

**Scripture reflections for Laura Michels, Feb. 21, 2018**  
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Ephesians 4:1-6

Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, #3: In fidelity to the spirit of our Foundress, we are a community of women religious consecrated to God in the Names of Jesus and Mary, who desire to proclaim by our lives the primacy of the love of God. Moved by an active love we collaborate in the Church's mission of education, with emphasis on education in the faith, and with a special concern for the poor and disadvantaged.

Mt. 7:24-25

**Today's Scripture readings were picked by Laura. With her hand on them, they give us a unique window into the person Laura was. But they also carry her hopes for who *we*, her beloved community of so many layers, should also become. I invite you then, to hear Laura speaking to us today through these texts.**

**Between the two Scripture readings that we expect to hear in the Liturgy of the Word, you heard a short excerpt from the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. The Holy Names Sisters and Associates present today will recognize this selection as one that names who we are as Sisters of the Holy Names:**

- **First, and most important, is the love of God: this love grounds all we are and do.**
- **It is expressed in active love on our part that propels us into ministry, which, for Holy Names sisters, has been anchored in a ministry of education in its many facets.**
- **And finally, we carry a deep concern for the well-being of least among us, for their full development as human persons (as the Constitutions go on to elaborate in the next section).**

**This was Laura through and through. I hope it defines all of us Associates and Sisters of the Holy Names. But there is no reason to stop with the Sisters and Associates, or the clergy, or those who work in ministry. All of us can aspire to—indeed *can claim*—this reality: *We are grounded in the love of God.* That love is so strong that it anchors our identity. It is *so constant* that we are free to respond in whatever way God is calling each of us to live out that love. It is *constant* within whatever vocation we choose for its expression. God's love is primary. It is for *everyone*.**

In the brief reading from Matthew, we hear the first half of a parable. As in so many parables, Jesus appeals to his audience's common sense. What person, building a house would ignore the foundation? How long would that house stand up? Any builder knows how much time and attention and skill and resources go into the foundation, right?

What is that rock, that foundation? It is living and acting out of the wisdom that flows from Jesus' life and teachings. *This* is the foundation of the house that will withstand storms and floods and earthquakes. *Here* is where God's constant love shows forth most brightly.

The writer of the Letter to the Ephesians, so concerned with maintaining the unity of a community that is apparently at odds with itself, spells out this call more fully:

- We are gentle with ourselves and one another.
- We are humble, being exactly who we are before God and others, recognizing how grace is constantly upholding us.
- We are patient, bearing with one another in love.
- We commit ourselves to strive for unity in the Spirit, listening always for how we can be drawn together in the Spirit.
- We work for peace.

These qualities still build the beloved community today. Consistent with the life and words of Jesus, we can add other qualities to this list:

- We constantly nourish our life before God, so that we continually grow in our understanding of who we are and how God desires for us to live on this fragile planet.
- We are honest; all our dealings with others are stamped with integrity.
- We are always respectful of others, especially those who seem so different from us, because they too bear the same stamp of God's love.
- We commit ourselves to community. We construct this foundation together. Only together will we be able to build it widely enough, diversified enough, to withstand the buffets of culture, economic systems, and the vicissitudes of life with enough equanimity and trust so that, we can say, as did Julian of Norwich: "all will be well, all will be well, and all manner of things--things we worry about, fret over and struggle in and through--will be well."

The writer of Ephesians leads us forward with these words: "Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gifts." Laura used her gifts so well and so generously during her time among us. Let us take up the same invitation in our lives.