

March 15, 2009

3rd Sunday of Lent - Cycle A

Fr. Larry Richards

The reality of the Gospel today, we use the Gospel for A because we have the elect that are going to get exorcised today. Not the exercise that you see when you go outside and run around the peninsula. But the exorcism you see on TV if you will. If you see all of that stuff, oh we don't believe in exorcisms, we do them every Lent. Not because these people are possessed. I don't think. You know the reality is we sit there and take them out of their realms of darkness and bring them in to the realms of light. And so we have these exorcisms that are as old as the Church. And, all of us have things in our own hearts and in our lives that need exorcised, if you will, that need to be delivered from the power of darkness. Every one of us here has something in our hearts. It could be unforgiveness. It could be lust. It could be, fill in the blank, anger, fill it in. You all have your own stuff. If you can't think of any come speak to me for five minutes and I am sure we will find one or two that you have in your life. We all have it.

Yesterday I was down in Loreto, PA, which is quite interesting because I gave a retreat to about 45 or 50 nuns and priests, all religious. And it was quite interesting because some of the nuns were full habit, high top, old habit like this and some of the nuns were in very nice clothing. And then we had all the monks and all the friars were all there. And so every time I would speak, some of the people would be smiling and some of the people would be frowning. You know it was just one of those things. No matter what I said I made half happy and I made the other half mad. You can figure which I made happy and which I made mad. But anyway, but everyone, I said, "See all of us, we love to judge each other. We love not to talk to each other; we love not to do... and all this stuff inside our hearts and our lives... that needs to change."

And I told them the story about a couple of years ago when I was getting on a plane, you know, I'm going to get to the airport, and I get to the airport. I am 15 minute early, whatever to get in there and as I am going through, who's three people in front of me, but Sister Joan Chitester. Isn't that special? Now Joan and I have known each other for a long time. Not well of course. We both know who each other is. And so here we go and she is three in front of me and you know Erie is not a big airport, and to go through security you all go together, right? She is three in front of me and I am three behind her. We notice each other. Do you think either of us said boo to the other? No. We sat there and we judged each other. I didn't talk to her. She didn't talk to me. And I got on that plane that day and I thought if this goes down I am going to hell. And in reality but it wasn't just all my fault. She didn't talk to me either, right? But see the reality is both of us were wrong. Both of us needed to repent. Both of us think we have the corner on the reality of the faith. The other person we demonize. We say, ugh. But we have things that need exorcized in our lives.

And see the same with the woman today at the well. Here she comes and she meets Jesus and He sits there and asked her questions. He enters into a relationship with her. And again as we know, very rare to enter into a relationship men, in Jewish religion, even the Orthodox today, real Orthodox, don't sit there and ever touch a woman's hand. You know it is rare that they want to be alone to talk to a

woman so it is just a part of the reality of the way the Jews lived. They didn't talk to women. And they did not sit there, well they talked to their wives of course, but in general, they did not talk to Samaritans. They didn't do anything with Samaritans. They couldn't stand Samaritans. And here is Jesus and He meets the woman in love. He talks to her. He acknowledges her. He loves her. And then He tries to get her to reveal herself to Him. "Go get your husband." "I don't have a husband." And then He reveals herself to herself. "You are right you don't have a husband. You have had five and the person you are living with now is not your husband." You see and what she proclaims more than anything when she goes, Come and see the person who," is what? "Told me everything I did." And it was everything she did wrong. Isn't that amazing? She was converted because this guy pointed out her sin in love.

And see when we can sit there and finally, if we try to hide our sin or say I don't have any. I am a good person. Oh Father how dare you make me feel guilty about my sin. We then we are not being real with ourselves. Then we don't need a Savior. When we come and we acknowledge our sinfulness and when the God of the universe is right there, think about your sin. You ever have anybody that sins here? One or two. And when you have your sins, that sin you hate yourself the most for, go back in your past, whatever it is. Those sins you hate about yourself, Jesus Christ was right there when you did them. Right? He wasn't up there looking. He was inside experiencing them, your sin. But He never, ever stopped loving you, did He? He knows you better than anybody else. He knows all of your sins. He knows everything about you. And yet He has never stopped loving you. He still invites you to know yourself, to know your sinfulness, and then bring it to Him so He can give you Himself. He can give you His Spirit. He can give you forgiveness. He can give you everlasting life.

The devil tries to keep us in the darkness of our sin and keeping us away from the light of knowledge. Jesus invites us to share that sin with Him so He can give us ever lasting life. So what is it in your own life, what is it in mine that we keep hiding from Christ? That we keep when people ask us like Jesus asked her. Oh no, I am fine. Everything is fine. And Jesus looks and says, oh no it is not. You want me to show you, here. It's like the people who would go to confessions to Padre Pio. And Padre Pio would say to them after they were done, "Is that all?" And they would go, "Oh yes." He would go, "Oh no, how about when you were in that thing and you picked up that prostitute?" And he called their sins forward. And then they would finally make a good confession. Then they would finally be ok. Then they would finally be set free. Let Jesus shed the light of His love on your life. Bring those sins to Him. Experience His mercy and His love and then experience eternal life. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.