

May 7, 2006
Fourth Sunday of Easter

I went to Ashville, North Carolina because someone from 17 years ago, one of my first kids, who I put a lot of time and energy into, who when he got into trouble I had to go to court for him and stand up for him, when he had problems up in Boston, I drove in eight hours up, put him in the car, drove eight hours back in a 24 hour period. Got him to Steubenville, he got on NET, and he did all of this preaching and proclaiming the word of God. So, I haven't talked to this kid in 10 years, so I thought it would be a good thing to catch up. Huh! It wasn't a good thing. Because he called and said "come over for lunch." So, he is a lawyer and his live-in girlfriend – huh - is a lawyer and so I went to meet with him and his girlfriend for lunch! Well, halfway through lunch he starts to say "you know, Father, you used to have all the answers for me. But now I have found much better answers." I said "how nice." He says "you know, me and her, we have been living together for seven years." "How nice." And then he sat there and said "we don't go to church anymore." "How nice." "And I don't believe in God." "How nice." "And the worst thing you ever did was bring me to God." "How nice." And so, I am ready to kill this kid! And I said "listen, I am not here to debate with you son. Being in a relationship with Jesus is being in a relationship with Jesus. It is not about the rules, it is not about the church. It is about being in a relationship. It is about knowing that if today, son you were to drop dead that you are at peace because you know where you are going." "I'm at peace!" He wasn't, he was lying! Too bad you could tell! Here was a kid who had absolutely no peace in his heart, and he is 35 years old. But he's done all these things for himself and he says "one thing Christianity did for me was took away who I am." And I said "then you never knew Christ, son, because He makes you fully who you are. He never makes you less who you are. He makes you more who you are." But anyway, I got in the car and I drove 9 hours back to Pittsburgh and I prayed for this kid – he really broke my heart, is the best way I could say it. And I'm sitting there struggling because if you listen to the first reading today, it says very clearly, does it not – the last word – I wonder if anybody remembers? What were the last words of the first reading? "There is no other name in which man is to be saved but the name of Jesus." Remember that? First reading, the last phrase of the first reading. "There is no other name in which man is to be saved but the name of Jesus!" Everybody will only be saved because of Jesus Christ! If this kid – because I asked the God of the Universe to let His full hand come upon him and help him know his sin so he will come to repentance – if he comes to conversion and he goes to heaven, it will be because of Jesus, even though he hates Him at this particular moment in his life! Any Muslim you know – the only way they are going to get to heaven is because of Jesus – any Buddhist you know – is only going to get to heaven because of Jesus. Any atheist you know is only going to get to heaven because of Jesus. There is no other name- and we can proclaim nothing else but that Jesus Christ - only in Him is salvation. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He died for everybody. And we can debate that and argue that but there has been nobody else who rose from the grave – NOBODY! And so Christ is the only one who proved that He is God by someone as being dead for three days, rising from the grave and giving power. And this power needs to be exhibited to us. Because, if I was to sit there and debate with this kid, it would have

done him no good, or me no good, because he wanted to be proven right and he wanted to push in my face everything I ever taught him. The only thing I could say was “son, Jesus is more alive than me or you. And He will reveal Himself to you.” And that is simple! And so, but it’s because of the name of Jesus. But then inside my heart, what we have to do is that second part. And it says here “That there is no salvation in any other name except for Jesus Christ.” But then in Peter, Peter says “that God wants everybody to be saved and come to the knowledge of His truth.” See, God wants everybody to be saved. You got that? He wants everybody to be saved. That person you can’t stand? The person that has hurt you – the person who is your enemy? God wants them to be saved. So, the questions now becomes do we want everybody to be saved? Do we want everybody to be saved? Or do we have our own little thing? You know, I told you before, like my mother once said “If that person is in heaven, I don’t want to be there.” And I said “don’t worry, mother you won’t.” Remember that? Isn’t that terrible to say to your mother? But the reality – to make it real in my mother’s mind – that “mom, until you want everybody to be saved, you don’t know what it is to follow Christ.” That every one of us – that has to be our goal! That we want everyone to be saved! Now, to be in the mind of God, is to have the same will that God wants. God wants all men to be saved. Now, if we go to the gospel today, I hope you got that gospel! In the gospel, again, there is one line in there that is so powerful – it says – and here is Jesus and He says “the Father loves me because.” And so now Jesus, the son of God says “do you know why my dad loves me?” Does anybody know the answer? “Because I laid down my life.” The reason God the Father, according to Jesus – the reason God the Father loved Him was because He was willing to lay down His life, that everybody be saved. Do you get that? That Jesus wanted everybody to be saved so much that He died for us. Now, do you want to be loved by the Father? If you want to be loved by the Father, then Jesus is telling you how! “You want to be loved by my Dad? Then lay down your life, so that everyone will be saved.” And that begins with your family. That somewhere, we have to start forgetting about ourselves, and my needs and my wants and who can take care of me...is what this kid says to me. He says “well, I have to take care of myself.” You know, exactly – that’s why he can’t come to Christ, because he wants to take care of himself! That the point of following Christ is to give up our life, and then Jesus proves to us – when we give up our life, when we die, three hours on the cross – everlasting life! But you can’t get everlasting life – you can’t take care of yourself until you give up yourself! So the first thing you have to ask yourself today is “do I want all men and women to be saved? Do I want everybody I know to be saved? Do I want that person who hurt me to be saved? Do I want everybody at work who drives me crazy do be saved? Do I want everybody to be saved? Because if I don’t have that mindset, I am not in the will of God, because that is God’s mindset!” He wants everybody to be saved! And second, “do I lay down my life for everybody to be saved? Every day! Do I do everything in my power to bring others to Christ? Do I do everything in my power – do I pray for them, do I talk to others about them? Do I have that burning desire in me that Jesus had that it cost me my life, every day – so that other people can know the love of God?” So, that is the call today. And, before you sit there and say “oh, yes I do, Father.” Prove it! Don’t just say it – prove it! What have you done this week – let’s go the last seven days – what have you done this week so that other people can be saved? What have you done to lay down your life, that other people will be saved? Can you think of anything? And some of you can, bless God.

Some of you can't, oh dear! What are you going to do? How will you lay down your life? You know again, we had it very simple. Every body is all excited in the beginning, but no one does it much anymore – we have those “You're Invited” cards in the back there, right? They're still back there on that table! Oh, I think I have another thousand of them over in the office. Take those little cards – and you give them to people and you hand them out and say “come to church.” You can do that – it won't kill you! Boy, you could bring someone else to Jesus Christ by something as simple as that. There are those CDs on “The Truth” back there – right in the middle of “The Truth” CD is “Give your Life to Jesus – pray this prayer with me.” If you are not the evangelization type, say “here, they are free...there are a whole mess of those Truth CDs back there...listen to this CD.” Huh! You can do that! That won't even cost you even part of your life, just maybe, oh about 30 seconds. Or it will take a little bit of courage. What do you do? Jesus, the Father loved Him because He laid down His life. If you and I truly want to be loved by the Father, we have to lay down our life. Why? So that everyone will be saved. Got it? Get it? You going to do it? Good! May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen!