

## A NOTE FROM FATHER EICKHOFF

The greatest homily I ever witnessed was delivered by Fr. Tivy, the pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Parish, on an extremely hot and humid summer day back in the early 90's. At the time, Our Lady of Mercy Parish met in the (old) auditorium at Waubonsie Valley High School. During the summer the school shut off the air conditioning since they were not using the auditorium. That Sunday the auditorium had all the normal attributes of a sauna. It was miserable for the congregation. It was terrible for poor Fr. Tivy dressed not only in normal clothes, but also in his vestments for Mass. I could see him very clearly as he stood at the pulpit to proclaim the Gospel. The sweat was pouring off his head and his face was red and flushed. Honestly, he looked awful. And not in the biblical sense of being great and majestic, but in the common sense of looking like he was on the point of collapse. As he finished reading the Gospel he paused for a moment, closed the book of the Gospels, and then began the homily. All he said was "Go and do likewise." Having said these immortal words he turned and walked back to the altar. Genius, sheer genius.

These words are taken from today's Gospel reading as Jesus relates to His listeners the message as to how they should live their lives. It is a simple message. And that is not to be wondered at. For Moses tells the people in today's First Reading that God's teaching and Commandments that what he is delivering to the Israelites are not hard to understand. As the scripture puts it, "For this command that I enjoin on you today is not too mysterious and remote for you." The teaching of God is not hard to understand. We often say that it is hard to understand, but what we so often mean is that we don't want to follow God's teaching and Commandments and so we come up with excuses as to why we are not living by God's Word. The most commonly used excuse is "I couldn't figure out what I was supposed to do." It is not a very good excuse. We know what we should do. We just want to do something different. We are drawn to being selfish, mean-spirited, or indifferent when we should be charitable, kind, or compassionate. To follow God's teachings and Commandments means that we have to set aside our own desires and embrace the mind and heart of Christ. This is what is hard. This is what is difficult. Not that we don't know what we should do, but rather that we do know what we should do and don't want to do it.

How then do we follow God's teaching and Commandments if it is so hard to actually do it? With the help of God and the constant practice of living by God's teaching and Commandments. Carrying out God's teaching on a regular basis builds within us the prompt desire and ability to readily follow those teachings even when we are seriously tempted to be selfish, mean-spirited, or indifferent.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Stephen Eickhoff