

Father Larry Richards

Moderator, Bread of Life Community

April 14, 2001

Cycle C

Easter Vigil

1st: Genesis 1:1 - 2:2

2nd: Exodus 14:15 - 15:1

3rd: Isaiah 55:1-11

Epistle: Romans 6:3-11

Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Lent is over!! I'm not going to tell you what I gave up for Lent, because the kids said I gave it up anyway. But still, Lent is over, and we are now people of the resurrection. We need to focus on that reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "Jesus Christ is risen," is what they used to proclaim when they would meet each other. And then they would say, "He is risen indeed." Jesus Christ is risen. He has risen indeed. Jesus Christ is risen, He has risen indeed! Jesus Christ is risen, He has risen indeed! That is the proclamation of a Christian. That we are people who walk in the resurrection. And to do that, I think we need to do three things. We need to let go, we need to accept, and we need to rejoice. We need to let go, we need to accept, and we need to rejoice. If you spend time listening to the second reading today from Romans, it talks about that we were dead in Christ. We were baptized with them in Christ. That means something we had to let go of. We had to let go of our old life, we had to let go of death, we had to let go of sin, we had to let go of our will, we had to let go of the old man.

Tonight we have eight people we are going to embrace in the fullness of the truth, who are going to become Catholics. Three of them will be baptized, three of them will be brought into the church, and two of them will be confirmed. And so, what is going to happen to them in a very real way? Especially those who are baptized tonight, they are going to die. Right here in front of you. It is going to be a really, really, real death. And that must happen to each of us, and it should happen to each of us. We need to let go of in the past. First, we have to let go of sin. Now remember, sin does four things to us: it pollutes us, it divides us, it enslaves us, and it kills us. We've got to let go of that. We've got to let go of sin. We know that we have already been crucified with Christ. It's a done deal. But we've got to live that and think that I am no longer a slave, I am no longer polluted, I am no longer divided, and I am no longer one who is dead, because Christ killed that old life of mine. Are you not aware that those of you who are baptized, and those who will be baptized tonight, are baptized into His death. So the old man is

gone; it's done. And we've got to let go of that. We've got to let go of sin. We've got to let go of doing it my way, that means our will. We've got to let go of that.

You know, too often, too often, too often, when a person is baptized, and when we were baptized, it is just a ritual. Again, the greatest example of that, I think, is if you see that movie, "The Godfather." When they are baptizing their children, they are very good Catholics, they are baptizing their child, and they are having people killed at the same time. There is a problem there. But so must it be with us. This isn't just some ritual we go through tonight. It isn't some ritual we went through when we were younger. That means something really did happen. That means I left doing things my way and now I want to do things Jesus' way. It doesn't matter what I want any more. That man and that woman is gone, done, forever. And we've got to let it really be done. Let it be gone. And that encompasses the whole man. Like today when they get baptized. What normally would happen in the early church is you would walk in, there would be a big baptismal thing here. You would walk in naked. We are not going to make these three guys naked, it would be a sight, let me tell you! Anyway, they would take them naked, and they would put them in one side. And then the bishop would be there and he would dunk them three time. I baptize you in the name of the Father, and then he would wait until there were no more bubbles, and then he would lift them up. And of the Son, wait till there were no more bubbles and lift them up. And of the Holy Spirit, and then he would lift them up. And then they would walk out on the other side, and they would put a white garment on to show that now they have died. That was a real death. They went into the ground; they went into the tomb. And now they come out, renewed, as it talks about in the Book of Revelation. Who are those all dressed in white? Those who have survived the great period of trial. They have washed themselves white in the blood of the Lamb. So they have died with Christ. But these three will die with Christ tonight. The other ones have died with Christ in another denomination in their earlier life. But everyone of us here, if you have been baptized, has already died. It's a done deal. So we'll let it go. Will you let go of your sins, that kills you, that pollutes you, that enslaves you, and divides you? Will you let go of that? Will you let go of your will of having things your way? Will you let go of that? Will you let go of the old man? Whatever that was. Will you have a BC in your life and let go of it, a Before Christ? We've got to let it go.

But then what we've got to do is, we've got to accept the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. These people don't just accept, "I believe everything that the Catholic Church teaches as revealed by God." Very nice; I'm impressed. Will you accept the person and the lordship of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord and who is not dead, who is alive and who wants to be in a personal relationship with you. Will you enter into this relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what He calls not only these eight to, but all of us, to be in relationship, not to be going through the motions of a ritual. And I'm more and more into that, because I think in my own life that sometimes as a priest I'm into the ritual. That's what I do, that's who I believe, I say this I do this, I do this, sometimes I'm on automatic pilot. And Jesus says, "Larry, I want you in your heart to be in love with Me, to accept Me, to be in a relationship with Me, not just say yes to a bunch of things of faith or creed, but be in a relationship." And if you and I accept this relationship and these ones who will be baptized tonight and come into the church, what happens is we are given new life with Jesus. The old man is dead, but we just don't go around mourning our old life. We start jumping up and down. We have a new life, a much better life. We are now closed from our sins.

