

July 5, 2009

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle B

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today we want to focus again on St. Paul and the Second Reading. Because Paul talks about his weakness and his angel of the flesh that was there to beat him. Isn't that a nice thought? Why. Because in the old translation it says, "to keep me from being conceited." Now the translation says, "From being too elated." But the reality that God let this happen to him, another way of looking at it is to keep him humble. He wanted him humble. And the only way he could deal with someone like Paul or someone like me or someone like you, is to have something in our life that keeps us from being too conceited. That we don't have our act together. Or something that keeps us struggling. Or something that keeps bothering us. So we can't stand before God and say, "Look at me God." And He says, "Yeah, I look at you. Look at that." "Oh." And we hide our heads. It is to keep us humble. Whatever that thing is in all of us. And so have to sit there and reflect on what is it that keeps you humble. What is it that you don't have together? What is it that you keep crying out to God and say, would you deliver me from this? And throughout all of these years you have been crying out to him, He said, "No." And you are like, "Hmm." But it is to keep you and me humble.

First of all, when we have to deal with that we have to sit there and when there is something in our life that keeps bothering us or you know for him it was a physical infirmity. It was probably epilepsy. What we have to do is the old thing, is to offer it up. You know we take this suffering; we take this thing that the Lord for whatever reason does not want to take from us. And we say, Lord, I gladly accept this and I offer it up. And never offer it up just for yourself. Offer it up for somebody else. When you offer something up or for reparation of your sin or different things, it can be tremendous for you. Years ago, over 20 years ago when I was Chaplain at the hospital as a seminarian, I walked in the room and this woman was in terrible pain. She was in her 20's. And as she is laying there she was in a bad car accident and her brother was driving and her brother was drunk. And so she had tremendous hatred for her brother. And I walked in there and I am trying to talk to her and she was just filled with misery. And I say, "Listen, I want you to offer up this pain." "What do you mean, Father?" I say... I wasn't a priest yet. "What do you mean?" She says. I told her, "I want you to offer it up for the good of your brother." "Get out of here." I said, "No, you are going to suffer anyway why not turn it into good for your brother who hurt you?" "I will not." I said, "Ok." "Get out of here." So I eventually left.

Well then the next day I sat there and I got a note that this woman wanted to see me again. So I thought oh this will be good. So I walked in there and she was smiling from ear to ear. And I said, "What happened?" And she says, "I was very mad at you yesterday." Even in those days I did that to people, think about it. I said, "Yes." And she says, "But you know I was sitting there suffering anyways so I thought, "Ok God I will offer this up for the good of my brother." And she says, "You know what happened as soon as I did that?" I say, "What?" She said, "The pain went away." I said, "Isn't that amazing?" When you and I take the bad that is happening to us and offer it up for the good of somebody else, especially somebody who has hurt us then we become as Christ. And in the midst of the

weakness that we all have, remember Christ was most powerful when? On the cross. When He had nothing. When he was nailed. When He couldn't move. That is when He saved us. And so often in our own lives it is in that weakness of ours that God's glory can be and power can be shown. And our job of course is, what does Paul do after he gets this and God says "No I am not because in your weakness is my strength provided?" What then does Paul do? "I will gladly,"... did anybody listen to the Second Reading you pagans? "I will gladly boast of," of what? "My weaknesses. I will gladly boast of my weakness so that God's power may be evident inside of me.

And so what we have to do, what it means to boast about our weakness is means to embrace it so this is why God keeps me humble or tries to make me humble for some of us and then in that then we know that everything that is good comes from God and not from me. We are not going to save the world because of our talents. Let me give you a hint. We are not going to save the world because of all the great things we do for God. We are going to save the world because Christ's power is inside of us and we are weak. But in Him we are very strong. But the strength comes from Him, not from us. So our job is to boast of that weakness so that the power of Christ may be exhibited in me and in you. And when we are like that, whoa, the things that can happen for the good of others and the good of our souls. So today let's unite us ourselves with Christ and the cross. Let's unite ourselves with Paul. Let us boast of our weakness. That Christ's power may be living through us. May each of you know His love today and forever, Amen.