

January 14, 2007  
Second Sunday In Ordinary Time  
Fr. Larry Richards  
Parish Mission in Concord, California

Good morning! Remember me? I was here a couple of years ago, and scared everybody away, of course and doing the Parish Mission. My name is Fr. Larry and I wasn't as gray in those days – so, we have gone gray as time went on, and put a little weight on – because Christmas came up – you know, you get me right after Christmas – Thanksgiving and Christmas – it was 15 pounds I put on – can you imagine? I always say it's more for God to love! But anyway, today, when we listen to the gospel, the gospel is a phenomenal gospel, because it talks about the reality how God wants to be with us! He loves to be with us! He came and He spent time on earth, and the very first miracle He did make some more wine for some people who had been drinking for some days! You know, Jesus Christ wants to give our life joy! And again, sometimes we make God this ogre, you know, we make Him this miserable person who can't wait to get us and send us to hell, or at least purgatory to the end of time, because that's the way God is! And we become like that, because we think God is an ogre – but listen – I have been to lots of – and I hate them – you know, wedding receptions – I hate those things! Because, you know – what do they do with the priest? They put you with Aunt Sally, because she goes to church every once in awhile, and it drives you insane because Aunt Sally sits there and says “oh, Father, what are you doing....” and you want to cut your wrists at the end of the dinner – so I don't go to wedding receptions! And yet, Jesus spent three days at one! And you know, in those days it took three days to do a wedding reception. The wedding was a big thing. And they would come and they would serve the best wine in the beginning, because everybody was fresh – and then as they drank and drank and drank, they would give them the cheap stuff, because they don't care anymore, right? And so, here it is they are saying “what are you doing, you are giving the best stuff last?” You see, Jesus wants to bring joy to our life – did you hear the first reading? It says “your God will rejoice over you.” Do you think about God when He thinks about you that He rejoices? You know, when God thinks about me, He laughs – it's like “oh, Richards...” But you know, most of us think that God is perpetually mad at us, and I'm never good enough for God! And we walk around with this scowl on our faces – you know, I when I go around anymore, just to make the people mad that think the priests can't be like anybody else – when I go around and I'm looking at places – most people in the Catholic Church look constipated! They just do! They look like they haven't taken a “mmm” in a long time! And they have that scowl and I think “who wants to be a member of that faith?” If that is what God does for us – gives us this perpetual scowls on our faces – and some of you look constipated right now – “I'm not going to laugh Father, I'm in church – how dare you – God does not laugh!” It says in the reading that God rejoices over us! He took regular, regular, water and He made it wine! Can you imagine – that was the first miracle that He ever did! It wasn't anything miraculous – crazy – it was something simple – ordinary to make people happy! Because wine will make us happy – well, most of us, some people become mean – but anyway! It gives us a little joy, huh? And God wanted to give us joy – that God isn't out to get us – He is out to love us and rejoice with us! But

we are all called to be great saints, you know. You know, that's the whole point – being a saint is one who rejoices in this life – who sits there and brings miracles to life – brings joy to life – who brings hope to life, huh? I just started this foundation a couple of years ago called “The Reason for our Hope Foundation” and the purpose of the Foundation is to bring hope to people! You know, this world is dark and there is war and there are people dying and there are people killing others. Where is the hope? If we don't have hope first of all in our hearts – if we are not people who rejoice first of all in our hearts – we can't give it to anybody else. And so, we have to know that God rejoices in us, and we are called to rejoice in each other. And we are called to be these saints – now, you can live an ordinary life that's just water – go for it! Hey, enjoy yourself! Or you can bring the water of your life to Jesus, and Jesus will change the water of the normalness of your life and make it into wine, huh? And the way we do this is we listen to our great Blessed Mother – you know, I hope you are close to our lady – there isn't a day that goes by that I don't say a rosary – there isn't a day goes by I don't go running to her for my support. And the last words recorded by our Blessed Mother in the scriptures are the words recorded today – “do whatever He tells you. Do whatever He tells you.” That's the key – to be holy – that's the key to change the water of your life into the spirit of the wine and the rejoicing that God wants to give us – is if we do what God tells us. And the way that happens is for three things for us to do to get to do what God tells us. We first have to listen. And the way we are going to listen to God is – again, when I was here two years ago and I gave you the Parish Mission – you know, a lot of people – they go and promise me all of these things, and then they dismiss me about two weeks after. And we will find out if you remember. The very first night I came here – Sunday night, I gave everybody homework. Does anybody remember what the homework was on Sunday night? You had to go...get a Bible – very good! So everybody was like “oh, I need a Bible, I have to go and get a Bible, oh my gosh!” And so you went to Walmart and all these places and you bought all these Bibles until they were all gone. And so, Concord didn't have another Bible here that was Catholic! And so then, I gave you homework for the rest of your life. Now, it would be quite amazing to find out how many people did it, or do it, because the rest of your life homework was what? Read it! No Bible, no breakfast – no Bible, no bed. That you read the Word of God every day – why? Because that is the only way you and I find out what God wants us to do! The only way you can do whatever He tells you is if we listen to what He tells us. Now everybody here – I bet you most people here – read the paper every day, don't you? You read the paper every day with your coffee in the morning because, oh, that's important! That's nice – oooh! If you can read the paper every day, why can't you read the Bible every day? The paper isn't going to give you life – its going to depress you, if you ever wondered lately. It's going to bring you down. God's word is going to lift you up. So, if you want to get depressed every day – keep reading the paper. But if you want to be filled with joy and life – read His word. Do whatever He tells you – spend time every day in His word. Spend time – listen to Him in the Word of God. The second thing we have to do, of course, in listening to God's word is be people who listen to what He is teaching us through the teaching of the Church. Now again, when Mary says “do whatever He tells you...” it means whatever God tells you – it means in His word, but it is also through His Church, because the Church, who represents God on earth today – who tells us what the will of God is today – not Oprah – now, I know a lot of you like Oprah – “I watch Oprah every day, Father, I buy all the

