Would any of these things that you do as foundations of the faith be any use if you are just pretending? Run through examples, you are not really praying but just pretending to be praying; you may be giving mom a loving hug but it is actually because she hasn’t found out yet that you broke the window; you are actually not being friendly with a friend but because you wanted to be invited to the party; you are actually not being charitable when you gave away old toys but because mom said you cannot have new toys unless you got rid of new ones. Explain that it is sometimes not about what you do, but why you did it that counts.

For older children

Can you prove yourself to be sincere? A nice debate can ensue here. Explain that loving God is sometimes like being sincere. You either do it for the right reasons or you don’t.

And if you don’t, God will know and no amount of proving otherwise will work. And like the people in the reading who did all the ‘right things’ because they wanted to get into heaven, you will not get into heaven either. We have to do all those things that we said were the foundations of our faith, not because we wanted to get into heaven but because they are the right things to do.

Year A


### LSW

children

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Concepts

Grounding our faith in the right intentions.

Points to note

Unlike the other readings from the Sermon on the Mount, which may be short but has many points and easy to get lost., this one has only two points, and they are both related. Count yourself lucky.

The first one reminds us that whatever we do, we have to do it for the right reason. If we were to do all the ‘right things’ so that we can get into heaven, we won’t get it. We do the ‘right thing‘ because it is the right thing to do and not because of the benefit it brings. It just so happens that doing the ‘right thing‘ gets us to heaven and we are glad for it but we don’t expect to get to heaven because of it. It is a bit ironic that we then get into heaven only if we are indifferent to where we end up.

I guess that the paradox of our salvation is like the paradox of sincerity. We cannot do anything to prove our sincerity because then it won’t be sincere. People will see us as sincere or they don’t and we just have to accept it. We are not in the position to demand that they are sincere. Similarly, we cannot do things to earn salvation. God will give it to us or he will not and we just have to accept it. We are not in the position to demand.

The second point is related. Our faith has to be grounded on firm grounds. And the firm ground is always inside of us. True faith can only be strong if it exists because we have faith, hope and love for the right reasons and not for any other. Faith, hope and love are ends in themselves and not means to get us somewhere.

Liturgy

Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia! Alleluia!

If anyone loves me he will keep my word,

and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him.

Alleluia!

Gospel

Explain that we are still with the Sermon on the Mount.

The Lord be with you.

All: And also with your spirit.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew

All: Glory to you O Lord

(Mt 7: 21-27)

Jesus said to his disciples, “It is not those who say to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. When the day comes many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name?’ Then I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you; away from me, you evil men!

“Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who builds his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and burled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!”

This is the Word of the Lord

Dialogue

Do you remember the story of the Three Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf? I hope the kids do as I noticed that many children did not grow up with the same stories or nursery rhymes that we did. Go through it if any of them do not know. So, is it important to have your home built strong and steady? Explain that it is not just our homes of course but any buildings at that.

How do people build buildings? They dig the ground so that they can lay the foundations. The foundations will anchor the building to the ground. The taller the building is, the deeper the foundations need to go. So, the foundations are very important. If they are weak, the whole building can come tumbling down.

Explain that in very much the same way, our faith also needs to be set on firm foundations. What would be the foundations of our faith? Let the children come up with a long list of things that they need for their personal faith to be strong. It must be things that come from them, ie., what they do, say or think. Do not include things that others have to do for them to have a strong faith. When you are at the gates of heaven, it is all about what you do that decides whether you get in or not: you cannot point your finger at anyone else.