

March 26, 2005

Easter Vigil

Fr. Larry Richards

Ok, a 45 minute homily. It's all for Will's sake, right Will? You're gonna be taking notes. I'm gonna ask questions. You're ready, ya, we tried this before! Now, as I've been thinking about what to do - you know we all know, do we not - that Fr. Rich loves the Passion movie? Do you know that? Yes, I think he talks about it every time he preaches, but anyway! So, but I like the Passion. It was ok, but I like Jesus of Nazareth, huh? You know, it was more dramatic in some ways than the other one. One of the things I remember about the movie "Jesus of Nazareth" was Nicodemus. Remember Nicodemus in that story? And Nicodemus was, as Jesus was being carried off, He is sitting there talking about the prophet Isaiah - "he was wounded for our offences, crushed for our sins. Upon him lays the chastisement that make us whole, by his stripes we were healed." And then he says, "and reborn." As I was meditating and thinking about what to talk about, I only came up with one word - the only word that kept getting to me - reborn, reborn, reborn. What does it mean to be reborn? Tonight, we have eight people that are going to be "reborn." Now, again, if you ever sit there and talk to a fundamentalist, they'll say, "have you been reborn, son"? And you go, as a catholic, "I don't know, I guess so." And you say "what's it mean to be reborn?" And they say "have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?" Now, that's a true statement, but it's not scriptural. (Laughs) Because, the person that asked that question originally was who? Nicodemus! And Nicodemus, you know, Jesus looks at Nicodemus and says, that's why he put the two and two together, that's why Nicodemus, when he looked at Jesus - Jesus looked at Nicodemus first and Nicodemus says "what must I do?" and He says "Let me tell you, Nicodemus, no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless they are reborn" or "born again." And then Nicodemus asks the God of the Universe - John, Chapter 3, vs. 5 - "what does it mean to be reborn" in vs. 4, and then vs. 5 says "let me say again, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless you are born of water and the spirit." You must be baptized, is what Jesus Christ said. To be reborn means to be baptized. And so, eight people here tonight are going to be reborn, baptized! They are going to be - the Spirit of the living God is going to come upon this water, and this water is going to be imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit - and these people who are dead, they might not look dead, but spiritually they are dead - that's so politically incorrect - but, Will, you're dead - (laughs) so, what's going to happen is the God of the Universe is going to take these dead souls and make them reborn! Change them, totally. Did you listen to the second reading today? You know, we just listen to readings and think, "oh, that's nice." We don't get it, do we? It was read well tonight, but if I ask you, what was the second reading about? Does anybody know? Will...NO? You said you were ready!! Are you unaware? See this is Paul - he has to slap the Christian community again. Like I'm going to do to you tonight!

Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were indeed buried with Christ through Baptism into His death. And so we were buried with Him into death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father, we might live in newness of life. And then He says "Now those who are in Christ, their old self was crucified, the old self is filled with sin." So what needs to

happen with all of us tonight is we have to say – now Paul was talking to people who were already baptized – and he said “Did you forget, when you were baptized, you died?” And what did you die to? Sin. So, first I have to ask the question – those of you who have already been baptized before, I pick on the non-baptized – have you really died to sin? Have you truly been reborn? Is there a BC and an AD in your life? Before Christ, and In the Year of our Lord? Is that really true in your life? Or do you just go through the motions of showing up? I’m a Christmas and Easter type person, Father. Shut up!! Christmas and Easter! “Oh, I’m in a relationship with Jesus.” Shut up! You are not! Oh, that’s very politically incorrect to talk about those people. You should be very nice and gentle to those people when they come to Mass on Christmas and Easter, Father. Shut up!! The reality is Jesus is calling you to be alive in him!!! Not just to be a ritual person! “I go to Mass every once in awhile, because I’m good person.” No, you’re not. None of us are, unless there is a dead to sin, and alive in Jesus Christ! Is there – are you just going through the motions of going to church on Sunday? Or are you in a living, loving relationship with Jesus Christ? Is there a relationship in you? That you no longer live – you are dead in your sin – it’s gone and now you are alive in Jesus Christ! If not, you’re just going through the motions of being a good person. We call those people pagans. Jesus wants so much more for you. He wants you to be alive. Not just wonder if He is alive and trying to be a good person. He wants you to no longer live, but let Him live inside of you. Jesus Christ wants to live in you. He doesn’t want part of your life – He doesn’t want Christmas and Easter – He doesn’t want an hour on Sunday! If you go to Mass every Sunday for an hour – jump up and down – He doesn’t want an hour of your life – He wants all of your life. He doesn’t want the time that you pray in the morning, “Oh, I give Him five minutes – I’m a good person.” He isn’t satisfied with that. What will it cost Jesus to give you new life tonight? His life. What do you think it’s going to cost us to enter into and receive this life? Our lives. Not part of our life. Our lives. Are you not aware that when you were baptized into Christ Jesus, you died? I wonder if you really believe that. Some people when they were baptized as babies, they haven’t really accepted that yet. So what has to happen is if you were baptized as a child is, when is a gift yours? The day you get it, or the day that you open it up? I believe it is the day you open it up. Because, again like I said the other day, if I give you a million dollars, and you take that million dollars and you never open it and you die of starvation because you didn’t think you had any money, well you had a million dollars, but you never opened up the gift I gave you. Some people – that’s the same with baptism – when you were baptized, you were given the gift of eternal life. Have you opened up that gift yet? Some of you have, some of you have not. Some of you have been baptized 40 years, and have never opened up that gift of everlasting life. You haven’t opened it yet. And you know, the day you open it is when you die to sin and you let Jesus Christ take 100 percent complete control of your life. You no longer live, but you let Jesus Christ live inside you. So, I want to invite you, that those of you who have not done that yet, don’t you leave this church tonight without dying. Don’t you leave this church tonight without fully surrendering yourself. Because if you leave this church tonight the same way you walked in, you wasted 2 ½ hours of your life. “That was so boring, and I hate when the priest yells at you! Can you imagine, he yelled at us?” Hee, Hee, Hee! You don’t know me very well do you? If you’re surprised, you haven’t a clue who Fr. Larry is! The reality is Jesus wants more of all of us. He wants more of me. You know, I’m a priest, I’m a celibate,

