

January 28, 2007
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! Last week at this time I was walking on the shores of the Pacific Ocean...oh.....! And you know, it was cold – it got down to 28 in San Francisco! It snowed in Malibu! And here I am in San Diego. Father Deitsch came down on Monday, oh...and he decides we're going to going to wear shorts, and I said "it's pretty cold out there...." And we went walking at about 6:30 in the morning to go get some breakfast along the beach and he says "oh, no..." And so we were walking and he goes "I can't feel my legs, I can't feel my legs!" And I said "Ah, Father Deitsch..." I felt bad – NOT! But anyway, as I was there every day, and I would reflect and I would go and watch the sunset down at the ocean, and I would listen to the waves – it always sets me back and gets me back in gear, just to be there. And I was thinking the one night as I was watching the sunset, and all the people – Pacific Beach was packed with all these people walking back and forth – and everybody coming to watch the sunset – but the God of the Universe loves us so much and He gives us these little things to remind us that He loves us. And sometimes, we are so busy in our lives – I know I am – that I neglect the very things that God is giving me to remind me that He is there and that He loves me. And if we listen to the gospel today – I am sure that if you listen to the gospel and the first reading you'd think "huh, wonder what he's going to preach on..." And you'd sit there and think "well, I know what I'd preach on..." and you'd all have different perspectives. But what really happens is we come – all three readings deal with the same thing – prophecy, and to be a prophet. It begins with a prophet – and you know how we are called to be prophets – and in the second reading we talk about how prophecy is nothing unless it has this – and in the gospel we hear about Jesus being a prophet and not being accepted in His own town. So we start with prophecy – everybody who is baptized has the vocation to be a prophet, huh? And again, we get into this whole thing about "oh, my particular prophecy is the charismatic gift of prophecy..." and that is a gift – absolutely! But it is not the main gift – it is not the gift that is given at baptism. The gift of prophecy that we are given at baptism is the gift that we listen to God's word – and we proclaim it! But to do that, we have to make sure that we are listening to God's word. And we have to make sure that we are listening today to the readings. And if we listen to the readings today, that first reading is such a wonderful, powerful reading. God says to you and to me "before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, I consecrated you..." So everybody here, not just us – you know sometimes we think that God just loves us and not the rest of the world – He doesn't love the "ooga, booga" people from, you know – "ooga-booga" land – He loves them and He chose them before the world began! He loved them and chose them before they were formed in the womb! That we have to begin there! That there isn't one person that God has not loved – not one. Not one! And that includes you, and that included me. That sometimes we have this horrible image of God and so we think God is out to get us, or

we think God doesn't love us, and so what happens is – is if that is our image of God, and if I am always thinking God is out to get me, then that is the way I am going to be when I am judging other people. If I think that God is judging me every moment of every day, then I am going to be judging others every moment of every day. And so, now I am not a prophet of the good news – I am a prophet of the bad news, correct? And yet, God came to make us prophets. And later on, John will remind us of what this is about – that God is.....love! Thank you very much! God is love, and so, if we are going to be prophets – what a prophet is – it takes the love of God, and brings the love of God to the world. That is what a prophet is. And in there is the truth of all God. But everything we have to know is we have to make sure that we are preaching - first of all - the good news. That doesn't mean we become "la las" and say "oh, I think you are so wonderful..." We become people who challenge people because we love them! Jesus was challenging the people today and they got so mad at Him that they tried to kill Him. They were going to take Him to the cliff and they were going to push Him over! Wasn't that nice? And the only thing that He was doing was He was loving them - He was loving them. And He knew in His heart of hearts that the first thing that I have to be as the God of the Universe is – because God is love – is BE love to the world. And so, what we have to do – and I would encourage you, because it says in the second reading today – “even if you have the gift of prophecy, if you do it without love, it gains you nothing!” I don't care if you are a prophet – if you don't do it with love, who cares? You stink! It's that simple! If I have the gift of prophecy, but I do it without love – I stink! Who cares? So the thing that makes prophecy real is when we do it with love, because God is the God of love! So what needs to happen – you know, I really hate this reading, the second reading, it drives me insane! You know why? Because every time I read it, I feel guilty! Oh, no, you don't feel guilty. All of you sit there and say “I live that reading perfectly, Father!” Some of you really do think that – I know – it's unbelievable! “Oh, Father, we know that YOU don't live...” did you see those couple of lines in there? “Love is not quick tempered...” And you thought “Father is quick tempered, huh!” “Love is not rude!” “Well, Father can be rude!” And you went around and put it all on me instead of “oh, I'm quick-tempered sometimes...” It's easy to put it on somebody else – I know, I know! But I hate that reading because of it! But what has to happen is this – I want you to take five days this week – five. Can you do that? And I want you to spend those five days with this word – the second reading. We have heard it a thousand times. But this is what I want you to do – because if we are going to be prophets, that means we have to sit in the presence of God and listen to His word – and then teach His word. But to do this, it is going beyond just listening to it and preaching it – sometimes when we preach, we don't have to live it, and I don't want us to go there. I want us to live it – to feel love, and then to be love in the world. And the way we are going to do this is very simple. What I want you to do is to take five minutes a day for the next five days – and in these five or ten minutes a day – you can handle this, can't you? I want you to sit there and read the second reading. 1 Corinthians 13 – and I want you to go – and I'm sure you have heard it before – and instead of just saying “love is patient, love is kind...” I want you to read “God is patient, God is kind...” and I want you to let Him be patient and kind to you. I want you to receive that first. Do not go to the second part until you have received that – you have felt it – you have experienced it! So, you have to read it slowly – “God is patient with me – God is kind to me – God is not quick tempered with me – God is not rude to me...” And let it sink in – and as you let it

go deeper and deeper into your very being – then you go to the next part. And when you go to the next part, it's going to make you feel guilty, like I feel. "Larry is kind...aha...Larry is not quick tempered...aha..." and then as you sit there and you do that – when you realize that there are parts of this thing that you are NOT...say "Lord, change my heart and make me kind, Lord, change my heart and make me patient, so that I can be your prophet to the word, because if this is who you are, then that is who I must be – I can't just be my prophet – I have to be HIS prophet. And so if He is love, then I have to be love!" And again, this is something that we will all grow in together! But we have to make sure we accept the first part before we do the second part! Some people want to be a prophet so that everyone will look at them and say "oh, look at them, they are a prophet..." and that just fills pride – that just fills ourselves – "look at the gifts I have!" Stop it! What God is calling us to is to be the prophet of love. Feel the love – share the love. And you know, when we say that prayer "Make me an instrument of your peace..." you cannot of course give peace to somebody else, unless peace goes through you first. You cannot give God's love to somebody else, unless His love goes through you first. So you and I are called to be prophets – prophets of love. Experiencing love and giving it. Got it? Get it? Gonna do it? You better! May each of you know His love today and for ever. Amen.