

Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle C

July 4, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. I am still messed up from our trip. Fr. Michael Kesicki and I of course we were in Germany all week. If you have never been to Germany it is by far the best place I have ever been throughout the years. It is very Bavarian where we were especially. I was in Cologne to say Mass in the same place our back altar was made. They gave me a nice plaque to put in the back altar. It is a beautiful place. Munich is a beautiful place. In the time being there as I was reflecting on the Gospel and on the Second Reading today, here is Jesus proclaiming again and again the Kingdom of God is at hand. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Then you have St. Paul who is now one who proclaims the Kingdom of God is at hand to the people he is with. The way he does it he says, "I boast in nothing but the cross of Jesus Christ." Thanks to the three of you who heard the Second Reading today. "I will boast of nothing except the cross of Jesus Christ." Then the way He lives it is by saying, "Let no man bother me because I bear His marks in my body." So some people will talk about that Paul was the first one to have the stigmata. Whether he did or whether he didn't it doesn't really matter. We know Frances later proclaimed the Kingdom of God and he had the stigmata. We had Padre Pio in our own time who had the stigmata.

The same with all of us – we need to proclaim the Gospel of God, to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to the earth where we will find ourselves. We got to pray at one of the monastery's then we got to go to Dachau and I didn't want to go there to begin with. First of all we didn't get there until late. We got a hotel, didn't know where it was and there was no air conditioning anywhere in Germany. It isn't the funnest place to be when it comes to that. We are in this place and we all got these single rooms. The room was no bigger than my confessional, literally and it was hot. I had the doors open. Please let me sleep. They started hammering literally and jackhammers at six o'clock in the morning. I was in one of my moods. I can't imagine you would know that. I was like grrr...I wouldn't even talk to Fr. Kesicki over breakfast. He knew not to bring anything up. I wasn't in a very good mood.

The first place we are going is Dachau where 40,000 people died and 2,700 of them were priests who were there. They didn't all die. We go in there and it is a very sad to see the gas chambers where so many people gave up their life. In the midst of all of this they have a Carmel Monastery built right outside of where all of these things happened. You touch the gate like here is the same. You walk through the gate and there is a Carmel with the Precious Blood. You walk in there and there are so many beautiful, beautiful churches in Germany. They all make ours look like a dump. There is so much to look at. We walk into this place in Dachau, this monastery, and it is very simple, none of the crowds just the Blessed Sacrament. So I did my Holy Hour there. It was the most peace I have had the whole time. It was just absolutely peaceful. Then we got to meet one of the Carmelite nuns and she was talking to us. We had bought some icons there and Fr. Kesicki got one that he gave to us which will be on the front altar or the one over in the center. It is just a little cross from Dachau but it comes from the midst of the suffering of 40,000 people. Not all Jews. Jews, Christians, there were Muslims there. These people who were tortured in the midst of it all. And now the Kingdom of heaven is proclaimed and peace can be there because of the crucified One.

On the other side of the wall is a Russian Orthodox chapel which was built by the Russian military. As they built this place, you can't get in there but there is a screen you can look in, and there is an icon of

all the people of Dachau, all of the suffering, all the people emaciated, starving, and in the midst of them is this risen, presence of Jesus Christ. That in the midst of all of the suffering ... you know when we talk about all of the suffering in our lives it is nothing is it? It is nothing to sit there every day and to be waiting to die of starvation. To watch people around you die. They would take the priests and take them out and priests had a special place. They had their own little barracks. What they would do is to the priests is they would inject them with various diseases to see how they would die or if there were cures for them that is the way that they did it. In the midst of all of that suffering there was Jesus.

It has got to remind all of us and all of our sufferings that happen, no matter what life brings us, the good, the bad, the hard times, the good times, that we are not alone. That Jesus is with us. Our job then is to bring the very presence of Jesus Christ who is within us. We preach not the resurrected Christ, well don't worry it will all be okay one day. We preach Christ crucified which means that in the midst of this we are not alone. That in the midst of this we don't do this ourselves. That Christ is not only in our midst but as Paul would say, "I preach Christ crucified and now let nobody bother me because look, He is inside of me." In the midst of it all Jesus is inside of me. He is not up there saying don't worry I am with you. It is okay. No, He is suffering with us and He promises us that in the midst of the darkness that He will bring light.

So in the midst of our lives, whatever happens in our lives good or bad we have got to focus primarily on one thing – we are not alone. Christ lives inside of us. In the midst of it, like all of those 40,000 people that died in Dachau they all now reign with Christ forever. Suffering they had more than most of us will ever experience, but rejoicing they have forever. Which one day we will experience because Christ who is crucified is with us. Christ who is crucified lives within us. In the midst of the suffering, in the midst of the chaos, He will bring us peace. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.