

Fr. Larry Richards
Sunday, August 7, 2005

Good Morning! Today, the first reading and the gospel go hand in hand as planned by the Church, and as we listen, we see the prophet – God says “I am going to speak to you, prophet, so come on up.” And so, the prophet goes alone to be with the Lord. And that is very important. He spent time alone with the Lord! Ok? And as he goes up there – there is a lot of chaos happening. There is wind or a thunderstorm, there is fire and there is an earthquake. But notice, of course, God is not in the wind, he was not in the earthquake, he was not in the fire... God came in a gentle, whispering sound. And he had to be two things – he had to go up and be alone with Him, and then he had to listen. Now we jump to the gospel. The same thing happens in the gospel. Jesus goes to be alone by himself to pray with His Father. And while He is praying, of course, He sends the disciples out, He is usually doing – this is what Jesus does for us now, He intercedes for us and He sends us out to go do things. And so, the apostles go out to the shore, and as they go out to the water, there is a storm that arises. And in the midst of the storm, the craziness of the waves and the wind, Jesus watched them in the midst of this... He is peace in the midst of the storm. And that is very important, because throughout the last, oh last five years the church has went through a lot – the world has went through a lot as we as a nation went through a lot, and each one of us individually go through a lot, huh? First, we have the scandal of the Church within the last five years, and some people have used this excuse for not being in contact with God and not going to church – whatever it happens to be. But what has to happen in the midst of the scandal – in the midst of the storm – in the midst of the chaos – we have to stay focused on Christ – not the storm, not the chaos, and not our weaknesses. Because in the midst of all those things – we have those three choices – you can look at the chaos, you can look at your weakness, or you can look at Jesus. We are in the midst of a war – you know there has been war throughout history – but now we are in the midst of it, so now it affects us because we are in the midst of something. People die every day because of war. It’s in the midst of chaos that we go crazy over this reality, constantly screaming and yelling, going nuts, but look at Jesus in the midst of the chaos. In our lives, everyone here has chaos every day, by being busy, it could be that someone in your family is sick; it could be because someone in your family is estranged from you, and you are in the midst of a storm – going nuts!!!! You have three choices – you look at the chaos, you look at your weakness, or you look at Jesus, huh? All the things are there, but Jesus tells how we can deal in the midst of the chaos! We need to be people who go alone by ourselves to be alone with the Lord. You know, a couple of weeks ago when I was in Birmingham, Alabama – I’m coming back from Birmingham and I told you I got stuck and all of this stuff and it was a mess! But anyway, as I’m coming back and of course that was the night of the wind shear, right? Our nice tent we had in our courtyard was completely picked up and thrown on top of the garage and destroyed my nice tent, but that’s ok. But on the way in, we’re flying and as we are flying in of course, they said “look at the nice little storm over there” and we saw the storm and we go “how nice” – “don’t worry, that’s 45 miles away!” “That’s real nice!” Five minutes later – BOOM- we are in the midst of it!! Now, I always take a pill to fly, right? But I took my pill at 11:30 in the morning – it is now 11:30 at night – guess

