

3 Lent B March 8, 2015

Most of you heard last week that the Archdiocese is beginning One Faith, One Hope, One Love—the first diocesan capital campaign in sixty years. So I want to begin with just a few words about that.

Catholic education will receive half the \$130 million that One Faith, One Hope, One Love hopes to raise. Cincinnati is the 38th largest diocese in the country, but we have the 6th largest Catholic school system: 44,000 students in 113 Catholic schools. \$40 million will be part of an endowment fund that will provide tuition assistance of up to \$1000 per student, per year for Catholic families who wish to send their child to a Catholic school but need some extra assistance. \$10 additional million will go as soon as possible to help with tuition. Finally, \$15 million will improve training for principals, teachers, and catechists. Training catechists means that parishes will have better PRP programs and better RCIA formation.

As I mentioned last week, I do ask you to kindly welcome myself and the other volunteers who will be contacting you in the coming weeks.

It is March 7, 1965 in Selma, Alabama. In Montgomery, George Wallace is governor. In Selma, 2% of black adults are registered to vote, despite great efforts. Three weeks earlier, Jimmy Lee Jackson had been shot to death while peacefully protesting. A decision has been made to March from Selma to Montgomery. Just outside of Selma lay the Alabama River, and across it the Edmund Pettus bridge. 600 marchers, many of them descendants of slaves, reached the bridge. March 7, 1965 is remembered as "Bloody Sunday."

1200 years earlier, the Lord God shouted to the Hebrew people. "I, the Lord, I led you out of the slavery of Egypt! You were slaves in Egypt, making bricks for Pharaoh, being beaten by Pharaoh's soldiers! It was I, God, who parted the Red Sea for you *so that you could become a free people!*"

And then God said, "And here is how to stay a free people. I will tell you how never to be slaves again. Take care of your parents. Don't lie to each other, or envy each other, or kill each other. Be pure. Learn to rest." And God repeated, "I led you on a march! I led all of you through the Red Sea because I want you to be a free people! Put Me first, and then you will be free!" (pause)

Because I might be able to cross any bridge I want, but if I can't drive down 125 without getting angry at some driver, I am in still in bondage! Because if I am free to vote, but my heart is full of hatred for a politician, I am not a free man! Because if I can't turn on a computer without staring at a bad site, I am living in chains! If I am unable to chat for ten minutes without gossiping about someone, I am not a free person! If I plan to have one drink and have six, I am a prisoner.

Jesus himself said, "Whoever sins is a slave of sin." The commandments were given, not to make people miserable, but to keep them free! The Hebrew people failed, of course, and so do we—despite our good intentions. Even St. Paul had to write, "I do not understand my own behavior. I fail to carry out the things I plan to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate."

Every one of us gets that. We have learned that the Law does not give us the power to obey it. Paul knew where to turn: "we proclaim Christ crucified...Christ crucified...Christ crucified!" That is not a cliché; that is freedom.