

7<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of Easter “The Work of Our Hands”  
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Ever since God gave human being opposable thumbs, we have been interested in building things. It no doubt started with building tools to help refashion our immediate environment to be more livable, perhaps beginning with clothes, shelters, weapons for hunting and protection, and tools to help cultivate farms...the list goes on. You can also make an argument that the greatest tool human beings created was language as this was how culture was built and with it knowledge that could pass from one generation to the next, to be built upon and expanded. One of the distinguishing characteristics of human beings is that we like to build, made in the image and likeness of the Master Builder whom we refer to as the Creator.

In our Gospel reading, we have the Son of God praying that his disciples continue on what he built. Before his passion and death, Jesus prays to his heavenly Father, “Holy Father, keep them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one just as we are one.” And here is the divine agenda. This is what God himself is interesting in building, souls that have the capacity to be one with him. As Jesus nears the end of his earthly ministry, he is praying that the work he started will come to completion and bear fruit.

In our first reading, a beautiful reading from Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul is saying his farewell to the people of Ephesus. He had been there for three long years building up the Church and now he has to entrust what he has built to others so he can continue this work elsewhere. Letting go like that can be very, very hard albeit necessary because the hope is what we build with God’s help will continue on after we have gone.

Fast forward five or so centuries, Christianity continued to spread. Building off of the successes and failures of those before him Pope Gregory the Great was a builder who wanted to see Christianity spread as far as possible. One of his hopes was that Christianity would take hold in the area of England called Kent, which was a large area west of London. The king there, Aetherberht had married a Christian and was very much open to the idea of welcoming the Church there. Gregory appointed a prior of a monastery by the name of Augustine to form a coalition of monks and priests to evangelize that area of England. That decision was one of the greatest achievement Gregory performed because the effort in England was a tremendous success. As such, Augustine became known after his death as St. Augustine of Canterbury and the great evangelizer of Britain. One side note of all this that I find fascinating is that all of this evangelizing and building up of the Church happened during one of the worst plagues in Europe’s history.

My friends, God gave us all a pair of hands and a stubborn instinct inside of us to build. And what we build, we really want to see endure...whether it is our family, our home, our work, our parish, etc. Of course, this instinct inside of us to create comes from God, our Creator, who desires us to know him, to love him, and to build his kingdom on earth. Sin gets in way as we all know, and sometimes in history, in epic ways. On this feast day of St. Augustine of Canterbury, it might be interesting to spend a little time today meditating on our hands. Just look at our

hands; dangerous things hands...capable of so much good and of so much evil. We can reflect on what our hands have done in the past, the good and the not so good. Perhaps we can then reflect on how God desires we use our hands today and tomorrow as disciples of Son Jesus, who is the way, the truth and the life.