what doesn't work 12 hours later? So, here I am – and the kid next to me is pure white – he is a Prep kid – and the lighting starts hitting us and we are going back and forth – and I have been through a lot of flying – I don't care for it! Worse time ever!!! It goes like this, and it goes like this, and it's going nuts, and what am I doing? Laughing!! I couldn't go nuts with this kid next to me, he was already white!! So I thought, “Well if I'm going to die – I'm going to die laughing!!” So, I'm laughing as we're going like this and he's looking at me like “Father, what are you laughing for?” And the only thing that got me through that was that I knew that that morning I spent my hour with Jesus. And if I could be at peace in that hour with Jesus, then I'm going to have to be at peace in this hour if He is calling me home now, huh? So, I have to have it! So, in the midst of the “nuts” I focused on what was important, and then I could laugh! Which isn't me it was all grace, let me tell you! And you know, as I was sitting there, I was telling a story to someone the other day – he is another priest – and this priest is saying “Oh Larry, a couple of years ago I was on a plane like that too, and I started turning white and I was grabbing hold of the stuff next to me and this woman looked over and she says ‘boy you are a horrible example for the religion, aren't you’.” And I said “did you slap her? I'd have given her a good whack right there!” Because here he is afraid, and she says you are a bad example, you should fear nothing! Oh, shut up!! You know, aren't you glad we have Peter? Peter – he messed up tremendously! He was a bad example of what it was to be a pope! He was afraid! He was impetuous! He went running the other way more times than he went running towards Jesus! And yet Jesus still used him to be the first pope! He still used him to be the rock – and he a lot of times was not a rock – to build His church! And that should give us hope, because in the midst of it sometimes we are not perfect people! Sometimes we are afraid! Sometimes we still focus on the winds, the rains, and the chaos around us! Sometimes we do focus on our weakness, and when those times happen and we are afraid in the midst of it, Peter gives us the out! He cries out to Jesus, and he refocuses! Jesus – Save me! Jesus – save me! And what we have to do is we have to keep refocusing and refocusing. And what is so important is if we don't spend this time with the Lord – You know, even Jesus went through a hard time, did He not? You know, someone would have said “oh, it's not a good example, showing what it is to be God in the Garden of Gethsemane.” When He was confronted with death, He wasn't like “oh, joy, this is going to be a great time tonight, oh I can't wait, I'm going to resurrect in three days, but it's going to be fun!” He had to look at His Father and He said “Dad, your will be done. Dad, you are the only thing that is going to get me through this – Dad.” And it was the Father that gave Him peace. But He couldn't have done that then, if He didn't spend that time alone on the mountain with the Father every day. So, if you and I want to get through the chaos of our life, you can look at the chaos – Peter, when he sat there and he looked at Jesus, he was fine! He could walk on water; whenever he looked at the storm around him, or he looked at the weakness in himself, he fell. And it is the same with each of us here. All of us have chaos – all of us are going crazy at one time or another. That is why every day of our lives, we have to take a moment – and you have to have peace in the midst of the chaos. I know you are busy – I know people are pulling you a thousand ways! But if you don't do it now, you are not going to do it later! Usually, when I'm on a plane and I'm going nuts – I'm just sitting there thinking “oh, my gosh, we're gonna die!” Thank you God. But because in my prayer that morning, He could give me peace – He could give me peace that evening when the rains and the winds came. You and I must

spend quality times in His arms every day. And again, we can do that – you know again, when I went to confession – I went to confession last Thursday on the Feast of St. John Vianney and I was telling Msgr. Biebel “you know, I do my prayer every day, you know – be impressed!” But as I was praying about three days before my confession, I was sitting in the Eucharistic Chapel and I was doing my holy hour and I was there 35 minutes and I just happened to look up after I was doing all of my prayers that you have to do – and the Lord was looking at me and He was like saying “you know, you haven’t even acknowledged me once!” And I didn’t! I was saying my prayers, but I didn’t even acknowledge that Jesus was in front of me. It was like He was there, and I am talking about Him with somebody else, and He is right there in front of me! And what we have to do is when we go to pray, we have to be still. Why? Because He speaks in that whispering sound. You have to be gentle to hear that. WE have to be quiet. And you have to be alone when we are in prayer. Jesus had to be alone. The prophet had to be alone. If this is the only time you are praying during the week – that is not good! You and I have to be alone with the Lord God of the Universe every day. If you are an adult, and you don’t pray, there is no way you are going to be saved. This is the most necessary thing in our lives, that we are still in the presence of God every day, so that when I am here in the presence of God and I have peace in the midst of the conflicts of my life, in the midst of my weakness, I can look at Him, and when I look at Him, we can walk on water. It is all a choice. Do you look at the chaos, will you look at your weakness, or will you look at Jesus? It is your decision. May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen!