

The church's one foundation

by [Bonnie Thurston](#) in the [July 13, 2022](#) issue

Unable to see verdant forests
for mangled, ecclesial trees,
most of my companions
have abandoned the church,
not rats, but certainly escapees
from a rusty old ship,
with a treasure in her hold
undiminished by its often ugly,
always precarious, commanders.

To the sailors who remain,
not confident, but at least
hopeful she isn't going down,
who still stoke old boilers,
and swab slimy decks,
St. Benedict offers counsel:
Be prudent in your cleaning.
In scraping off the rust,
don't break the fragile vessel.

Appreciating mature beauty,
long faithful seaworthiness,
old sailors, like astrolabes,
still chart direction by the stars.
Their night watches taught them
the sun will rise from the sea.
They show their shipmates how
to be held in a crumbling conveyance
by the foundling Love in her hold.

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[Jon Mathieu](#), the *Christian Century*'s community engagement editor, joined [Bonnie Thurston](#) in conversation about her poem.