

## Christmas Midnight Mass

December 25, 2009

Fr. Larry Richards

Merry Christmas! So, how was your Christmas Eve so far? Some great, some not so great I am sure. It all depends. Family is always a great time for Christmas Eve, sometimes good, sometimes bad. And that is what Christ was born into. The chaos of the darkness, the chaos of life in itself and He came to bring peace. He came to save us. One of the things was is there was no room for Him in the inn. And sometimes the problem with our lives is there is no room for Him in our hearts because it is filled up with everything else and this is where we have to refocus.

Tonight I was down here and I had the earlier Mass. Fr. Michael came down and I had to cook dinner. When I came out of Mass you know it took a little bit longer than normal and I get over there and there is Fr. Michael sitting in the room next to the dog and "Hmm," he said. "I said 7:00 o'clock." "I know Michael. I'll get right to the cooking." So I made steaks and everything. It was pretty good. It had some stuff. But in the midst of it, he left about 9:00 o'clock, and about 9:30 I came to sit to say my rosary and to say Divine Mercy Chaplet and just be here and spend some time just meditating on the birth of Christ. Then one of my old kids comes in. He came in blazing. I am at the altar because I go up to the altar and I am trying to fix the candles. He opened up his coat, took out two beers, put one there on the altar and said, "Here Father, one for you and one for me." And I said, "Get it off the altar son." Then he started, "Father I came to Mass." Then we had a screaming session for the next half hour like, "Son you have got to get your life tin gear." "Father I am trying my best." "No you are not." It is Christmas don't you know. And here it is in the midst of it, the chaos in this kid's life, Christmas Eve, just filled with it. And I said, "Son," as I have told him a thousand times, "you have got to make room in your heart for Christ. And until you do that I don't care what you do, nothing is going to ever give you peace, I promise you." And he argued with me some more and I am just here to tell you all the same thing – I don't care where you are at or what you are doing until you let Christ and make room in your heart for Christ you will never have peace. Oh, you are going to try for a little bit. You might have fun for awhile. You might sit there and think that this is where it is at. But I promise you, I promise you before the God of the Universe, I promise you, you will end up empty, literally as hell. I promise you unless you make room for Christ in your heart.

And that is what this Christmas is about when you open your heart to let Christ be born there. Fr. Detisch was here the other day for our wonderful penance celebration. I was over at his, he had a penance celebration on Sunday. They called me over and there was about 15 people there. Nobody had any sins over at Fr. Detisch's place because of course Fr. Detisch is the greatest sinner in Erie. Then he came over here and helped me on Monday. Fr. Detisch is my best friend. So those of you who are saying, "He talked about his best friend." Fr. Detisch talks about me every week. Let me give you a hint. And this week it could not have been any worse. We got our calendars, which we are going to give you tonight, and as we got our calendars and we are opening the box to give you these nice calendars and we open every box and guess what the calendars say? Sacred Heart Church! Pastor – Fr. John Detisch. Do you think he got ours? No. So if you want a Sacred Heart calendar there are about 15 boxes next door. Anyway he was over here and he likes to yell. He makes me look gentle sometimes. I have 3 crèche's or 3 nativity scenes in the rectory and he starts screaming. "Larry, you have the baby Jesus in

the nativity scenes. It is Advent, Larry. Christmas isn't until Friday." I said, "John," whack, "are you out of your mind? Do we take Jesus off the cross until Easter Sunday? John if you haven't got this yet Jesus was born 2000 years ago. You know He is not that little baby in that crib." And let me tell you that here too. For those of you who think that you come up there tonight and you look at the nice baby in there and you go, "Oh isn't the baby Jesus nice. " Let me give you all a hint – this isn't Jesus. It is a piece of plaster. It isn't God. it is just nothing. If you want to see Jesus tonight, when you go to communion - that is Jesus. We are not thinking about something that happened 2000 years ago. We are talking about tonight and Christ giving you His life tonight. He is knocking at your door and saying is there room for Me in your heart? Or do I have to somewhere else? Can I find a place in your heart tonight to be forever?

