

Second Sunday of Lent
February 20, 2005
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Today, as we once again begin with the Word of God - the Old Testament in the gospel, they talk about the need to be with God and the need to listen to God. Before we focus on that, we have to focus on what keeps us from that, and deal with our temptations. Because again, when Jesus spent forty days and forty nights in the desert - His Lent - He went to fight with the devil. To deal with the evil one. And so must we. And so the first thing we have to do is acknowledge that Lent is the time when we fight the demons. We fight the temptations. And the greatest temptation - and the way he gets us the most - is the subtle things that he says to us again and again and again. Anything but Jesus. Anything but Jesus. Television is more important than Jesus. Your sleep. You have to take care of yourself. That is more important than Jesus. And it's subtle. You know Jesus I love you, but I'm tired. Or it's that anything, anything, anything but Jesus. TV, time, being, with someone else. Everything. Anything but Jesus. That's the temptation all of us deal with. And each of us - our Achilles Heel is different for each of us. Huh? Might be food. Might be sex. Might be time. Might be watching football. What ever it is. But what ever it is, the devil says, "anything is more important than Jesus." Sometimes he says it explicitly. Sometimes he tempts us with feelings. Sometimes he tempts us just in our day-in and day-out good and bad of our day. But remember, the temptation is anything but Jesus. But if you listen today to the first reading and the gospel - and the second reading too - and it tells us we are called to holiness, which we've talked about before and we are going to focus on today. Abram listened to God, and that's how he became the Father of the Faith. When Jesus takes his best friends - Peter, James and John - the same ones He will have with Him later when He suffers in the garden, and He takes them up to the mountain with Him. They were alone with Jesus. And how important that is that each of us is alone with Jesus? Every day we need to be alone with Jesus. Now notice, when they looked up after the Transfiguration they didn't see anybody else but Jesus! They spent time alone with Jesus. So, though the devil is going to tell you anything else but Jesus - you're a busy person, you got this and that - you and I have to tell the devil to "Go to Hell" - "Go to Hell." And then we have to say "the only thing that matters is Jesus. Only Jesus is what it comes down to." Only Jesus they saw, only Jesus. So the first thing I want to ask you is, as we're in Lent, are you spending time alone with only Jesus? Every day. If that was your resolution, are you living it? If not, let's go and go to the next place. Now, what you have to do is when you are alone with Jesus, you just can't be there. You know, sometimes people, including myself, I'll spend my hour with Jesus every day - I am alone with Jesus. But, I'm not listening to Jesus. I'm talking. I'm praying or I'm saying things. Or, I'm distracted. But I'm not listening. So, what it takes is both. Because if you're just alone with Jesus, well that's nice! Here is the Father of the Universe, when these three were alone with Jesus, He says "see this, this is Jesus" - WOW! But then He says "listen to Him." The same God of the Universe when we are alone with Jesus, He says "it's not enough to be alone with me." It's not enough to go and spend an hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament. It's not enough. What we have to do when we are there is listen to Him. And how do we listen to Him? Well, by being still, by being silent - "Being still and know that I am

God.” And one of these days when I find someone who can really do calligraphy big, we are going to put that in that Chapel – “Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46, verse 10. Put it there big so that it reminds people constantly - be still and know that you have God in front of you. But the second way, of course, is through the Word of God. To listen to Him. Yesterday, I was in Birmingham, Alabama. And down in Birmingham I talked to a bunch of men. I stayed with EWTN with the Fathers there, which was an interesting experience. They were good guys. We had a fine time. But anyway, as I sat there, as I always do at Men’s Conferences, like we will be having one here in a couple of weeks here for the men. But as I was there with the men, I sat there and said “OK, men, you’re men of God, you’re at a Men’s Conference. Let me see your bibles.” And of all these men, guess how many men had bibles? Two, those pagans! Two! But that’s not just here. If I was to ask you, ok, let me see your bibles - oh – you’d hold up your missalettes Here. Shut up!! Where’s your bible, huh? Listen to Him! We have to spend time with the Word of God every day of our lives, so that we’re listening to God. We must! It’s not an option! Now again, some of you have been doing this for years. Good. He wants you to listen more. Some of you haven’t tried this yet. I’ve talked about it more than once. I talk about it a lot! So what you have to do today is decide – who are you going to listen to? Are you going to listen to Jesus? Are you going to listen to the world? Are you going to listen to your own thoughts? Are you going to listen to what you want to do? Or, are you going to take the time from this day forward to be alone with Jesus, and then listen to Him. Which means you really spend time every day reading His Word. So that you are letting the God of the Universe tell you what to do with your life. Not you. Not TV. Not sports people. Jesus. Listen. The God of the Universe in this gospel just spoke to you. The God of the Universe said “this is my beloved Son, whom I am pleased with. Now what I want you to do is listen to Him.” That’s what God said to you today. Not Fr. Larry. God. Now if God said that to you, the ball is in your court. Will you listen to God, or will you listen to the devil? Will you listen to God and say “Ok Lord, I get the message. I’m hearing you God. You don’t want me to come and just show up. You want me to listen. So God, you who are my God, I this day before my God, promise you for the rest of my life, before you my God, that I will obey you because that’s the only way I can truly be holy. That’s the only way I can truly be your disciple. I will obey you and I promise you, Almighty God, from this day forward, I will listen to Your Son every day of my life by spending time with Him in Your Word.” Is that where you’re going to go? I’m going to give you a little hint if you do that. If you and I truly commit ourselves to letting the rest of our life be spending time with His Word every day so that we can listen to Him, I’m going to give you a hint of what He is going to tell you – the same thing He told those apostles. “No need to be afraid, you don’t have to be afraid.” And how many people live in fear? How many of you come here every week still in great fear every day that you’re not good enough, not worthy enough, not holy enough? Afraid of what’s going to happen tomorrow, afraid about no jobs, afraid about your health. How many live in fear? And so the first thing you’re going to do if you spend time with Him - He is going to tell you - like He said to them - “don’t be afraid, I’m in control, listen to me.” The second thing He is going to tell you is the same thing He told Jesus – “You are my beloved son. You are my beloved daughter.” Beloved means that we are the “Apple of His eye” as it says in the Old Testament. That’s like if you – you ever have anything in your eye? Everything stops until you get that thing out of your eye, does it not? You get

paralyzed. Ok, everything stops. No matter what you're doing, everything stops to take care of this problem in your eye. We are the "apple" in God's eye. Everything stops for us. We are beloved. And so if you and I truly spend time alone with God, listening to Him, one of the two most important things He is going to tell you, in general is "don't be afraid" and, "you are My beloved child." But then through that, He is going to tell you "this is what I want you to do today, this is what I want you to do tomorrow, this is what I want you to do with your life." But that's the thing today. Today can be another day where you come and go home and say "that was nice. Fr. Larry was back. Wasn't that nice?" Or you can say "the God of the Universe talked to me today, and he told me to be alone with Him, and to listen. And I made Him a promise today, for the rest of my life, I will obey and I will spend time alone and I will listen." Ya got it? Good! Get it? Good! May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.