

Father Larry Richards

Moderator, Bread of Life Community

March 18, 2001

Cycle A

Third Sunday of Lent

1st Reading – Exodus 17: 3-7

2nd Reading – Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8

Gospel – John 4: 5-42

Good morning. I got in late last night from Phoenix. It was the most horrendous flight I think I have been on in my life. And you know I love to fly! On the way out I thought I could handle it. No problem. I come back and there was nineteen year old kid sitting next to me and half way back from Phoenix and he says, “Are you going to be alright, Father?” I said, “I am suppose to be saying that here.” Geesh! (Everybody laughs). But, enough is enough. That was a thing and a half here.

Today if we sit there and let the word of God speak to us, we spend time, and because we have Catechumens here this year, we are going to stay on the A cycle readings throughout this time. It is the cycle when you have people converting in the parish. So today we are going to spend time with the gospel of St. John. And this is the woman at the well. The Samaritan woman. We are going to kind of work backwards okay just to give you a little bit of sense. We are going to start off at the end here. Here is the woman who is an adulteress. Who had had five husbands, if you will. Who was living with somebody now. But notice that Jesus did not condemn her. He just told her I know all about you. I know all about you. He didn't condemn her. He accepted her. He never accepted the sin. But He accepted her. And that acceptance and that telling, that understanding somebody, really makes all the difference here. Then she goes and she tells others. And then when she goes and tells those others, go to the very end here of the chapter 4 of the Samaritan woman of John's gospel. At verse 41 it says, many more began to believe in Him because of His word. And they said to the woman, “we no longer believe because of your word, for we have heard for ourselves and we know this truly is the Savior of the world.” This is what is important. Jesus of course, starts off by telling somebody what they have done. They know that He understands them. There is something inside of us that wants to be understood. But once she goes and she feels understood, she goes and she starts telling others. And then the others come and they say, we know. Not because of your testimony, because we have known.

When you are young you have to be told from somebody else. Or you've got to be preached to. But some people are still being fed by other people. Here I am taking the word and I am chewing it and I am giving it to you. You are eating it because you can't take it. Well we shouldn't be letting people chew the food for us. After a while, we need to take the word of God and chew on it ourselves. But so often, our whole walk with Christ becomes something like, Fr. Larry preaches a good word and I like it. But then how much time do you spend with the word of God? Well, I don't. I get it at Mass. No, no, no, no! You are getting what I have digested and given to you. Which is good if you are a little child and young in the spiritual life. But what must happen is that you and I must hear His word every day. We must digest it ourselves so that you can sit there and say Father, I don't believe because of you. Or because of my parents. Or because of Johnny down the road told me. I believe because I know. I've listened. I now this person of Christ. So we got to make that next step. Some of you have made that step years ago. Some of you aren't close to making that step yet. But you got to make that step to be a person who follows Christ.

One of the things I find so strange about our parish is, which is a good thing and a bad thing, some people come here for a while. They get all excited. And then they leave. They go somewhere else. Why because there is no groundedness. They go from place to place. I was with a bunch of ministers this past week. And there were some people there and I thought they use belong to one of the local parishes. Now they belong to this other church. And they belonged to this church and that church. In ten years four different churches. Because they are still trying to digest what other people are saying. Oh and if I like this community I'll stay here for awhile. And then I'll go elsewhere. No! You must be grounded in Christ. You must be grounded in a community and a committed community. The good and the bad. That is what we are about. Don't just go fluttering from place to place. No. You got to be committed to Christ and His church. Sometimes you will be offended. Sometimes I am offended. But, we are together as a family. A family that yells at each other. That loves each other. That cares about each other. Prods each other. Gets upset with each other. But we are with each other. And if you are chewing on the word of God yourself, then you will not be fluttering from place to place. You'll be grounded in God's word.

And so the first thing we need to be doing is are we really committed to Jesus Christ? Or are we committed to feeling good? If we are committed to Jesus Christ, I promise you, unbelievably, you are going to go to the cross and it is going to kill you. Get excited. But in the midst of that you will be understood. This woman was transformed because somebody knew her. Remember the show Cheers? You remember the song? Everybody knows your name. There is something good about when people know you. You know. Here is who I am. They see the good and the bad. Again, anytime I sit there and think I am doing anything really good I have Carol (the church secretary) to pull me back down. This week someone wrote and said "Fr. Larry my hero." She got this big hero worship e-mail that somebody wrote from Notre Dame. And so I get an attachment and Carol says, "Hey, don't let this go to your head. We know your spots." They know who you are. You know me. I know you. We know each other. Good and bad. This is who we are. And there is a comfort in being known. And that is what Jesus offered this woman. He knew her and yet He loved her. He knew the worst part about her. And yet He loved her. Jesus gives us great comfort. And that is our word this week. Comfort. And the fact that He knows us. And yet He loves us. And that is what the call is for us to do with each other too.

The third thing is that we are called to really know each other and to love each other. Spots and all. As we are. Good and bad. Bad and good. And when that comes, we will become the community God wants us to come and be. None of us are perfect. We are never going to have a perfect community. If you are looking for a church and you think this is the perfect community you haven't a clue. We are not. But, we know each other. And hopefully we as a community are trying to eat God's word together. Not just digesting what somebody else says. But together we are delving into God's word. We are getting to know Jesus together. He is knowing us. And we are knowing each other. And we are being formed into the body of Christ that He wants us to be. And that is that well of water that will flow up inside of us. It will keep going because if that well of water comes from Jesus Christ, we'll always be new. And we will always be loving. And we will always be bringing forth the spirit and truth the way we are supposed to be worshipping here every week. And I believe we do.

So today, let us spend time with the word. Let us let Jesus know us. Let us know each other. And let us accept one another. And love one another as Christ does to us. You got it? You got it? Good. May each of you know His live today and forever. Amen.