

December 24, 2014
Christmas Eve Vigil Mass - Cycle C
Fr. Larry Richards

Again, Merry Christmas.

Today, tonight, as we hear God's Holy Word, it talks about, "He shall be named Emanuel, for God is with us." And that's truly what Christmas is about. It's God wanting to be with us, and that means that we are never alone. And often we think we are alone. You know, often, people have said to me, "Oh Father, I could never be a celibate priest, you'd get lonely." Well sure, but I know a lot of married people are lonely too. But the reality is all of us get lonely, every single person. And the reality is it's because we are focusing on us, when we should focus on the Lord, who always wants to be with us. And the fact is, always is with us. And that's one of the most wonderful things ever, to know that when you're sad, He's with you. That when you're sick, He's with you. When you're afraid, He's with you. When you're happy, He's with you. He rejoices with you and he's always with us.

You know, too often, we keep God up there and Christmas comes to say God is here, not up there, here. And so if God will humble Himself and be with us, always, you know He's not just with you when you're doing good, He's even with you when you're sinning, right? Again, that's why St. Paul would say, "Whatever you do, you make Jesus do," because He's within you. There is never a moment in your life where God is not with us, never. But the question always becomes, are we with Him? Do we want to be with Him? He never forces Himself, He always invites. When He came many people didn't accept Him. He came anyway, because why? To prove to us that we are loved by Him.

You know when you love somebody, you want to be with them. It's just that simple. God loves us so much, He wants to be with us. Not only 2000 years ago, in the manger, but tonight in the Eucharist. He couldn't get any closer to us when we feed on Him tonight. His body will become our body. Our body and His body become one. We are what we eat. But it must be more so than that, often people are afraid of God. You know when I do Men's Conferences and that, throughout the year, I say, "Do you pray every day?" And I have heard more than once, "Well Father, I'm afraid." And I say "Why are you afraid?" "Because you know Father, I've done a lot of sins, He doesn't want to be bothered with me." Now he's saying you're the reason He came, He came to save sinners. That's the whole point.

And so I would encourage you this Christmas to spend time with Him. You don't have to be afraid. I would encourage you, tomorrow, take 5 minutes, would you, 5 minutes of your life, and go by yourself alone to be with Jesus. Go to the manger and watch Jesus and Mary. Watch her as she sits there and she plays with her Son. He coos, He cries, whatever, and while you're in the manger with Jesus, ask if you can hold Him. Just ask Mary if you can hold Him. Then you hold the God of the Universe in your arms for a while. Start there. He's with you. Will you be with Him this Christmas? Will you hold

Him in your arms and then as you hold Him, will you let Him become one with you?
That's the whole reason He came was to be one with you. He is with us, please be with
Him this Christmas. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.