books she says, oh it's the greatest thing..." Oprah is not going to give you everlasting life – sorry! Dr. Phil is not going to give you everlasting life! He might give you some great ideas – it doesn't say in the Word of God "listen and do whatever Dr. Phil tells you..." it says do whatever Christ tells you. Rush Limbaugh – I doubt that Rush is a favorite out here – some people listen to Rush Limbaugh every day – "ah, I love Rush..." ok, great! It doesn't say do what Rush Limbaugh teaches you every day, does it? It says do whatever God tells you. And what God tells you is from the heart of the Church, and when the heart of the Church speaks, that means we have to do it. And so, if the whole world sits there and says "well 99.9% of the people that live in Oakland, and Concord, and San Francisco believe that the Church is wrong in its teaching about artificial birth control, I don't buy it!" Well, nobody asked you – it's what God says through His Church. So to do whatever He tells you is to obey the Church, huh? So, I obey the Church in all things. And finally, the way we come to do whatever He tells you is by every day in our prayer life – by in our prayer life we need to sit there and make sure that we are listening to God in prayer. So often people, when we talk about prayer – and that is what we are going to do a lot today with the kids – you know, getting them excited about this relationship with Jesus and not being bored and going through the motions of saying prayers. Most people just say their prayers – that's why they are in la la land, thinking of 50 different things while they are praying their rosary, or they are falling asleep – "you know, Father, I say my prayers every night before I go to bed and oh, I fall asleep in the middle of my rosary, so my guardian angel continues it for me..." Shut up! The God of the Universe wants you and me to be in this relationship with Him, where He talks to us and we listen to Him! And the only way that is going to happen is if you and I are silent and say "ok, God, what do you want me to do..." and then do it. But we have to ask Him. I promise you, if you go to prayer and you say to God "you tell me what you want and I'll do it..." and then you shut up long enough – I promise you God is going to tell you what He wants you to do with your life. I have a new CD that just came out – it hasn't even been put on the web site yet – but it is called "Knowing God's Will" – how do you come to know God's will for your daily life? The first way is to listen – not tell. And I deal with people all around the world and I sit there and ask "how's your prayer life?" "Well, I pray every day Father..." Well, how do you pray and they say "well, I do this and I do this..." and I say "when do you listen?" Because most people, this is the way they pray... "Lord, bless me, and bless this one, and Lord, help me not to have cancer, and bless this one over in Iraq and blah, blah, blah..." and did you ever have one of those friends, who every time you see them, they want something? And what do you do when you see them? You run away every time you see them! If they call you, you thank God that you have "caller ID" and you go "oh, no, not here – sorry!" Because why? Because they are "gimmee, gimmee, gimmee!!" What is your relationship like with God? Is it "gimmee, gimmee, gimmee? I want this, I need this..."? Or, is it "Lord, I exist to do whatever you tell me. So tell me." And when you and I do that, then the Lord will change the water of our life into wine. He will give us joy – He will transform us, and He will make us joy-givers to others. But it is your decision. Will you, today, do whatever He tells you? And to do that, you need to listen. You need to commit to reading the Bible, His word, every day. You have to listen to the teaching of the Church, and you need to listen to God in prayer, and you watch what God will do for you. The problem is most people won't do what I just asked and miss out. But if you do it, you watch how God will

change your life. Got it? Get it? Gonna do it? Oh, you better! May each of you know His love today and for ever! Amen!