

## Thanksgiving Day – Cycle C

November 26, 2009

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. And so it is Thanksgiving and we hear the same Gospel year after year after year for the ten lepers and only one comes back to give thanks. And yet every single one of them was I am sure grateful in their own way. But to come back and give thanks, to fall before the face of Christ, to fall on our knees before Him and say thank you. So I was reflecting on what we have to be thankful for and what I have to be thankful for. So I had to do it in a way that it would flow for a homily. So I am going to be talking about the five F's. what am I going to be talking about today, the five F's. Aren't you excited. The five F's are family, food, fun, the flag, and faith. You got it? So let's go through each of those. Today more than any holidays I always most grateful for Thanksgiving because I don't have to do anything. I don't have to take anything home. I don't have to buy presents. It is just a time to be with the family. And as we all know that is a great thing and sometimes it is not so great of a thing. There is the good and the bad. Family is our family. Today it is going to be quite interesting because I get to meet my nieces boyfriend for the first time. They are quite petrified. My mother has called me twice this week, twice. "Now Larry, you are going to be nice to him." "Now mother, I will be my nice to him." Which is always very different than everybody else's nice as I am sure everyone here knows quite well. I said, "Mother if he is going to be part of this family he is going to have to deal with me the way I am. I am not going to be pretty for anybody if they are going to walk in the house." So if there is any place I have got to be me, it is with my family. And family is the place where we all are the way we are. There is no pretext, there is no I have got to be nice to everybody, it is just the family. You have got to be nice to your family because they are your family but you don't have to be anybody else than who you are.

Our family of course is the family and it's the day we come together as a family. We come to celebrate family but this is the point, our family at home is not just our family. What about celibates like me? You are my family. The church is my family. We are a family together. And that is why we come together as a family and we honor God together and say as a family we are most grateful for each other. And again you are more my family than my family is at home, correct? You see me more. You spend more time with me in many ways, and you put up with me throughout the years as I am. And that is what it is to be a family. To have people that love you and accept you as you are. That is what we have got to make sure that we are doing with each other when we go home to our families and when we are here. We come together as a family.

The second thing we are grateful for is food. Come on you pagans, food. Of all things on Thanksgiving Day. I had to go back on my diet because my sugar went beyond, beyond. So I have been very good. I haven't had a carb in a month which is pretty good for me. Today I blow it. Today I go and I eat everything I can so I will be a sleep, we will probably be eating at 4 o'clock, so by 5:30 I will be in bed. Like BOOM! OUT! Well at home I sleep on the couch. But anyway I will be a sleep on the couch sound asleep. We have got to think about how blessed we are with the food that we receive. Think about how blessed that every day we can eat abundantly especially at Thanksgiving. This Thanksgiving there is so much that we need to be grateful for when it comes to our food. We have a food pantry to take care of the poor. How many baskets of food have we given away? We know this is what nourishes us. But to eat food we have got to remember that something else had to die to give us our feast today, correct? Those

poor little turkeys they are all dead. Thousands, millions, millions and millions of turkeys all died for you so you could stuff yourself today. Father, I don't eat turkey. I am a vegetarian. Well those poor potatoes had to die. They were in the ground quite happy for you. Anyway, whatever it is something had to give itself away so you and I could feast today on food. And this day when we feast on the food we have got to be grateful that other things gave their life for us to be able to eat today. And that is a grateful thing. Instead of taking everything for granted. Yeah, I got to eat. But where did it come from? To be grateful to all of the people who picked the food. To be grateful for all of the people who put it in their trucks and drove the food to us. There is a lot for you and I to eat a lot of food today and we have got to be grateful we have it. Think of all of the people in the world who do not. We need to be grateful today, very grateful for our food.

