

By Pat Haggerty

I was sitting on the beach with my youngest grandson, Mac. He was sitting amid a pile of rocks and throwing rock after rock as far as he could. It wasn't very far---because an almost two-year old doesn't have such a strong arm. He was happy as could be, though. What more could a little one ask for? The beach. The rocks. Throwing things. That's bliss!

Rocks hold a fascination for many and not just toddlers. Some adults collect them for their varied shapes and textures. Some artisans love to paint on them. Some construction workers love to build with them. Some landscapers use them for design purposes. Once, I gave a rock to each of my students and had them write about their rocks using personification. There are endless uses for rocks!

Jesus knew the value of rocks and used them as symbols. He even told Peter he would build his church upon this rock (Peter). In the gospel for the feast of the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, we read the words of Jesus to Peter: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:17-19)

What does this mean for us and how can we relate to the rock metaphor? To me it conjures up images of the seaside, of Jesus walking on the shores of Galilee. He is talking with his

apostles, He is pensive, He is reflecting. It further connotes an image of strength, certainty and power. We are part of a Church that is built on solid ground; that is led by a strong leader whose predecessor is the Apostle Peter, the rock of the Church.

It is comforting to me to think about our Church being on solid ground. There are so many "shaky" things in our world today. There are so many uncertainties. What can we count on now? What should we believe? Well, in thinking about Matthew's gospel, we can certainly believe in God's kingdom here on earth and in heaven. We can believe in the certainty of God's love for us. Because of the strong foundation our church is built on we should have no worries. We are protected against whatever storms may come our way. Be at peace!

Next time you are at the beach picking up rocks think about our Church and its strength. That in itself should be a source of consolation.