

**A Sermon**

## **BUILDING ON A STRONG, FIRM FOUNDATION**

**presented by James Garubanda**

**June 1, 2008**

**St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, 2136 Carter Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55108**

I greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ.

I am James Garubanda, (for those who do not know me), I am the husband of the late Beatrice. Beatrice died unexpectedly in September, 2005 and left me with four children: Esther, Joshua, Lydia, and Ampa. We live in St. Paul. We are originally from Uganda.

I had a mixture of excitement and also anxiety when I was asked to preach today and to talk about the Hope Multipurpose Incorporated or HMI capital campaign to build an expanded Blue House campus in Kazo, Uganda. Immediately I prayed and thanked God for the opportunity and also asked God to tell me what He wants me to talk about. Well, it did not take long. My prayer was answered and a topic was revealed to me: "Building on a strong, firm foundation."

In St. Matthew 7:21-29, Jesus talks about a wise man who built his house on rock and that even when the rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, it did not fall. The house which was built on sand could not withstand those hard conditions. So here as well as elsewhere the wise and Godly choice is to build on a strong foundation, whatever we do -- whether building a physical building to live in or building our faith and hopes. Thanks be to God and let His will be known to us.

Today we are here to worship our God, and to thank Him for what he has done for us in our everyday life, for giving us life and good health. Pray to God to help us as we start the First phase of the HMI capital campaign to build an expanded Blue House in Kazo, Uganda.

I want to thank every one, for your prayers and for the support you have given to the orphanage in Kazo. At this moment I am happy to say that the Orphanage at Kazo has continued to do well, with the help of both Board members in USA and Uganda, and with all the funds that you have contributed. In August 2006, the USA board sent Pat Owen and me to Uganda to see the girls and the trip was a success. The girls enjoyed the visit – as did we -- and Pat made a video which most of us have seen. God has rewarded you mightily for what you have done thus far: the girls at the Blue House are very happy and very grateful. They have shelter, food, clothing and are able to go to school and get an education. Four of the girls have passed their government exams and are in Junior High School.

Whatever we do in this project, we desire to do what God wants us to do. We are guided and inspired by what St. Matthew says in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of his Gospel, verses 35 through 38: “for I was hungry and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me.” Let us continue to be wise men and women and have this privilege of giving to the girls of the Blue House from the abundance God has given to us.

Also thank you for your prayers and supporting me and my family since the death of Beatrice. It has not been an easy road but with your support we have been blessed.

The late Beatrice Garubanda had great faith and hope in Jesus Christ, and this was her firm foundation. She was always willing to help those in need wherever she was. She came to the USA in 1987 with our three children to join me while I was a student at the University of Minnesota. For a long time we were cut off from Uganda until when she made it back for a short trip in 2001. On this trip she was accompanied by Esther and Ampa, I stayed here with Joshua and Lydia. The situation she found in Uganda was not good. A lot had changed since she was there in 1987.

Uganda as a country was/is facing a lot of hardship. AIDS has devastated the basic family unit. Children are living with no parents and with few other adults. Older siblings care for their brothers and sisters even as they raise themselves. This was the situation that Beatrice saw when she visited Uganda.

Here is what the late Beatrice said about that trip of 2001, and what came after. HMI started with stories of orphans in Uganda. Beatrice talked about her experience of seeing firsthand families that were wiped out by disease, especially AIDS. To her dismay she found:

- care-givers in charge of 21 to 29 children
- children who are abused and abandoned
- children who are consistently sick and perpetually hungry
- children who head households
- children in their grandparents' household and a big number of children that are roaming towns or villages because they are homeless
- children in villages who are not going to school because schools are too far for hungry children to walk to

These stories were shared with friends and from this situation the late Beatrice, with the help of friends founded an orphanage on a follow up trip to Uganda in 2004. The Blue House was started with 12 girls in a temporary shelter. Beatrice's hope was to build a permanent living quarters, a medical center, and a school. This is the campus that HMI plans to build through the capital campaign we officially launch today. We want to build a permanent dormitory in Kazo, Uganda to house 40-44 girls.

Finally brothers and sisters, let us remember the Ugandan Martyrs. They were young Christians who were persecuted in 1885-1887 because of their strong, firm foundation and belief in God. June 3 is the day Christians around the world remember the Uganda Martyrs. This day is observed every year in Uganda by the Christian community. The story of the Ugandan martyrs is a story of faith, courage and cruelty. Their fate was a climax of religious persecution of Christians in Uganda, eight years after first Christian missionaries set foot in Uganda with hopes of spreading the gospel. Initially the missionaries were invited to Uganda by King Mutesa 1 in 1875. Unfortunately the king died in 1884 and was succeeded by his 18 year old son Mwanga. The young king, misled by traditions in his court, was threatened by the coming Christian faith. He realized that the first converts put loyalty to Christ above the traditional loyalty to the King. The young King Mwanga ordered that all Christian converts be burnt alive, beheaded, or speared to death after giving them a chance to denounce their faith. The Namugongo martyrdoms produced a result entirely opposite to Mwanga's intentions. The example of these martyrs who walked to their death praying for their enemies and executors so inspired many bystanders that they began to seek instruction from the remaining Christians. The 45 young converts are recorded to

have been persecuted with a climax of 26 who were roasted alive at Namugongo on June 3 1886. So today we remember their sacrifice and we honor them. They have nourished our faith and encourage us to hope for a better future.

Our Christian faith is a free gift from God, a gift that has given us life, hope and purpose. Our reading from Deuteronomy reminds us that our faith is not something to keep to ourselves, but something to pass on to our children, whether they are our biological children or our adopted children around the world, the children of God. Moses tells his people to teach God's words, "to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Our Gospel from Matthew reminds us that followers of Jesus are called to act on their faith, to build their faith and this world on the strong, firm foundation of faith. God's foundation is the only foundation that will withstand whatever life brings. May God continue to guide and bless us in the days ahead.

**Amen.**