The other F we have to be grateful for is fun. I hope you have some fun today. I know I am going to have some fun with my niece's boyfriend today. It is going to be great thing. Someone said to me on Facebook yesterday, "Oh can we have one day where Fr. Larry doesn't call someone a pagan." So I responded, "Pagan." Then this woman responded and if you know anything about Facebook you can make a wall post, someone said, "Oh Father I think I will send you a book called The Art of Kindness." I said, "I already got that one. It didn't work." Anyway we have got to enjoy each other. Our family together fun has got to be fun time. So today I would encourage you to make a memory. Today I would encourage you to have some fun around the table. To do something stupid today and to be grateful, some of you do that quite easily, but any way to be grateful that you can do that. To be grateful that you can laugh at ourselves. That life is not all that serious. Not one of us is going to get out of this life alive. So enjoy it while you got it. Be grateful and have fun. I often think how Christ must feel about us when He gave His whole life for us. And sometimes we just go moping around like I am alive another day. And He says, "Excuse Me, I died so you could live. Would you have some fun and enjoy it please too?" Christianity is not just about dying all of the time. It is about enjoying what we got. Do you remember the great story about Theresa of Avilla? They were having a big party once and they had partridge. Do you know what partridge is? Not in a pear tree, but they were eating partridge. And Theresa, the great Saint sat there and she devoured it. She went and she looked like she never ate before in her life. The other nuns are going, "Ohhh, look at Mother." And she says, "When you pray, pray; when you fast, fast; when you partridge, partridge." And she just sat there and she pigged out. She enjoyed it. Today has got to be a day of fun. A day that we enjoy one another and we enjoy all the blessings that God gave us. And the more you and I count our blessings and we start thanking God for all the good things that happen to us instead of all the bad. Every single person in this church if you and I start filling up a piece of paper on what we have got to be grateful for, let me give you a hint, there is a heck of a lot more we are grateful for than what we cannot. We can see, we can hear, we can taste, we can feel, we can walk, we can talk, fill in the blanks. There is plenty. So have some fun today.

The next thing we want to be grateful for is the flag. We are going to bring up the flag in a few minutes. The flag symbolizes so much. We have got to be thankful for our country. Think about the freedoms that we have. That we can fight with each other. We can debate with each other. If someone is our president and we don't like him we can say it. That is the great thing about freedom. You have got to be grateful for all of the people who have fought for us throughout these years who have given up their lives for us. There are people in the grave today so you and I could be free. On this day of Thanksgiving we have got to remember those people who gladly gave up their life for us and the people who are still alive at this very moment. How many of our kids, how many of the kids I taught at Prep, how many of the people who went through the TEC community right now who are in Afghanistan and Iraq fighting for you and

me so we can have a day of Thanksgiving. So today when you and I are sitting there and we are praying and we are talking about all of the stuff we want to be talking about we need to have a grateful heart. Other people have done things so we could enjoy this. So we honor them and we lift them up in prayer. And in this month of November we pray for all of the dead who have been in Purgatory that if they gladly gave up their life for our freedom that we want to gladly pray for them so that they can enjoy freedom forever in heaven.

And that leads us to the final thing and there is a lot more we could be grateful for on Thanksgiving but we have got to be thankful for our faith. You know I have got to tell you at the Sunday Mass at 11 o'clock, could you tell, I was quite irritated at the end. I know that was very unusual for me but I said this Thanksgiving as you sit around your Thanksgiving table and you have got everyone here, there is one thing that you must be most grateful for. What is it? But everyone was quiet Sunday at 11 o'clock. Chirp, chirp. It was like little crickets going through everything. That was an attempt to give you a cricket. Anyway as you sat there I was like are you kidding me? After all of these years? After everything on the Truth CD? After everything I ever taught at Prep you don't know that so instantly? The greatest thing that you and I have to be thankful for today is our salvation. And our salvation cost Christ His life. And if you and I do stand before God and He says, "Why should I let you into heaven," the only answer is because Jesus, Your Son, died on the cross for us, period. And so today as we are at our Thanksgiving table and we are talking about what we need to be most thankful for that darn well better be the top thing we are thankful for. That Christ died so you and I could live forever.

So as we come before our Father today we thank Him for many, many things. We thank Him for our families. We thank Him for our food. We thank Him for our fun. We thank Him for our flag. And we thank Him most of all for our faith we have in Christ Jesus. People, there is a lot to be grateful for today. So let's live a life of gratitude not just today but every day. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.