

20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 16, 2009

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today is the day I should take the collection for the air conditioning. It is terrible. You know you people out there have it easy. At least you have a breeze. We have nothing up here, but offer it up to the poor souls. Anyway, since we have preached on the Eucharist the last 2 weeks we are going to focus on this week on St. Paul. And he gives us a pattern on what life is supposed to be like for a Christian. But you see I believe most Catholics anyway, of course none of you people here, but those other ones, sit there, ahem, live their lives in such a way that they're Catholic on Sunday and they try to be good people the other days, but that is really about it. It doesn't have that great of an influence on their lives. So Paul is saying something all together different here. And so he is looking up for a pattern that you and I are supposed to take our lives and place it on here. This is the pattern of your life. So as we go through this let us examine this together. Is this the way that I am living and if not what do I have to got to change in my life to make it this way.

Here is Paul talking to his brother and sisters, which is us, and he says, "Watch carefully how you live," and he says, "not as foolish persons but as wise," and this is what I want to focus on, "making the most out of every opportunity because these are evil days." They were evil days then and they are evil days now. But what he is saying is make the most of every opportunity, now. If you go to Walden Books, well I guess there aren't many Walden Books, but Barnes and Noble or Borders, you go to all these places and they have all these books on finances, and how to make a million or how to do well. And people buy these books unbelievably because they want to make the most of every opportunity to try to get networking. So you get this networking all why...so you can build up yourself and build up your kingdom and make the most out of every opportunity. People will do that for a million dollars easily. Oh yeah, it'll make better. Well that ain't what he is talking about. It is an evil age so we have got to make the most out of every opportunity for who – for God. So do we do that? Do we make the most out of every opportunity for ourselves and our money, for our families or do we do it to build up the kingdom of God? You know one of the ways we look at that is am I bring people to Christ? Or am I just sitting there doing what is good for me and I have my own little group. It's me and the people who believe the way I believe and we are very happy. And it is us against the rest of the world. The rest of the world can go to hell for all I care because it is just me and myself. Really? Is that making the most of every opportunity? Or is it sitting there and you and I are in this world to make the most of everything and to bring everybody we know to Jesus Christ? Is that what you're doing?

It is kind of like the Titanic has sunk and we are in the lifeboat and while we are in the lifeboat you know some of the people even pretended to be woman to get on those lifeboats. As long as I save myself, I am safe. I am in the boat. Don't bother me. You can go to hell. I don't care it's just me. Me, me, me. It is very nice but it is very selfish. If we are in the lifeboat because Christ has saved us, we have got to make the most of every opportunity. What does that mean? We try to bring as many people in the lifeboat as possible willingly giving up our own space in the lifeboat if that is what it takes to save somebody else. Are you and I making the opportunity at every moment of our lives by bringing people we know to Jesus Christ? Are we trying to get them in the lifeboat or am I just trying to live for myself? Okay, I am saved and I got my nice religion and my relationship with God and everybody else, well sorry. You believe what you want to believe, let me believe what I want to believe. Am I making the most of every opportunity because this is an evil age? So that is the first thing.

The second thing Paul tells us is we shouldn't live in ignorance. And what's ignorance? It means lack of knowledge of something. It doesn't mean you are stupid. You can be very, very intelligent but very, very ignorant in some things. A lot of people are ignorant on the teachings of the church. They are smart. They may have the doctorate degrees. They might have 2 doctorate degrees, a couple of masters degrees but be very ignorant of what it teaches of God. And so Paul says don't be ignorant. And he is saying what you shouldn't be ignorant about, don't be ignorant but try to understand the will of God. What that means is that you and I have got to be living God's will in our lives, right; that we are doing everything possible to live the will of God in our lives. So the question is, are you living God's will? Most people when I ask them this they are sitting there saying, "I don't know. I don't know if I am living God's will or not." Well, you should know. If I was to say you are going to be dead in an hour would that be okay because you are living the will of God? Remember St. Francis of Assisi was out hoeing his garden one day and someone came up to him and said, "Francis, what if you knew that you would be dead in an hour, what would you do?" And what was his answer, "I would continue to hoe my garden." Because he was doing God's will. Are you and I living God's will? Do you know that you are living God's will? And the only way to find that out is you are a man or a woman of prayer and you sit over in the chapel or you sit at home or wherever you pray and you say, "God, I only have one desire to do your will. And then you sit there long enough until He tells you His will. Some of you might sit there a long time. But is that most important to you, to know God's will for your life which means you have a listening heart in prayer. Don't talk. You listen when you go to prayer. God, what do you want me to do? I'm not leaving here until you tell me. And then you are living God's will and not living in ignorance – the second thing.

Then the third thing he says here is, "don't get drunk on wine," okay you don't do that, "in which lies debauchery," please don't do that, "but be filled with the Spirit." Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Now again, I have preached in this church for the last eight years and I have talked about many, many times how we need to have a life surrendered a daily surrender to the Holy Spirit. I have given you in the bulletin and outside the bulletin; I've given them in the back of church, the prayer of Cardinal Mercier of daily surrender, submission to the Holy Spirit, which is the secret to holiness. So I am taking for granted that you listen to me. Yeah, right! I would be quite interested, I am not going to do it to you now, but if I was to ask for a show of hands how many people actually pray the prayer to the Holy Spirit every day, I wonder if we would even have a quarter of you; even though your pastor has been telling you to do this for eight years. Do you pay any attention or do you just sit there and say okay Father, hurry up it is hot in here. Can I get through this please – now. Do you have a daily surrender of your life to God's Holy Spirit? And one of the ways you can prove that is, there is this one line that I love - giving thanks always and for everything. The way you can tell you and I are really surrendered to God's Spirit is we give thanks always and for everything. That means that we are not people of negativity. I can be a person of negativity when I am not surrendered to the Holy Spirit. Can you? Is there ever times when we look at what's wrong with the church, what's wrong with the people around us, what's wrong with our pastor, what's wrong with the murals in the church, what's wrong with the blue sky, what's wrong with this. How come this isn't done yet? How come that isn't done yet? What's wrong with you husband? What is wrong with your wife? What's wrong with your kids? What's wrong with your parents? What's wrong? What's wrong? What's wrong? What's wrong? That's not what it says here. Does it say be filled with the Holy Spirit and find out what is wrong with everything else around you? I don't see that that is what it says. It says, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit giving thanks always and for everything." That's what it says.

So do we take this pattern that God gives us today and do we go that's nice and continue to live our lives our own way? Or do let the Spirit of the Living God convict our hearts and say you're not living the way I

created you to live. This is the way I want you to live – that you and I make the most of every opportunity for God; that we know and live God’s will; and we give thanks always and for everything by our surrendering of our lives daily to the Holy Spirit. If you do this you are going to have peace and you a life of holiness. And that is what he is calling us to.

You got it? Get it? Going to live it? You better. Me too! May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.