

July 19, 2009

16<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time - Cycle B

Fr. Larry Richards

Today we hear about the bad shepherds and the good shepherds. And so the first part is always directed towards the priests to make sure we are doing our job. Sometimes we do, sometimes we don't I guess. But the reality is, I as pastor am not shepherd. Christ is your shepherd. Isn't that exciting that you have Christ to be your shepherd and not Father Larry. That He is the one, if we go and listen to even the response today, the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. There is nothing I shall want. And then the shepherd, how does He treat us? Well, we get that in the Gospel today. Jesus the Good Shepherd looks at you and me and says, "Come by yourself to an out of the way place" or a deserted place in this translation, "and rest a little." And when we come to an out of the way place and rest a little with Him, He refreshes us. And then He teaches us, you see so often we want the shepherd to be one who just sits there and takes care of my needs. But the shepherd is the one who takes care of our needs but then teaches us because here they are, He takes them and says, "Come by yourself to an out of the way place, deserted place." You must come by yourself. Then He refreshes us as we hear in the response, come by yourself. He will refresh you. And then He taught them. The way like the Holy Father is a Good Shepherd is He teaches us. He doesn't take care of all our needs. Nobody here has met Him, well as far as I know. I haven't met Him. So if you have met our New Holy Father the last couple of years, well that's pretty good. I have never met Him. So, but He is still a shepherd in the way Christ is because he teaches us. But what needs to happen in our own lives is we need to first of all, make sure that we are having a place of rest.

You know yesterday I had to go to Harrisburg to do a wedding and you know I had to get up early, 6:00. Drive down there, I got there; wedding wasn't until 3:30. Then I sat there and they had a reception. They asked me to pray at, so I got to pray at 6:45 at night. I got back in the car to drive back so I can be here for the Masses today. And then I have to leave right after, this afternoon and head back down to my 5 day retreat in New Jersey. So I am going right back down 80 but, on the way down I was very tired. And I had to keep pulling of the road to fall asleep and sleep in the car because if not, if I had just kept trying to force the issue, I would have died. I would have been that simple. So I had to stop and I had to rest. And so sometimes we think that we are people that don't need to rest. We must rest. Christ commands you and me today, "Come by yourself to an out of the way place and rest." This week I will go on my 5 day retreat. Every year a priest must make a 5 day retreat. It is in canon law. It is a command. It is a law. We must take 5 days to rest in the Lord. And it is here that God will refresh us. And it is here that God will teach us. So that is not just for me as priest or pastor, but that has to be for you. When was the last time you listened to Jesus, that you truly obeyed him?

You know we do all these other things and we play these games with God, "Ok I will do this and I will abide by all the rules and all that is ok." But we only listen to part of the stuff. Sometimes we think the more we do the holier we are. And that is a lie. You know, the more you do isn't the holier you are. You must rest by God's command. Jesus looked at them and after they did all of these things He says,

“Ok that is good. Now come by yourself, you have to go away by yourself and rest a while. ” So for a priest we have to do it for 5 days a year, together. But everybody here, when was the last time you took a day just to be with the Lord? Father I have eight kids. I can't do this. Well, when was the last time you took an hour to be with the Lord? That you went by yourself, to be with the Lord, so that He could refresh you and so that He could teach you. Again it is not an option. You must take time. And it is ideal if you can take it every day and give that 5 minutes of God in your prayer to refresh you. You are by yourself and so He can teach you. But how can we sit there to allow ourselves and that is the point. Many of us don't allow ourselves to be shepherded. We sit there and we talk about we need a shepherd but then when the shepherd tells us something, we don't pay any attention to Him. He commands you today, “Come by yourself to an out of the way place and rest.” Because, if you don't rest you are going to barren out. If you don't rest, you are going to break down. If you don't rest, you are going to be good to nobody. Nobody. If you don't rest you will be irritated, irritating and irritable. Both at the same time. If you don't rest you are breaking God's command to you.

So again, first of all he wants us to rest. He wants us to rest by ourselves in an out of the way place. You are going to have to find that place. And this is what I am going to encourage you to do, that somehow, within this next week, that you make sure and you are going to set up a time. You might be able to do it this week. But that you can ideally take a day, all by yourself. And there are plenty of retreat places around where you can do that. Avala house, St. Thomas Moore, you can come and spend the whole day in our chapel if you want and let the chapel be a day of retreat for you. You can go in there and spend the whole day with Jesus and the Blessed Sacrament. It would be a great thing. If you can't do a day, if it is absolutely impossible for you, and do it once a year. We are not saying do this every week, but then sit there and say, “Ok God, I will give you half a day.” And then while you are there with the Lord, you have to be alone with Him. Don't do this; this is not time for family time. This is time, even though, again, when I am talking to families, do you have a daily prayer life? “We pray every day together Father.” Very good. But especially if you are the man or if you are the mother, you need to have alone time with the Lord. You must have alone time. Don't get this stuff, we pray for meals father. We pray at meals. That is nice. Do you have alone time with the Lord? Just you and Jesus? You must. It is a command. Come by yourself.

And while you are there you need to rest. Like last night, I didn't get home until after, almost one o'clock. And then I hadn't said Mass yet. And then I didn't do my prayer. So I had to say mass here and then I had to do my prayer. I didn't get to bed until after 2:00. And I woke up this morning, ugh, and when I get in the car this afternoon to start driving, I'll be, ugh. But if I don't rest, then I will be dead. If you don't rest, then you will be dead. Physically, maybe. Spiritually, surely. Spiritually, for sure. If you don't take time to rest in the Lord. And the reason you have to be there and rest and find that refreshment, is so that Jesus can be your shepherd and the way Jesus can be your shepherd and my shepherd is He wants to teach you something. He wants to teach me something. So He calls me once a year for 5 days to shut up. So that He can teach me something. He wants you too, to shut up so He can teach you something. But you are going to have to take the time to be away to rest in the Lord so He can refresh you. And then while you are rested, so he can teach you. What does it mean to be His flock? A member of His flock? What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? The number one way

he is our shepherd is by the way He teaches us. They were like sheep without a shepherd, so He taught them. Do you need a shepherd? Then go away to be with Him, alone. Let Him refresh you and let Him teach you. You got it? Get it? Are you going to do it? You better. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.