

4<sup>th</sup> Lent B

3-15-15

Again I want to begin with a few words about One Faith, One Hope, One Love. If the diocesan capital campaign reaches its goal of \$130 mill, \$16 million will be directed toward supporting vocations to the priesthood, the permanent diaconate, and also of lay people who need training to better serve in parishes. The \$16 mill. will provide tuition assistance for those people to study at the Athenaeum of Ohio in Mt. Washington; it will also endow three faculty positions, and also do some repair and upgrading of the buildings. *I should mention that the Athenaeum is open for visitors and you are welcome to visit.*

Our parish goal for One Faith, One Hope, One Love is \$580,000. We more than half of that in pledges, but we still need lots of participation. Once again, I ask that you give myself and all the campaign volunteers a courteous welcome when we contact you to present the campaign. (pause)

We are told that in our Milky Way Galaxy, there are perhaps 8 billion planets similar enough to earth that they might support human life. We know that God chose at least one of those planets for a unique creature called a human being. We humans are like God's science experiment: would men and women honor God? Would they be good to one another?

The human experiment didn't go so well. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Cain killed Abel. Sodom and Gomorrha were the Sin Cities of their day. God chose the Israelite people to be his own, and THEY turned against Him. You heard that in the first reading, God's own beloved people "*added infidelity to infidelity, practicing all the abominations of the nations and polluting the Lord's Temple.*"

Remember, God had 8 billion other planets out there, just in our Milky Way. If you were God, what would you do with planet earth and its violent, evil people? A big asteroid, maybe—then try again some other planet?

God visited his little earth. In Jesus Christ, God showed what a human life ought to look like and taught us what God wanted of us. Jesus told us to put God first and to love one another. Instead, we killed Jesus and pretty much ignored his teaching.

St. Paul wrote that God is “rich in mercy.” 8 billion other planets to choose from, and God puts up with us on earth. God may have tried again on some other planet, but He has not given up on us. Not on you. Not on me. How merciful, how patient God is!

Jesus said to Nicodemus—and to us:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.*

At weekly Mass, are we asking Jesus to save us? Are we asking to be transformed, to be cleansed, to be the people God wants us to be? Are we making progress as a Christian? Nicodemus made progress: first he came to Jesus at night out of fear; by the time Jesus dies, Nicodemus anoints the body and lays it in the tomb.

This Mass, this Lent, we beg God to be rich in mercy towards us all!