

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

03/18/12 4 Lent B

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

-- You see them in many public places, especially baseball stadiums, football stadiums and the like: signs that say **John 3:16**. Tim Tebow even had it etched into the black below his eyes before football games.

-- Yes, we've heard this verse many times. To many people, it's consoling. But it also tends to lose its edge because of its popularity.

-- John's gospel is not picturing God as a cuddly mother taking care of a child, even though that image can be found elsewhere in scripture. The "world" has a much more sinister meaning for John.

-- When he talks about the world, he's speaking of those forces on our earth which are far from God, or even fighting against God. He's talking about the "messy" things in life and, frankly, people who make a mess of their lives (and often others' as well).

-- It is into this sinful world that God sends his Son. God's love is shown in his willingness to enter into the messiness of earthly life. Jesus has become like us in all things but sin, as we hear in one Eucharistic prayer.

-- And Jesus came to earth that we might have life. He raised us up as he himself was raised from the dead. And this is pure grace, not something we earned or deserved, as St. Paul reminds us.

-- If Jesus did not save us from sin and death, then the Church is useless, our devotional practices mean nothing, and our service to the world is a matter of being good citizens and nothing more.

-- Fortunately for us, Jesus has come into our world. He entered the darkness of human life in order to redeem us. In whatever situation, whatever dilemmas, whatever joys or sorrows we find ourselves experiencing, he is there with us, bringing light to the world.

- That is particularly important to remember this week as our community has experienced a tragedy that showed us the dark side of the world which John's gospel speaks about.
- The gunshot death of young Michael Schwartz brought to our town and area the darkness of life in our world. Many people are suffering from this tragedy: the boys involved, all the families, friends, neighbors, law enforcement officers, and others.
- We can't paper over it, or think we can make all things well by ourselves. But our faith in Jesus Christ will support us in dealing with this and in supporting the families and individuals involved.
- For Jesus Christ did not enter an ideal world where all would turn out well by itself. He entered the real world where sin, death, accidents, natural disasters and human ignorance and error all conspire to quash our hopes and dreams.
- And he embraced this world in love, gave himself to us and gave us new life.
- We need to embrace the new life of Jesus Christ. As we do so, we are equipped to accomplish the good works Christ has prepared for us in advance.
- We are given strength to comfort those in sorrow, to feed those who are hungry in body and spirit, to warn those who are in sin so they might turn to God for mercy.
- We face many challenges in life. Some are the result of our own sin and foolishness. Some are thrown at us by the twists and turns of life.
- But through them all, Jesus Christ is there for us. He has saved us from sin and death. Without him our faith is useless. But, with him, it has the power to bring us everlasting life.