You know every day I am big on spending time with the Word of God. So I tell people no Bible, no breakfast, no Bible, no bed. That you should not go to bed at night until you read from the Word of God and should not wake up in the morning until you start your day without reading from the Word of God. I tell people to keep your Bible next to your bed stand. And before you get out of bed you should pray to the Holy Spirit and you open up God's Word and you pray with it until it hits you between the eyes with a two by four. Now yesterday when I did that I opened it up when it came to the end of 2Corinthians. And it says, "Examine yourself. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ lives in you?" Examine yourself. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ lives inside of you? So I meditated on that all day yesterday – okay Christ, you live inside of me. You live inside of me. Today when I opened up the Word of God it came to Galatians 2, my favorite verse in the Bible. Galatians 2:19, it says, "I have been crucified with Christ so the life I live now is no longer my own. Christ lives in me." You see the baby born wants to live inside of you. He doesn't want to be part of your life. He doesn't want you to come in on Sunday or once a year or twice a year and say here I am Jesus. He doesn't want a cultural following. You know sometimes we make Christ this la la, tip toe through the tulips type. Christ said you cannot be My follower unless you deny your very self and pick up your cross every day.

So He is looking at you tonight and He says awe you have time for television. You have time for money, you got time for sports. You got time for this, you got time for that. Do you have time for Me? Will you allow Me to be born in your life? Will you let me live inside of you? God isn't this big cheerleader in the sky that says, "Go for it. Go for it. I am praying for you. I am helping you. Don't worry." No, no, no, no, no. That has nothing to do with Christianity. Christ is inside of you if you are a Christian and your job is to get out of the way and let Him live His life through you.

So to do that I would suggest you do three things. First be still. Second, receive. An third, give thanks. First I would encourage you to be still. Tonight or tomorrow I do my prayer time tonight from 3 to 4 in the morning. I get to do this about an hour in a half to two hours. I would encourage you to do this – if you don't say the rosary well it is time to start. Starting tomorrow say one decade. How many is a decade – ten Hail Mary's. And when you do that meditate on that and ask Mary to take you by the hand and go there to the place where Christ was born and be there with her. She will say, "Come here, come here. I want to show you this." So when you go in there you watch and you smell the hay. You smell it there. You watch Jesus Christ be born, I won't go into that now. The first one to receive communion in the hand was good St. Joseph. He got to hold Christ, the first time he held the God of the universe in his hands. Then he takes Jesus and places Him on Mary. There is Mary holding Him and you are watching this tonight or tomorrow. Take five minutes and do this, please, five minutes. Imagine sitting there and you are watching Christ, you are watching Mary hold Him. You look at Mary as she looks at you and she

says, "Here, would you like to hold Him?" I would encourage you for five minutes, tonight or tomorrow, to just hold God in your hands. To let the God of the universe, Jesus who will give Himself to you, think about it – be still with that for a moment. Think about it. The God the universe cannot contain, you see these stars, are to remind you of all the stars that are in the heavens. You look up and you see all o the stars in the heavens. And most of the stars are bigger than our sun, right. And het the God of the universe is beyond every star, beyond every galaxy. And yet He humbled Himself and became a little baby who we could kill, who we could beat, who we could torture. And He just wasn't there then. The same God comes to you and me tonight in the Eucharist who we can taste, who we can spit out, who we can stamp on, who we could go back there and put in the toilet and commit a great sacrilege. The God of the universe humbles Himself for you and me. So what we need to do is be still for a moment and think about what is happening. Here God humbles Himself before us.

And then when He does that what is our job? We have got to receive Him. We have got to make room in our heart. We got to clear out all of this other stuff. A couple of weeks ago I used the analogy that if you have a glass of water and I want to give you the greatest gift there is of a great wine that cost \$2000 a bottle and I say, "here I want to give you this," whatever it is, fill it up. I have all of the gold in the world and I got this gold and I want to melt it down. And I have all this gold and you come to me with a filled glass. I can't give you anything until you empty it out. And the more you empty it, the more you receive. Christ wants to give you everything but you are going to have to make room for Him in your heart. You can't fill it up with all of this stuff you are trying to fill it with. You think that is going to make you happy and it hasn't yet. Do you think that is going to continue to make you happy? You need to get right with God.

After you have made some room and God can come in then you need to give God the Father thanks. It says that the whole reason Jesus was born was to save us from our sins, right, to save us from our sins. So here is the God of universe this Christmas and every Christmas, and every day of our life, who gives you a gift. He gives you Jesus. Have you ever once for Christmas, ever once, just once in your life ever thank God for the gift of His Son? For Christmas He gives you Himself. So this Christmas what we have got to do is have a thankful heart instead of all of the things I do for God. God is just a hard god. He makes me go to church and He makes me be pure. He makes me not want to want to have the fun I want to have. Oh this God of the universe makes my life miserable. Would you get over yourself for five minutes and thanking Him for all that He does for you. All of the things that He does for you and me. He has nothing left to give us. And He gives us Himself in love. Is there room in your heart tonight for Him. If not don't you leave this place until you make a place for Him in your heart. Don't let Him go anywhere else accept inside of you. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.