

# The boys at Schmoe's

*Preaching is all about making connections between the word in the pulpit and the wrench in the hand.*

The church echoed with the sound of hammers and drills. It was four days before the re-dedication of St. Al's Church. The project foreman and I made our way through the bustling activity and reached the crates of the newly arrived organ pipes, the centerpiece of the renovation project.

## **All that glitters...**

Steve took a pry bar to the first crate. The lid creaked open. I looked inside...and I choked. There was a word in my throat that I couldn't say in church.

"They're tin!" I said, in disbelief. I glanced at Steve. "They're supposed to be gold!"

He ripped open every wooden container. Soon all the crates were open and the pipes were exposed in all their utilitarian starkness. I shook my head. "They look like furnace ducts."

We checked the purchase order. The organ company had made a mistake. Two painters were dispatched to gild the pipes. If they worked through the night they might meet the deadline. But one problem remained: no safe place to execute the work.

I stepped outside to cool my anger. A cold drizzle was falling, and I had no coat. But I didn't care. I sulked down the street. Next door, the bent grills on the wrecked cars at Schmoe's Body Shop seemed to sneer as I walked by. Then I heard one of the shop doors clank open.

"What's the good word, Padre?"

It was Schmoe. I shuffled inside and told him my woes. He wiped paint thinner from his hand. "We got two paint bays here. You can have them both."

You can't beat having neighbors like Schmoe.

According to the Bible 30,000 lumberjacks, 70,000 transporters, and 80,000 stonecutters contributed to the building of Solomon's Temple. It doesn't mention auto body workers, but for a certain parish in suburban Cincinnati, the boys at Schmoe's saved the day.

Liturgy concerns more than hymns and prayers. Blueprints, paint fumes, and callused hands also render glory to God.

## **Monday matters**

We preachers take time to prepare for Sunday but forget about Monday. The root of this problem, as I see it, is an overemphasis on understanding the Scriptures, understanding doctrines, understanding the Mass, understanding the meaning of the sacraments, etc. As important as proper understanding is, it only gets us halfway down the block. None of us come to the sacred liturgy to be lectured; we come to be sanctified. And, come Monday morning, God is going to use us to somehow sanctify the world to himself.

Take a look at the faces of people who come to church tired from working overtime or worn down by raising a family. They need a word of encouragement. What better encouragement than to realize that offering their work to God adds value to the work they do! Indeed, God will transform our labor of love into something that will last forever!

## **Liturgy and life**

Each Sunday, preachers have the opportunity to acknowledge the ways in which daily work—whatever it might be—plays a part in God’s desire to transform the world.

One practical way to connect the worship of God with the work of our hands is to invite your listeners to “take their preacher to work.” I do it on a regular basis. Many parishioners are honored to give me a tour of their office or show me around a job site.

It’s all about making connections between the word in the pulpit and the wrench in the hand. Jesus spent time at the fishing dock. Preachers today could learn some lessons on a loading dock. And, especially, at Schmoe’s.