

Second Sunday of Advent – Cycle C

December 6, 2009

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Good morning. The greatest thing happened this week. I got new contacts so now I have bi-focal in one eye and not in the other eye. I can actually read things without my glasses. Great thing. I don't know why I didn't get these years ago. Anyway today as we focus on the theme for Advent this year which is promises made, promises kept. And the promise that God makes us this day is the last line of the Gospel. "And all flesh will see the salvation." Salvation, we focused on it a little bit last week but now we really need to focus on salvation. How we are saved and how we experience that salvation. I have been reading this Gospel for about forty years and just yesterday when I was praying over it the Lord really hit me on how we prepare for salvation and the way John proclaimed it, which is kind of stupid I guess. I think I knew it in one part because I preached it and it didn't hit me deeply. John went about proclaiming repentance, a baptism of repentance. So the way to experience salvation and all that God has to give us is through repentance. The word repentance comes from the word metanoia. And metanoia means to change your life, to change direction in your life. The problem with so many people in the church, nobody here, those other people outside of this church, but everybody else, is they don't think they are much of a sinner. They have to really think about things when they go to confession. They are like I don't know what to confess. I really can't think of anything so I don't have to go too often because a year is plenty. I don't have that much to confess. Well, repentance is much more than going through your little list and yes I did that and no I didn't do that. Yes did that and no I didn't do that. Repentance means we stop living our life for ourselves and we fully live our life for God, humongous difference on how to live your life.

So when we look at how to repent, we have to look at three things. We have to look at our relationship with God, our relationship with others, and our relationship with self. Let us first focus on God. When someone comes to confession the number one thing, the number one sin people should be would be the first commandment, correct. The first commandment is what? You shall love the Lord your God above all things. Have no false gods before Me, right. I have been hearing confessions for over 20 years and rarely, rarely do people confess that sin. And yet, let me give you a hint – it is your sin, it is my sin. It is a sin where we live for ourselves. We don't put God first. We have false gods in our life – be it material things, be it our own ego, be it our own pride, fill in the blank, right. The core of all sin is pride because it is wanting to do things my way. So when it comes to God if we are still fitting God into our day, if we go to bed the night before and I wake up and I thought did I pray yesterday, if the answer is no, oh my we broke the first commandment. God has got to be first in our lives. He must be the reason we do everything we do because we are the reason He does everything that He did. So the first thing we are going to examine is our conscience here together. Do I fit God into my day or do I build my day around God. I have talked about this about a thousand times. Anytime you and I fit God into our day we have broken the first commandment we must repent. And repentance means change your life man and woman. Change your life. So if you are not committed to a daily prayer life what do you got to do, repent and change your life and start praying. Father I pray it is just hard. I don't want to hear that it is hard. I don't want to hear it and I don't buy it. It is a priority. It is all a matter of priority. If you are fitting God into your life your priorities are screwed up. It is time to unscrew them up. Isn't he very gentle, Fr. Larry. Such a gentle man. We have screwed up priorities if we are fitting God into our day. The most screwed up priority ever and that is the first thing we need to repent of.

The second thing we need to repent of is the way we deal with others. I like to focus on family first because that is my struggle. This past week I got invited to go to Malaysia next September. Do you know how long it is to get to Miri, Malaysia? It is going to take 39 hours. I go to these different places and it is good. You walk into these places and people are like, "Oh, Father." It is all nice. The people I struggle with the most is family. Same with you, most of you anyway. We can be anything outside but with our family it is a little bit hard. This past Thanksgiving, I already told you, there is that struggle about will I be nice to my niece's boyfriend, will I not. With family at Thanksgiving and usually Christmas too, I go up there, I have dinner, hi, hi, go downstairs take a nap. Everybody leaves, "See you Uncle Larry, "See you. I love you. Bye," and that is the end of it. This year I thought I have got to deal with my family first. I have got to treat them as Christ or what is the point of what I do. So I purposely, when I went home I said I will treat my mother, my brother-in-law, my sister, my nieces, my nephew, I am going to treat them as Christ, period, or what is the point. So, I did. A couple of glasses of wine helped. But that was all besides the point. Just two. The reality is instead of going downstairs and going to sleep I am going to sit up here and deal with my family as Christ. It was the best Thanksgiving I have had forever. We sat there and we laughed and everything for hours and hours and hours. All because I decided it is time to stop treating my family differently than I treat a stranger. They are Christ. Do we treat everyone meet, beginning with our families and do we treat them as we would Christ? If not, we have something to repent of. We need to change our lives, okay.

The third thing we have got to focus on is ourselves. The purpose of the Christian life is not to focus on self but the forgetfulness of self, the laying of our lives down. That is what Advent does. It helps us to slowly empty ourselves out so we can receive more of God. The problem is we can even be filled with things that are good but if we are filled we are not open. For instance I have a glass of water and the glass of water is filled to the top. Somebody gives me a two thousand dollar bottle of wine, the best wine in the world, people would kill for this wine. And you come to me and you have a full glass of water. You are not getting any of the wine, none. And is it my fault? No, I want to give you it, I want to give you all of this wine. The best wine in the world. But, because you are filled with the water or filled with self you can't get any of it. What you need to do to receive the wine is empty the glass. And you don't want some of the water left in there because watered down wine isn't very good in case you are wondering. You need it fully emptied so you can receive all of the wine, right. It is the same with our souls. As long as our souls are filled with self, are filled with my way, are filled with the things of the world, are filled with my wants and my desires, if you and I we come to God this Advent filled with self then when Christmas comes He can't give us anything though He wants to give us everything. The same in the spiritual life, the same in what we just explained. What must happen at Advent is we empty our self of self; of our selfishness; of doing things our way; of filling it with my sin; of my wants, my desires, living my life, my family, my way. We empty ourselves so that God can give us Himself. And the more we empty ourselves this Advent, the more we get the promise of salvation. And the promise of salvation and the more we get the wine if you will is Jesus Christ in His life.

So this Advent we continue this daily outpouring of our lives so that Christ can fill us more with Himself. The only way to be filled with Christ is to empty yourself of self. It is the only way. It takes grace to do it but it begins with the desire to do it. Will you and I desire this day to empty our self of self, to treat others as we would Christ, and to put God first? When we repent this way we receive that promise of salvation. We receive more faithfully and more fully this Christmas the fullness of Christ. And for those of you who it has been awhile since you have made a good confession, it is time. In a couple of weeks we will have on the Monday of Christmas week we will have a penance service here. We will have 10

priests to hear confessions. In the back, for those of you who have not heard the Confession CD, it is a free CD back there. When you walk out take it. It is free. It is an hour long it will help you go to sleep at night. It is me. As you are listening to it, it will help you to prepare yourself to empty yourself so that Christ can fill you with Himself. You got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.