

November 18, 2012

33rd Sunday Ordinary Time - Cycle B

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. I never learned any Italian while I was in Italy. Just so you know. We listened to the Gospel today, the one line is "...that He will send His angels to gather His elect from the four corners of the world." That the God of the universe is always going to take care of His elect. And His elect is us. That we are the ones that God does everything He does for. The deepest and best grace of my sabbatical was, well first of all after a month I was ready to come home. They were all laughing at me because I had the days, minutes, seconds counted down. I had a timer on my app phone. "Okay, when do I get to go home?" And he says, "Larry, you just got here." A month of peace and quiet is just plenty for me. So anyways, but again it was all grace, especially Assisi, the time there, the Holy Land. It was just one big thing after another. And I ate a lot and but I walked up to six hours a day.

But besides all of that, that the grace was given to me, just to realize two things. One is that, it doesn't matter whether I am around or not. Right? The parish did quite well. We are down some people, but anyways. It still continued. The retreat program went well. Everything went well. You can take me out. It is like taking hand out of water. Everything is still fine; which is the greatest gift you can actually have. Because then you can't control everything. And it is a great gift not to be in control of all things because, there is only One Person in control of all things. Who is that? God. Yeah. And I am not Him and neither are you so we can relax. The second thing is to know that everything that God did He did for love of someone like me. And He did it for love of someone like you. More than anything else that we are taught by our faith, what has been revealed is that we are loved by Almighty God, as we are. And the only thing that will change us is His love. So that is where it all begins.

And so as these days happen now, and these next couple of weeks, we start focusing on the end of the world. And again, people get all afraid and all. Like, "Oh my gosh, the world's going to end." The world is going to end, you got it. Aren't you excited? That is the reality that when everything is going crazy, God still does everything for the love of us. This past week I re-read The Great Divorce by C.S. Lewis. Have you ever read the book The Great Divorce? It is a phenomenal book. And he talks about the people that are in hell and in purgatory and they get to go to heaven. And the people in hell are the ones who like to do it their way. And they do it in subtle ways. You know about their religion, "I was perfect in all things. I deserve this." But nobody accepted the love of the Father. But even in hell for C.S. Lewis, if a person would ever just stop thinking about himself, just for a moment, and think about God and accept the love of God he could be brought into heaven. But it is eternal, a person who is in hell because they are only focused on self. They will never be able to get out of it because they are only focused on their own reality. So when we think that we are in control of anything. And we think that everything depends on me. And everything I have to do in my family, it all will be, what is going to happen? That is the focus on the wrong person. We need to be focused on our daily life. That Jesus Christ is in control.

That if you listened to the Second Reading today, He paid the price to make us perfect. And again, we are still trying to work at it. We are still trying to do more and then the more we do maybe God will love me more. That is not of God. That God paid the penalty. That God paid the price. He has redeemed us. We have to let Him. Hand over control. Hardest thing I do in my life and the hardest thing the most of us here will ever do, but when you hand over control, then you can know, okay, I can trust you. We can't even control our next breath, right? Those of us who have control issues, it is the biggest lie there ever was. If I can't even control my next breath, then I can't control anything. So I hand over that. So if the world was to end today, praise God, He knows me. He is going to take care of all things. In the midst of that, the only way we get out of fear for that, is when we know that everything He did, like I already said. He did because He loves us.

So when you look at God, and I had a chance, you know when I was over there the Seminarians asked me to give a talk. I say, "Fine." Because, I was going crazy not talking to anybody. You know going to Mass every day, you know I only got to celebrate Mass twice myself, being in charge. Every other time we listened to other priests, wake up early. So I was going crazy. Let me do something. And so one of the things they asked me towards the end, the Seminarians asked me if I'd give a talk and I said, "Please." And so I got to do one, the thing that they responded to the most is when I focused on, which I have talked to you about many times. Mark 1:11. What is it? Mark 1:11. And Mark 1:11 is.... Has it been that long that I have been gone? "You are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." And so, even though I kicked them in the butt, because that is just part of my style, as I have said before, I can kick even kick you in the butt, you are going to have to spend time with Mark 1:11 the rest of your life. You have to go sit with it, Mark 1:11. "You are my beloved." And that is where it has to begin with us until we come to know that we are beloved of the Father. That every time God looks at us, He smiles because He knows us.

Think about it. Most of us think when God looks at us He frowns. Right? Because none of us are perfect. And we always think that we are never good enough. You are not. Neither am I. That is why He smiles that we are beloved to Him. And so when we get to that beloved, then we know that I can trust Him if the world was going to end today. The world is going to end for all of us when? The day you die, the world ended. But even that, that was another great grace, to not have that fear of death. That if God was to call me today, I am ready. I was excited at one point. I said, "God, take me right now. I am all ready." "No." "How about now?" "No." But see that is the point. That somewhere we get that all these things that we have taught. All of these things is real. We can believe it. It is true. That Christ is coming again. That Christ died for our sins. That Christ has redeemed us, He has loved us, and He has everything in His power to save us. And what we have to do is surrender. Completely. Fully. Holding nothing back. Getting up. Giving up that control. Giving up all that stuff where we think I am going to be in charge. You are not. You are going to die. I am going to die. The world is going to end. Israel today could blow up. A nuclear holocaust could happen tonight, before Thanksgiving and that is fine.

It doesn't matter that the president got re-elected again. It is fine. God is still in control. He still loves you and me. He has redeemed us in His precious blood. And He promised that He will come and take care of His elect. If you and I are the elect, and we are, then we have to tell our faces. We have to be hope in a world that doesn't know hope. We have to be light in a world that only sees the darkness.

And when we start living this way, God is going to do great things in us and through us. And He will bring hope to us and to the world. So when you listen to the Readings today, don't be afraid. Be filled with hope because when everything is said and done God will send His elect. He will send His angels to gather His elect forever. We are the elect of God. You got it? Get it? Going to live it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.