helping us to build our homes on rock, not sand.

We can't claim to be Christ's followers if we **ignore** that guidance.

## **Illustration: The self-contradiction of “Cafeteria Catholics”**

This is why it is a **contradiction** for a **Catholic politician** to be **pro-abortion**.

✍ As Catholics, we know that abortion is a **grave violation of human rights**, because it kills an innocent human being.

- ✍ It is not a matter of **personal opinion**, it is a **moral truth**.
- ✍ Christ himself, though the official teaching of his Church, has **assured** us that it is.
- ✍ And so, anyone who claims to **believe in Christ** must **also be pro-life**, open both to **protecting the lives of the unborn** and to **supporting the needs of unwed mothers**.
- ✍ It is impossible for us, as Catholics, to support anyone for positions of influence and power over our lives who does not believe that every life is sacred. Otherwise we have handed over our power to one who will promote things contrary to Christ. We would be collaborating in that evil.

This is also why it is a **contradiction**

- ✍ for a Catholic **lawyer** to tamper with evidence,
- ✍ or for a Catholic **doctor** to overcharge his patients,
- ✍ or for a Catholic **athlete** to use illegal performance enhancing drugs,
- ✍ or for a Catholic **businessman** to deal in pornography.

We cannot **pick and choose** among the teachings we find in the Bible and the Catechism, as if it were a **cafeteria line**.

We cannot say that we agree with the **first and second** Commandments but not the **sixth and seventh** Commandments.

If we do that, we are building our lives on **sand**,

- ✍ **hearing** Christ's words without **acting** on them,
- ✍ being **unfaithful friends**,
- ✍ and sooner or later we will **collapse**.

Christian faith always involves **humble, loving obedience** to our Creator and Redeemer.

Only in this obedience of faith will we discover **true freedom and happiness**, just as we are only free to send **astronauts** into outer space by **obeying** the **laws of physics**.

## **APPLICATION: Simplifying Our Life**

Keeping this clear is a great way to **simplify life**. And here is where you, our graduates, may be able to make some plans for your futures – and how (and where) you will build your lives.

God wants to **bless** us with **wisdom and holiness** - the source of true happiness.

And all we have to do to **receive** that blessing is **hear** and **heed**.

Keeping those two things at the **top** of our to-do lists, will make everything else **fall into place**.

First, we need to **hear** the teachings of Christ.

- ✍ This we do by **reading** good Catholic books, **listening** to good Catholic podcasts or radio programs, and **contemplating** great Catholic art and literature.
- ✍ The treasures of Christian doctrine are **inexhaustible wells** of the **wisdom** we all desire.

We also do this through **prayer**.

- ✍ Prayer isn't just "**saying** prayers" or **asking** for God's help.
- ✍ Prayer also means **reflecting deeply** on God's Word in the Bible, **listening** to what he says in the **depths of our hearts**, and **responding** with **our own words** of thanksgiving, praise, and love.
- ✍ And so, today, as we celebrate you and prepare to “send you off” your parish offers you two gifts:
  - The Catechism of the Catholic Church – so that you can **KNOW** and **LEARN** your Catholic faith
  - A prayer book called, “Day by Day” which can help you find reassurance when the winds and rains are buffeting your house.

By prayer and study, we **hear** God's Word.

And then, second, we **heed** that Word.

We **do** everything that Christ **asks** of us.

- ✍ Every **once in awhile**, we can be **unsure** about what that is.
- ✍ But **99% of the time**, we know **exactly** what God wants us to do.
- ✍ God wants us to give our very best in all our **responsibilities**.
- ✍ He wants us to **help** those around us, to be **faithful** to our relationships, to **obey** the commandments, to **build up** the Church, to **spread** his teachings, to **foster** a civilization of justice and love.

Today, as Christ feeds us with his **grace** through Holy Communion, let's reflect on where our houses are built now – and make plans, from this moment forward, to always build our homes on the rock – on Christ.