

## FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

This week is Catholic Schools Week. Even though we no longer have Saint Patrick Catholic School, many of our children still attend Catholic schools in the area. It is a wonderful grace that they have so many good schools from which to choose. I hope that this week, and the witness of so many good teachers in our communities, can highlight the **Spiritual Work of Mercy of Instructing the Ignorant**.

Now, I know none of us like to be called ignorant, yet in many ways we all are. There are far more things about our world that we don't know than we know. As one author put it, "stupidity has no cure, but ignorance can be solved simply by being informed" (Fr. George William Rutler). When we look at the gifts God has given us, we can see many ways to act in mercy by helping to teach people. This happens all the time – school teachers instruct every day in their subjects, coaches instruct how to excel in their sport, parents are constantly teaching their children the basics of the world around them and helping with homework and the other problems of life (for a video of a beautiful example of this, check out [www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6\\_583\\_o54U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6_583_o54U)). There is a beauty to this mercy (when it is not done with arrogance, but with *the good of the other* in mind) which helps others to know the truth.

All truth comes from God and is related to God; all truth points back to God. But instructing the ignorant is especially merciful when we teach others about God and to know God. We see this work of mercy in the life of Jesus. After the Apostles return from proclaiming the kingdom, healing and doing mighty deeds, Jesus invites them to "Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). They go off, but

**[w]hen he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.**  
(Mark 6:34)

Jesus sees the ignorance of the people in the crowd, how much they need to know the Kingdom of God, how they need to know God's love for them, and in **mercy**, He gives up His "day off" to do what? Not just to perform miracles or feed the multitudes (though, He does do that a bit later), but to **teach** them. He sees their need for God, and wants to help them to know the God of love.

Our understanding of God is too often warped by the culture, and instruction from someone giving us the Truth can help us to see things more clearly. Instead of seeing, for instance, the Ten Commandments as a way that God has given us to grow in love of Him and one another, we sometimes see them as restrictive. Let me use the analogy of sports: if we were to look at a game of basketball, we would find that the game wouldn't be much fun if there weren't any rules. While we might not like being called out for a foul, if there were no such thing as "fouls" then there probably would be a lot more blood spilled on the court. If there were no rules, the chaos would remove much fun from the game. We enjoy the game *more*, not less, because of the rules and boundaries. God has given us the rules, the boundaries of how to "play" the game of life. He does this not because He is a ruthless tyrant; quite to the contrary, it is because He loves us and wants us to thrive and find joy that He gives us the "Big Ten".

I can't tell you how many times I have had people reject God, saying, "I want nothing to do with a God that would force His Son to be executed in a most tortuous manner." In those moments, I try to instruct them that God is not a *sadist*, but rather to see the great LOVE of God, that He would allow His Son to *choose* to suffer to set us free and to *show* us how MUCH He loves us!

Can you see how instructing the ignorant is a work of mercy? When we learn truth (whether it is the truth of the physical world or the spiritual world), our hearts are broadened to embrace more of God's loving plan. Breaking down the walls of ignorance sets us free to embrace not only the truths of the world around us, but the God who created it. May we each embrace the God who *is* Truth (John 14:6), and share this truth with those around us.