

Homily 1 June 08

***Let these words of mine remain in your heart and in your soul . Deut 11:18.***

Let these words of mine remain in your heart and the soul. ... Every one who listens to these words of mine and acts upon a will be like a sensible person who built the house upon the rock with the rain came down to floods rose bells blew they did not fall. (Matt 7 21) They were founded upon rock.

I'd like to share a reflection with you on the significance of building our lives upon the word of God. In particular the words of God .. the words of Jesus and the inspired words of the early church leaders like St Paul, as they are reflected in a sacred Scriptures we know as the Bible. How many people here have a Bible at home . How many people here own a missal containing the Sunday readings ?

Last week we reflected upon the special nourishment that the body and blood of Christ has for us. This week's readings remind us of the nourishment that is provided in the Scriptures. I have to say at the outset that the Scriptures have been such a great source of inspiration, support and comfort to me throughout my life. I always start every day with time reflecting on the Scriptures and I always find word or phrase which gives me some inspiration for the day.

I have just completed another two weeks in Timor. Every day there I am presented with emotional challenges but after I have read my scripture portion of the day and spend some time reflecting on the previous day's events, I realize how God's Word has come true for me in the events of that previous day. This is a pattern of prayer I have undertaken since the age of 19 when I was evangelized by a ministry group in the military college at Duntroon .. The people who lit a fire in my heart for the Christian life, inspired me with stories of prisoners of war in Korea and North Vietnam who sustained themselves by memorizing the Scriptures and especially memorizing key passages of the words of Jesus and the apostles . They treasured these in their hearts, and were able to withstand torture and agony **of their situation.**

Our first portion of Scripture today gives us crystal clear directions:  
Let these words of remain in your heart and in your soul. Jesus reinforces that by saying everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts upon will be like a sensible man who builds his house upon the rock.

Should any of you go to Jerusalem today you will find Orthodox Jews who truly follow the first instruction in Deuteronomy . They stand before the West wall with small portions of Scriptures strapped to their heads and arms, and rhythmically speak over and over the words of scripture. You will find a similar practice happening in Islamic schools in Pakistan.

Memorizing scripture is to be commended, but Jesus was concerned that people didn't live out in their lives what they had learned in the Scriptures. It somehow went over

their head and certainly not into their hearts. That's why Jesus made this dramatic statement in today's gospel .

Listen to these words of mine and act upon them . It is like building a house upon rock. You will be able to withstand the storms of life , if you listen to my word and act upon it. To not act upon it is like building on Sand -- a little pressure upon you and you will be washed away . That was a regular occurrence in the middle east - still is today – foolish people would build houses in the sand close to rivers so they didn't have to go far to fetch water, rather than building on higher ground with rock foundations .

Of course it is a continuing challenge for us to act upon the word of Jesus. Its easy for us to be lazy too, and not put in firm foundations in our lives .That is why we should store the words of Jesus in our hearts. If we have planted them in our hearts the Spirit will bring the appropriate action to mind whenever we are faced with making a decision in that area. Jesus wants to get into our hearts to shape out motives and actions and desires. We need to carve out time to sit with him and listen to him, in his word.

Well, how can we do that now. The best way is to take time to read some scripture daily . I would recommend that you develop a planned reading program. It might start with some small portions like the pastoral letters. Or you could read a chapter of a gospel per day . Or you could start by reflecting upon the readings for next Sunday. Another way is to read and pray the office of the church. The morning and evening prayers offer us a wide selection of encouraging passages especially those in the psalms.

There are also many excellent scripture study programs available . The “little rock “ study program is the best I've seen . Its distributed by Petrie Catholic parish . The annual Lenten program is another excellent way of introducing yourself to study with other people.

Another way of absorbing scripture is to listen to it . You can play it in your car or at home or on your IPOD!! There is also scripture in song .

The final challenge I offer you today is to spend a little time this week exploring and perhaps memorizing a scripture verse that is of specific encouragement to you. One favorite of mine is John 10 :10- it says “ I have come you might have life and life in all its fullness.” John 15 :10 is another : “you did not choose me, I chose you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last.” Another favorite of mine is “Do not be afraid - I am with you “. Do you know how many the times that appears in the Scriptures - 365 - one for each day. Some Bibles even list a “where to find “ list of passages on certain topics.

So what do you think about that - do you think there is some good news in the scriptures there to encourage us.

May we listen to the words of Jesus , may they remain in our hearts and may we act upon them.