

5 December 2024 - Thursday of the first^t week of Advent

[Isaiah 26, 1-6; Matt. 7, 21. 24-27](#)

Homily

The few verses of the Gospel we have just read are the end of what we call the Sermon on the Mount, that long discourse in which Matthew brings together all the most important elements of Jesus' teaching. After these few verses, Matthew adds a conclusion, which we have not read and which is: *' When Jesus had finished these discourses, the crowds were amazed at his teaching; for He taught them as a man of authority, and not as their scribes. '*

The Sermon on the Mount had obviously begun with the Beatitudes: *' Blessed are the poor, the merciful, the peacemakers, those who suffer... '*. Each of these Beatitudes was a call to action addressed to the disciples so that poverty, sadness and war could be eradicated from society, through their active love. Then Jesus had asked His disciples to do something far more radical than the Law required. *' You were told... I say to you.'* *' You were told to love your neighbour, I tell you to love your enemies.... If someone asks you for your shirt, give him your coat too '*.

And this led to Jesus' teaching on hypocrisy, in other words the recommendation not to perform any religious act that does not correspond to the truth of life. All religious practices are absolutely useless if you don't practise the Beatitudes, if you don't feed the hungry, if you don't console the afflicted, if you don't love your enemies, etc.

And all this led to the conclusion of this long discourse, which we have in today's Gospel. Be careful, Jesus recommends, to build your house on solid foundations and not on sand. The house built on rock is that of the man who, says Jesus, *' listens to my words (i.e. all the teaching that has gone before) and puts them into action '*. In contrast, the house built on sand is that of the man who says: *' Lord, Lord '*, who can even prophesy in the name of Jesus, who can even cast out demons and perform miracles in the name of Jesus, but does not live out in his everyday life, especially in his relationships with others, the radical demands of the Sermon on the Mount.

Advent is a time for each of us to check what kind of foundations our house is built on.

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