today a 45 year old virgin, and God still wants more of me. He doesn't want part of me – He wants all of me. Huh? Will you give Him everything tonight? That's the question. These eight people who are going to be baptized – they are going to give Jesus tonight everything – Aren't you Will? Yes, holding nothing back. And what's going to happen is they will be cleansed from original sin – all their sin will be taken away. Oh, ho, and some of them really need that! The second thing that will happen – not only original sin, but all the sins they have ever committed – that's why these people got away good and easy the other night when we had our Passion Talk – everybody else had to go to confession and make life-long confessions. The ones who have not been baptized – they didn't have to confess anything, did they? Because tonight, it's all “get out of jail free card.” Baptism, water being poured over, it doesn't matter what you did before. The only thing that matters is from tonight, onward. Because tonight, your old self is dying. The original forgiveness of sin is what happens tonight through baptism. The second thing that will happen tonight in their baptism and with all of us is that we become temples of the Holy Spirit, right? When we look at God, and we come into a catholic church, we think, “Oh, God is here, how nice.” No, God is here, of course, but where is God? Here, inside of us. Tonight, we become - these eight people become - temples of the Holy Spirit. So, again, we don't just sit there – if we only lived this! If we only believe that no matter where we are, God is. Again, I would tell my kids at Prep “Gentlemen, you'd never come and have sex with your girlfriend in front of the tabernacle, would you?” “Never, Father, how could you even say such a thing?” “Well, then you better not do it anywhere else.” Why? Because, where is God? Here. We are the tabernacle of God. And gentlemen and ladies – anything you wouldn't do right here – right here in front of Jesus in the tabernacle, you and I better not do anywhere else, because He lives just as solely inside our hearts - right here. This isn't a game. This isn't a ritual. This is reality. Jesus Christ lives inside of us!! And that happens the day you and I got baptized. Tonight these eight people become tabernacles of God. So, all you have to do is sit in their presence, and God is inside of them. Just as really He is in the tabernacle. So, if we start living that – no matter where I am, Jesus Christ lives inside of me, we will all become saints. Thank you. St. Willie, I can't wait! So the second thing that happens is we become saints. The third thing that is going to happen to these eight people and to us, is that we become adopted children of the Father. When I do my Missions and I tell people, “You know, some people try to see if God is up there or not.” We get to call the God of Universe and call Him “daddy.” When you and I pray – is that really how you and I pray? Do we sit there – are we so intimate with the Father that when we pray we sit there and say “daddy, you who are my dad.” Do we let Him say our name? Do we hear Him say our name? Are we so intimate with our Father God that we know Him so intimately and He knows us, that when I go to pray, I know I am in His presence and I just say, “Daddy?” Because today, these eight people – just as all of us were, get adopted by God. And they get to look at the God of the Universe who Muslims won't even say His name – they get to look at the God of the Universe and say “You're my Dad – forever.” Is that the way we live, that God, you're my Dad? And He can look at us and say “You are my son, and you're my daughter.” That's what baptism does to us. And the last thing it does to us tonight is it makes us members of each other – the Body of Christ – for all eternity. And I know this scares you very much – we're going to be together – forever! A billion years from now – you didn't like Father Larry now? Ha, Ha, Ha!!! A hundred billion years from now, we

are going to be together!!! I might get quieter, but I don't think so. The reality is we belong to each other, forever. There are no Lone Rangers in Christianity. You belong to me – I belong to you. When these eight people are baptized, they belong to us, and we belong to them. We are members of the family. So this is what's happening tonight. And it's what happened to most of us however many years ago. So let it really be true for us, as it is going to be true for them. Let us really surrender ourselves tonight to the Lord. And let us really enter into relationship with Him – let us have a BC and an AD. That just as Jesus is no longer dead, but alive, so we too are no longer dead, but alive. Ya got it? Get it? Good. Not 45 minutes, but 14 minutes and 23 seconds, so AH, what are you gonna do??????