

2nd Lent B March 1, 2015

I begin today with literally once-in-a-lifetime news. 60 years ago, in 1955, the Archdiocese engaged in a Capital Campaign. From that campaign came new high schools: Moeller, LaSalle, St. X, high schools in Dayton and beyond. McNich benefitted also.

All these years later, the Archdiocese has begun a new campaign. It's called "One Faith, One Hope, One Love," –not to build a single building, but instead to build up our parishes; to provide priests, permanent deacons, and well-formed lay people to serve the diocese; to help kids attend Catholic schools if they wish, and to help those schools have great principals and teachers; to train catechists for children in PRP and adults in RCIA; to extend the amazing work of Catholic Charities for the less fortunate; and to provide for retired diocesan priests. I should mention also that 20% of our gifts will be returned to St. Bernadette for our own needs.

"One Faith, One Hope, One Love" is a unique opportunity to help Cincinnati be a better archdiocese, and to help St. Bernadette be a better parish. The overall goal is to raise \$130 million in pledges payable over five years. Our goal at St. Bernadette is \$580,000. That sounds like a lot—and it is—but I am happy to report that parish members have already pledged \$237,000.00, which is 41% of our campaign. My pledge is a part of that number. I have been meeting with parishioners to present the Campaign, and a wonderful team of parish volunteers have begun to meet with folks also. *Our campaign chairpersons are Charlie and Beverly Barnes. I thank them!*

Every parish in the Archdiocese will participate in One Faith, One Hope, One Love, and here at St. Bernadette will also be invited to participate in this historic opportunity to make a generous gift.

For now, I ask you to carefully read the insert in today's bulletin, and to welcome myself or our hardworking volunteers when they contact you in the coming weeks, and to consider being a volunteer yourself. Finally, I invite you to begin to consider a sacrificial pledge as your means permit.

May I say a few words about today's bible texts? (One possible answer is "yes.")

I remember the moment very well, although it was a long time ago. I was praying my breviary and reading the words to the hymn Amazing Grace. Suddenly, out of nowhere, I was grasped by an overwhelming Presence, powerful beyond imagining. I felt I would explode, or perhaps be crushed. No words, no visions. Just a Presence that was not of earth. It lasted just a few seconds, was suddenly gone.

I have had plenty of ups and downs since that day, moments of failure and sorrow and hurt, times of getting off the right track. But I have never forgotten. I know there is a Divine Presence, an almighty God. And I know I shall meet God some day!

And I can imagine Peter, James, and John, reminiscing 30-40 years later: "remember that day on the mountain. Remember when we knew that God was in him!"

Do you remember a powerful experience of God, a moment that changed your life? Some will say, "Yes. I have never forgotten. Christ touched me. ME!" But....nine of the 12 apostles did not see Jesus shining on the mountain top. And many good, faithful Catholics might say, "No, I have never had that experience. I can only go by faith." And of course, faith and love are what really matter, aren't they?

Abraham did have a profound religious experience—and then—on Mt. Moriah--God tested Abraham to let go of his beloved son, Isaac. Life tests all of us, sooner or later. We have to let go. The loss of health, the loss of a job, the end of a relationship, the loss of a loved one, the end of a dream. God grant each of us enough glimpses of Him, just enough time on the mountain, so that we endure the Cross and keep the faith.