

Sisters of the Holy Family
FOUNDATION DAY, 2009

Dolores: Teresa, Teresa, do you know what today is, back on our own dear earth? Can you see all our sisters? My, such a lot of them, and Associates too!

Teresa: Yes, I see them, and I know what day it is, Dolores, it's November 6th, the day you founded our community.

Dolores: Somehow the word "founded" seems a bit pretentious when I remember our first days — teaching catechism, caring for those precious little people whom their mothers had to leave while they worked. I never thought of our efforts to serve God's poor back in 1872 as a foundation, or ourselves as founders.

Teresa: Well, I wasn't there at the beginning, you know. There were two ahead of me.

Dolores: But you were the faithful one, Teresa. You stayed with me, even though we hardly knew what we could do, or how to do it.

Teresa: Remember those long nights when we cared for and prayed with the young women dying from terrible disease due to the life they lived on the street? But there were wonderful moments, too, seeing the eyes of children light up when we spoke to them of our dear Lord and how he loved them.

Dolores: Yes. And as I listen to the celebration readings chosen by our sisters for today I think I understand the idea of "foundation" better. St. Paul explains that what he built will survive only because this building, the Body of Christ, is actually built on Jesus Christ. Our little foundation, the Sisters of the Holy Family, isn't about us, but rather about our dear Lord. We are simply his hands and feet and voice among his people.

Teresa: I never told you this, Dolores, but I once made the mistake of complaining to Father Prendergast that we didn't have a famous founder.

Dolores: Oh, Teresa! To Father? To our very own guide and founder?

Teresa: Yes. I was thinking of Dominic and Francis you see. I still turn red, even here in the eternal Kingdom, when I think of it.

Dolores: What did he say?

Teresa: He said that the true founder of every religious community is the Holy Spirit.

Dolores: That was gracious of him, but so true. As Jesus tells us, the "floods" will come — today I see many of our sisters discouraged because of the community's diminishment. They forget about our stigmata scandal, the terrible doubts that assailed people about our work at that time, the suspicions and gossip. If we had not been built on the Rock of Jesus Christ, strengthened by the Spirit, we never would have survived our first years.

Teresa: There have been many sorts of trials in our history, Dolores — losing everything but our house in 1906 — that was my biggest trial, I think. And God, who has been so good, has never and will never abandon Holy Family. The sisters' confusion is another "flood" that they face — but God is in the storm as well as in the sunny days. Like we did in our trials, they need to recall that they can choose to build with gold or with straw on the foundation.

Dolores: Yes, I remember writing once —

Teresa: I know. Every one of us is a precious stone — emerald, chrysolite, all the rest.

Dolores: Well, it was one of my better meditations.

Teresa: Yes, it was and is. And seen in the light of that meditation, our Foundation Day is a great celebration. It reminds the sisters that they are built on the firm ground of Jesus Christ for enduring existence that it is best to just stand on the threshold of the house of God than to exist anywhere else, that the Holy Spirit has never left us wanting.

Dolores: And the community will endure. It is already eternal because we, and so many other sisters and associates, are here in the eternal kingdom with our Dear Lord. And God isn't finished with us yet!

Teresa: Yes, the community has eternal life, and think of all the people today who carry the work on, the work of the Spirit, the work entrusted to us to pass to them. See how many!

Dolores: You know, Teresa, I'm so proud of our family of sisters. My prayer for them is to always remember that they do not stand alone, but "move and have their being" in the one who has bestowed life, purpose, and tremendous love on our community and on each one of us.

Teresa: So much, so immensurable. Happy Foundation Day, Dolores.

Dolores: And Happy Foundation Day to you and all our dear Sisters of the Holy Family and Associates. Now, Teresa, come along; I want to go find Father Prendergast and ask him about being a famous founder.