

Third Sunday of Lent

March 7, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today the Gospel of course fits beautifully as it does by the church decree on this time of Lent. And if you listen to the First Reading it talks about we who are discouraged by our sins. And then it begins, "You help us to deal with our sins by the works of prayer, fasting and almsgiving." Those are the ways we can deal with our sins. But if you are listening to Jesus today, Jesus was in no way gentle in any way shape or form. There were two big tragedies that happened in Jerusalem. When the tower fell and all of these people were killed He says, "Do you think these were the greatest sinners because they were all killed in that way?" And He says, "No way were they the greatest sinners." But then, this Jesus who all of us want to come to and have Him be gentle and loving toward me at all times, He says, "But you will perish in the same way if you do not repent." So He says that twice. That means He says you are going to die not only spiritually, but physically. So here is Christ twice today being a little hard on us not a little hard, all these people were listening. Can you imagine what you were thinking? Could you imagine if I had said something like you know all of those people who were killed in that tragedy, fill in the blank, the whole same thing is going to happen to you if you don't repent! Would you be happy? I'll bet you would all be upset. I'll bet you letters would be written. I'd bet you it be on CNN. Fr. Larry said that because of this tragedy, that we are all sinners and all the people are going to do the same thing, I'll just bet you. But Jesus Christ said it twice today in case we didn't get it. So the point of this of course is what Jesus Christ is calling them to and what Jesus Christ is calling us to is to today is very simple. What is it? Repent.

Now again, repent means we have got to change our life. So sometimes Jesus looks at us and He has to be hard on us because it is the only time some of us can hear Him is if He is hard. He says, "Listen, you are going to die and a horrible death if you don't repent." You don't think they all hurried up and went, "Oohh, I had better pay attention. I had better listen to what Jesus Christ is saying." So what Jesus Christ is saying to all of us is we need to repent. Now what do we need to repent of? Well, we need to repent of doing things our way, very simple. We need to repent of our selfishness. Go through the commandments with yourself. And hopefully everyone is going to confession for Lent and we will talk about that next. When we repent it is a daily process. It is a good practice to have a daily examination of conscience and to go through the commandments. Or to download from our website the Sins That Need to Be Confessed list and to go and look at it every day and make this a daily examination of conscience. Am I doing these things? Am I failing to do things? What is God calling me to do? And when I do that daily examination of conscience then I have this daily repentance. And repentance of course is that Lord I am going to change by Your grace. It is not just an "I am sorry," but it is an "I am going to change." So that is the first step. So we do that. We pray to the Holy Spirit. We do our daily examination of conscience. We don't make excuses for our sins. We say this is me. I did it because I want to. All of us sin because we want you know, even me. I like it and so do you. In your heart of hearts so do you. That's why we do it. And sometimes you'll make this little game with us—"Oh no, I really don't want to do these things." Well sure you do. That is why you and I have got to repent and say, "Lord I like doing these things sometimes. You have got to change my heart Lord. I can't do it. This is what I want. But I give you permission to change my heart so I can do what you want." So that is the first thing. One, repent. We have to ask for the grace and have that daily repentance.

The second thing we need to do is to be good followers of Jesus Christ is go to confession. Now a good practice that I have been teaching for many, many years and as I was just yesterday down in Columbus we were dealing with down in Columbus the men. We had 1700 men there. And again we talked about the need for Confession. I always say everybody needs to go to confession at least once a month. Some of the surveys were talking about we don't have confession enough here. And I am thinking okay well we have confession s everyday in the parish at 11 o'clock before Fr. Wright's 11:30Mass. I hear confessions before 11 o'clock Mass. I hear confessions on Saturday from 4 until 5. We also, now that we have Novena, we have Novena every Wednesday night because people say why can't we have it during the week? We have Novena every Wednesday from 7 – 8 and at 8 o'clock I hear confessions every week. So now during the week we have confessions. There are people constantly who stop in the office and go to confession for a different time and I don't mind that at all unless it is a three day confession. But if it is mortal sin you need to get rid of it. Come on. That is no problem. We will take care of you. So will Fr. Wright. Also if this isn't enough the Cathedral has confessions how often? Every day at 5 o'clock I think – a quarter to 5 every day. There is plenty of opportunities. It might fit perfectly into your schedule but so? When you sin did you enjoy doing your sin? Should we just like bend over and say hey, I'll go out of my way to make sure that after you sin I'll fit into your schedule. Sometimes you are going to have to bend your schedule. It might hurt a little bit. You might have to get to church early to go to confession. You might have to break up what you like to do on Saturday afternoon and come into church and go to confession. I feel bad. No, I don't. It should hurt a little bit when you go to confession. To sit there and think what you and I have done to Christ and yet we want everything given to us. Gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme instead of really repenting and going out of my way. I am pretty easy in confession. One Our Father is all I give for a penance. That is it. And everybody says, "Is that enough?" One guy came to me the other day, I gave him one Our Father and he goes, "That is not enough Father." I said, "You got that right it is not enough." But, it is enough for Christ. So we try to make it easy for you to go to confession. We embrace you in the sacrament. But sometimes we offer if more than other parishes, but you need to avail yourself to that. You are going to have to break your schedules to get in here and go. We of course will have the big penance service on Wednesday of Holy Week. We will have 10 priests here after the Passion Talk to go to confession. If you are sick of listening to my Passion Talk, I am sick of giving it, you can come after, about a quarter to nine on that night, the last place in Erie to do that. Then of course I will hear confessions before and after on Good Friday. So, there are plenty ample opportunities for you to go. So when you make that daily repentance, then the second thing you need to do is go to confession, how often – once a month.

So then after you do that then what has to happen is you have to have the intention that you are going to change. Going to confession isn't a get out of free card only, it is Lord you died for me to take away this sin for me. Now I want to live my life for You by dealing with this sin and not falling into this sin anymore. But Lord look at me, you know how hard it is for me. You know how I love to live the life I live. You have got to change me. And Lord from this day forward I am going to try as best as I can to work with you so that this sin gets out of my life. It is a process of growth but it comes from that daily repentance, the acknowledging when I go to confession and then the change in my life that comes by the grace of God that I get in confession.

So that is what God is calling us to. He doesn't want any of us to die, of course not. He wants us to live. But the way we have to experience true life is only one way – through repentance. So, He looks at you and me today and says, "repent!" So let us repent. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.