

Fr. Larry's Homily – March 9, 2008

Good morning. We're down today, I don't understand? Why are we down? Hahaha. Lot less – this'll be a bad week for collection. You don't have to worry about that 'til you become a pastor, and then you go, "Oh dear." Anyway – and also as an aside, we'll be cancelling the sessions this afternoon at 3 o'clock because nobody's been here all day and I don't want to force. Some people still can't get out of the driveways, and I have to drive to Syracuse anyway so I'll be able to get on the road earlier, it'll be easier in the long run. So next week we'll just add a half hour because this week and next week are really the same about where God's calling us. So we'll just make it more practical next week.

Okay, so today let's look at the readings. Every one of the readings of course have to do with life after death. Every single one of the readings. We start with the Old Testament and God's promise, "My people, I will raise you from your graves." The second reading, if you surrender to the Holy Spirit, then the Spirit will keep you alive forever. And then Jesus we see that He is the resurrection and the life, and anyone who believes in Him shall not die, but live forever.

And so the key is to live forever, that we're going to all live forever by the grace of God. But how do we enter into that life. Well there's three things that we're going to have to do. The first thing that we're going to have to do is repent. Ahem. The second thing we're going to have to do is surrender. And the third thing that we're going to have to do is believe. But let's look at the first one first – to repent.

You know the first word's ever out of Jesus Christ's mouth in His public ministry was to repent. And if you listen to the second reading, Paul talks about living according to the flesh. And he says, "If you live according to the flesh you will die." Very simple. So living according to the flesh is not just sexual temptation or lust, and coming into that. You know again as people come closer to God or as they get older, as they become more into the Christian life, sometimes they think, "Well, at least I don't have any of those things I struggle with any more." So they start thinking they're pretty good. And that can be a humungous problem. Because living in the flesh is living the way the world lives. Huh? So you mightn't struggle with sensuality, but you might struggle with pride – thinking you're better than others because compared to other people, you're a saint. Huh? Or wanting to be greedy, or wanting to be selfish, or

wanting to live life your way, or wanting to you decide what's right and you decide what's wrong. The way of the flesh is in all of us somewhere.

And so the first thing we've got to do is acknowledge that; and not just acknowledge it, "Oh yeah, I'm like that but everybody's like that", which I hear all the time – especially from women when they gossip. Not just the women gossip but, you know, the men too, but the women talk about it more and they say, "Well yeah, I gossip, Father, but everybody does that." Ooooooh. That makes it okay, right? Because everybody does it? So we've got to sit there and acknowledge what is it inside of us that's still in the flesh, and if we know God's not a liar He said that if we continue to live in the flesh we will die. So the first thing we've got to do is acknowledge that flesh and repent of that flesh, and ask God to come in and change our hearts; and start living it His way and not our way.

And that takes us to the second thing. The surrender – because that's what Paul talks about because if you live in the flesh you'll die, but he says, "But you're not in the flesh. We have the Holy Spirit." And the Spirit, if we live according to the Spirit then we will live forever. So what that takes in our lives is that we have a real surrender to God's Spirit. And we do that two ways, I would say. The first way that we do that is that external wanting and giving our life and letting the Holy Spirit to take control of our life.

Now I talked to you lots about that before where I've given you the prayer, surrender to the Holy Spirit – you know I gave it to you last year and it's on the internet, we've talked about that surrender to the Holy Spirit. And so you've got to sit there and acknowledge that to surrender yourself to God's Holy Spirit every day – whether it's through that prayer that I gave you before, Cardinal Mercier's prayer, or your own surrender. That every day you surrender to God's Spirit. And one of the best ways to do that is when you and I start thinking about our life as having this mouth to mouth resuscitation with God. That God to keep us alive breathes His Holy Spirit into us. And every time we inhale, God exhales. And every time we exhale, God inhales. That this is the God of the universe that gives us mouth to mouth resuscitation to keep us alive on earth, but to keep us alive forever.

The second way that we fully surrender to the Holy Spirit is what we do every Sunday or ever day for a lot of you, and that's receive the Eucharist. Jesus said if you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you will live forever. And so the way we get more of

God is to take Him inside of us physically. And the more we receive Him the more we become like Him. And so the second way that we fully surrender to God's Spirit is to receive the Eucharist. That's the bread of eternal life. That just as we eat physical bread to keep us alive, when we eat that spiritual bread we will live forever.

The final thing that you and I have got to do to actually live forever is believe. Did you hear Jesus today when He's talking to Martha? He says I am the Resurrection and I am the Life. Anyone who has died and believed in Me will live again. Anyone who lives will never die. And so here's the God of the universe making us a promise. Here's Jesus making us a promise. If you believe in Me, you will live forever. And then He adds very simply, "Do you believe?" Very simply, do you believe? And what's your answer? Do you believe in your heart of hearts that He's going to let you live forever? That no matter what?

I've been struggling these past couple of weeks; I have three good friends that are dying. And young, every one of them are young. And as I sit there and I'm dealing with their families, and talking, and struggling with these people, the only thing that I can ever say to any of them is, "Listen. This is hard. But this world isn't home – we're just passing through." And when you and I begin to realize that no matter what happens, it's going to be okay. That the God of the universe loves you so much, and loves me so much, that He'll never let us be gone forever.

Jesus – you know why is Jesus going to bring Lazarus to life? Did you get that? When He was called to see Lazarus He said, "The one whom you love is sick." The one whom you love is sick. And so Jesus came. And Lazarus is every man – that's you and that's me. And so when you and I get sick, or when you and I are troubled, the saints look at Jesus and say, "Listen, that one You love, he or she is sick." And then, when Jesus is confronted with the death of Lazarus, what's He do? He weeps. Because it touches Him when we're in pain, or when we're in death. And then this God of the universe, it says why he wept, "See how much He loved him." And then He went and He brought Lazarus to life, because see how much He loved him.

If you had the power to give everlasting life; if you had the power to give someone life, wouldn't you bring someone you know who's dead back to life? You'd do it in a second, now wouldn't you? If someone you loved had died, you would do everything in your power to bring them back to life. Well the same with Jesus Christ. You and me, that He loves you and me so much that when we finally take that final

breath on this earth, this God of love who loves you and me, who gave everything for you and me; does everything in His power to give you and me everlasting life, because of His love.

And so that's the question today. Do you believe that He loves you so much that He will never let you go forever? He will never let you rot forever. He will do everything in His power as God to bring you to everlasting life. That's God's plan for you. And our plan is to want that plan. And we do that by repenting, by surrendering, and by believing. And if we do that, we're going to live forever. A hundred billion years from now, we're going to live forever because of a God who loves us and gives everything for us.

May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.