



Blessing of the Builders – April 9, 2010

Reflection by Sr. Margaret Wick

Readings: Ephesians 2:19-22

Matthew 7:24-27

After hearing these two readings you might be thinking about the soil preparation that's been occurring the past several weeks – loads of slurry and crushed limestone put in place to create a firm foundation for the building. Or perhaps Jesus' parable about torrents of rain and strong winds reminds you of the weather this past week. The message in both of these scripture passages is, indeed, the importance of a sturdy foundation – one that can withstand all kinds of challenges and one that supports a dwelling place where God's spirit will live.

As the builders prepare the foundation and build upon it, we are reminded of our foundation as Sisters of St. Francis – built on the courage and faith of our foundress, Mother Xavier, who left Germany and came to Iowa in 1875. She was a woman who was called to reach out to those most in need. We, her followers, have carried on that spirit for 145 years. We have reached out to orphans, the sick, the homeless, those needing education, the elderly, to new immigrants. This building will be a dwelling place for that spirit. We are constructing a building for sisters whose foundation is courage and faith. We are constructing a building for sisters whose lives have been dedicated to serving those most in need.

The new building will be a place for our dedicated staff to provide even better care for our elderly and infirm sisters. Yet, this building is about more than the sisters who will live there --- and they would be the first to tell you that. It is about the future. When we were discerning several months ago about whether to move ahead with the project in these challenging economic times, we realized that addressing the building issues now will free the congregation in the future to carry on the mission of the Dubuque Franciscans - to respond with courage and faith as did our foundress, to reach out with open hands where the need is greatest. And so during these next months, let us recall often that this about more than a building, it is about carrying on the mission in the future.

When it became clear in our Chapter that new construction would be necessary there were also conversations about looking beyond our own housing needs to assist those who do not have the resources to meet their housing needs. We do not yet know what

this "companion project" will look like, but we are confident that with the same spirit of prayer and discernment that has guided the design and construction of the new building; it will become clear in the next months. Indeed, in the spirit of Mother Xavier, we are committed to reaching out where the need is greatest.

We thank all of you who have been and will continue to be part of this building process. Together we are indeed building a house where love can dwell, a house where hands will reach beyond wood and stone to serve others, a house that will proclaim from floor to rafter that all are welcome in this place.