

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

07/03/11 14 A

-- There's an Episcopal priest who received a parish assignment after studying for a doctorate. A few months after he was there, word came to him that the defense of his dissertation was successful and he was being awarded his degree.

-- That day he was talking to a parishioner who was with her young daughter. He told her the news, and she told her daughter he could now be called Dr. Robertson.

-- Her daughter said *Does this mean you can operate on people now?* Her mother replied (without thinking) *No dear, Fr. Chuck is the kind of doctor who doesn't help anyone.* She immediately realized what she'd said and became red-faced.

-- Fr. Chuck just laughed and said *That's OK. Actually it's a good description of a PhD.*

-- Now I'm not telling this story because I once started a doctorate I was unable to finish due to having to come back to the diocese. I tell it because it illustrates how the tokens of respect and power we so often rely on cannot bring us salvation and happiness.

-- And that is the message of our gospel as well. When we come before the Lord, it matters little to him what markers of human wisdom we've attained. He doesn't put a lot of trust in sophisticated talk.

-- Now, don't get me wrong. Jesus doesn't want us to remain ignorant. We do need, in the words of St. Paul, to move from the milk of infants to the solid food of the spiritual life. We need to grow in the knowledge of God's word and the tradition of the Church.

-- Yes, we need to assume adult responsibilities in the faith. But we dare not think for a moment that mastering those responsibilities will save us. We need the love of Christ to do that.

-- All of us have burdens and responsibilities in life: in our work, in our families, in our community, and (for many of us) in our Church community. The yoke of those responsibilities can seem heavy at times.

-- Jesus knew something about yokes. As a carpenter he probably made the wooden yokes used on beasts of burden. They helped the animals to carry a bigger load with less stress.

-- Jesus doesn't promise he will take away the burdens of our lives. But he does promise to make them lighter. Often in life we can feel as if nothing we ever do is enough. I know I've felt that way at times, especially over the last couple of years.

-- That is true: nothing we do on our own is enough. We cannot save ourselves. Jesus comes to ease our burdens and to bring us life. But we must trust in him.

-- I've come to St. Caspar's to assume the yoke of responsibility as your pastor. It's a burden I can't carry on my own. I need to trust in the Lord. But I also need to rely on the Lord's presence in each and every one of you to assist me in this ministry.

-- For the Lord calls all of us to share that burden of ministry to God's people, using the different gifts he's given each of us to do his work. I must trust he will give me the strength to assume the burdens of leadership in the parish.

-- And I trust he will give all of you help in carrying your burdens in life, and in the life of this parish community. What I've seen so far leads me to believe that his grace is already at work in you.

-- May we all have the childlike trust to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will bring us the grace we need to take up his yoke of service, and to find our rest in Him.