

Cornerstones of faith

Pat Marrin | Jun. 25, 2009 NCR Today



"Cornerstones of faith." Matt 7:21-29

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus cautions his disciples that the foundation of faith is action not just words. Church membership, perfect attendance at worship, theological credentials are nice but not enough. The bedrock of faith is to do the will of God. Build your house on this rock, not on the sands of good intention or ritual practice.

The underlying reality of faith is a personal encounter with God, and this happens most directly in the living out of our faith. Jesus will outline specifically where we can find him in Matt. 25, the demanding parable that gives us the corporal works of mercy: "I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me to drink, ..."

Peter is named "rock" and designated the cornerstone of the church not because of his intelligence or bravery (he failed on both counts) but because he walked the walk and, in the end, knew from experience and profound failure the meaning of the message he would preach -- a gospel of forgiveness. Like a former alcoholic who is authorized to help other alcoholics, Peter the miserable failure will preach God's mercy to sinners.

The probing lyrics of songwriter Leonard Cohen touch the core of this paradox. "There is a crack, a crack, in everything. That's how the light gets in, that's how the light gets in." We build our faith on the rock of mercy, the foundation of forgiveness. Peter is foundation precisely because his heart was broken, there is a crack in him, like the rock Moses struck in the desert that burst into tears. Thanks be to God. That's how the life gets in.

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