I was telling Dale today, I think it is pretty luck for you, Aaron, and Skip, that you don't have to confess any of those sins you have ever done. And that would be quite an interesting confession, the three of them, let me tell ya! And I don't get a chance to hear it. It's all gone, by the blood of Jesus Christ. That He Himself tonight cleanses them. They never have to confess one sin they have committed their whole life. It's all taken away tonight at baptism. They are cleansed from original sin and from personal sin forever. And they are made new. And that happened with us at baptism, and it happens again and again with us when each of us goes to confession. We are given that newness of life. And that's what happens to them, they were dead now they are brought to life. They were dirty and polluted, and now they are cleansed. They were people who were slaves to sin, and all of us know what it is like to be a slave to sin, they this night will be set free. And Jesus Christ has already set us free. When we walk, do we walk like we were set free? Or do we, people who proclaim Christ, who have been baptized for years, who utter forth with our mouth, "Oh, yes, I'm a follower of Jesus Christ, I'm a Christian." Do we walk in the freedom that was bought for us at Calvary and was given to us at the resurrection of Christ Jesus? Do we now proclaim that I have died with Christ, it is done, but now that Jesus lives inside of me, do I walk as someone who allows Jesus Christ to be alive in me, is Christ resurrected fully and completely in our hearts tonight? Or are we just cultural Catholics, people who believe and are Catholic because that's what I am? Get a life! Is Christ alive and resurrected in your heart tonight? Are you a slave, or are you free? Do you walk in reconciliation with the Father, with the church, with yourself? Jesus Christ died and He rose to reconcile you and to reconcile me. He called us to now no longer live our will, but to, like Jesus, when I let Jesus live inside of me, the only thing that matters now is not my will, but yours be done. Father, because I know You know what's best for me. You will make all things work together for good to those who love You and are called by Your decrees. I love you Lord and I have been called by Your decrees. I have been baptized, and then He can now work with us, if you will accept the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you truly accept the person of the Lord Jesus Christ tonight? And that has to be a willing, thought out, actual acceptance of Christ. Not the, "Well I've been that way ever since I was a kid." Oh, yeah? You might have been in love with your husband or wife since you were younger, too, but the day came when you had to carry that through with the marital ceremony. You had to make a public statement. Well so too, one day in your heart you've got to make that very clear; Jesus, I accept you, and what you did for me at Calvary, and what happened at the resurrection, I accept that in my life, I accept what you did for all, for me. And you know when you did that because you have a new life, you're clean, you walk in freedom, and you are reconciled. Do you know you have done that? Are you walking in freedom?

And after these two things have happened we are let go, we have to accept the person of Christ, and now we've got to be people who rejoice. We've got to rejoice! We've got to be people who know there is something different about us because we've been in this relationship with Jesus Christ. We've got to be rejoicing people. We've got to be joyful people. And that means even in the midst of all kinds of garbage. As a person who still has joy. One of the greatest examples to me, it's been about 12 years ago, there was a woman (I won't use her name, she was at Our Lady of Peace, you might know her) she had cancer for about 7 years. And almost my whole priesthood at Our Lady of Peace she was in the hospital. And every time I went to visit this woman she was someone who loved the Lord tremendously. Every time I saw her in the hospital she was always in the midst of terrible suffering. But she was always smiling from ear to ear.

And I used to sit there with her and I was so, I hate going to hospitals still after all these years, but her, I was attracted to her because I always thought how can you be so happy. And I asked her how can you be so happy. And she looked at me and she said, "Because of Jesus." That is what we as Christians, resurrected with Christ, letting Christ live within us, even in the midst of garbage, we are people who rejoice because Christ is risen, Christ is risen, Christ is risen, and He is risen inside of me.

So this Easter season, if we are people who find ourselves still sad, still wanting to do things our way, still wanting to be in slavery to sin, let us let it be clear the word of God is true, and the word of God makes it clear that old man is dead. Let us accept the person of Christ, give him permission to take over our hearts and our lives. And as we do that let us rejoice, because just as Christ is alive, so shall we live forever.

You got it? You get it? Good!! May each of you know His love, today and forever. Amen