

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 17, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Did everybody see me on TV on Friday? No! Exactly! Satellite problems. You can watch it today at 4:00 or whatever the times are Monday. Some people taped it at 1:00 in the morning or got to see it at 1:00 in the morning. You can tell I was the one who was very quiet at the table, very wallflowerly.

But anyway today when we listen to the readings the biggest thing you have got to learn, well it is not the biggest, but one of the things you have got to learn is Jesus Christ wasn't a prude. You know sometimes we see these really pious and they look really holy, people. You that's not what they thought of Jesus. Jesus did not go around with this judgmental attitude everybody else is bad and He was really good and He is not going to slum with these bad people. Jesus today sits there and makes thirty gallons of wine for a bunch of drunken people. He does. It took three days of parties for a wedding. And that is why they gave you the good wine first and they let the inferior wine come later because people really don't care after awhile. And so the head waiter says, "Why are you giving the good wine now? They are pretty bad." And that is not encouraging drunkenness in any way, shape or form. But it is encouraging that what comes from God is to bring us a benefit and bring us joy. That doesn't mean that you go down to the Plymouth every night like some people did last night. It means that you enjoy life. Why, because Christ did. Will it cost you your life? Yes. Are you going to have to die? Yes. Are you going to have to suffer? Yes. But, it doesn't stay there. God wants you and I to be happy forever, right? Isn't that the point? You know, who made me? God made me. Why did God make me? God made me to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him so that I can be happy with Him forever. And the key of all this of course is in the second reading. It is the Holy Spirit. You know when I was down in Washington on Friday they had me get there at 5 o'clock. So I got there like 3 o'clock and they put me up at this hotel and so then I went over and they had like a 10 minute interview with me and they said, "Okay things don't start until 8 o'clock now so you can walk around the museum here if you want. Yeah, right – for the next three hours. And so I went back down and I spent an hour before in the Basilica and I went back down to the Basilica and it was a great experience for me just being there with the Lord for a couple of hours in the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. What I was most touched at there, was I have talked about it before, on the back wall is the big mural and it is the universal call to holiness. And it gives you the key to the universal call to holiness. Has anybody ever seen that? Five of you? Well hopefully if you go to the Right To Life March in a couple of weeks you will see it. Anyway, the core of it all is the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is coming down and making all these people holy. And then when you go in deeper into the Church you there is the beautiful domes inside. You know it is almost as nice as our church here. It is really something, pretty close. But anyway when you look up there you see again the Spirit is coming down and all this fire filling the dome, the fire of the Holy Spirit coming down upon people. And so if you listen to the second reading today, it is clear. It says, "The Spirit is given for some benefit." That see everything God does for us, our time on earth though it can be a struggle, and it is, though things can stink, and it does, God calls us to have joy in the midst of it. And when He does takes the water and the blandness of our life and He transforms it into wine, into joy if we surrender and hand over control.

And see that is the key – most people don't handle over control. It is just that way. You know where people have it categorized, right? You know before the interview started I was at the end of the interview with on The World Over. And before it started you know Raymond Arroyo you know he sits there and says, "You know Father I have one problem with what you said in the book." And I said, "Bring

it on.” That is how he started and this is before we are on the camera of course. He says, “You know Father, when you tell people to pray before they are intimate with their spouse,” I said it another way in the book, but for here on Sunday with the kids we’ll explain. You know when you have intimacy with your spouse, you all know what that means, okay. He says, “You tell people in your book to pray before intimacy with their spouse Father.” And that is all he said. And I said, “You haven’t done that yet, Raymond?” “Ah, ah.” It was quite interesting. And so I said, “Well you’ve got to do it.” And he says, “But Father how would you know if that’s any good?” I said, “I am a spiritual director of married people.” “Oh.” Anyway so I sit there and say, “You see, Christ wants to rejoice with people in the midst of those things. He wants to be invited.” You know sometime we think anything that brings me joy or anything that brings me a little bit of happiness, God has no part of that. He’s only with me when I am suffering. Really! Is that the kind of religion you believe in? Not me and not the God of the Universe. Jesus wants to be part of every part of our lives. If there are any parts of your life that Jesus isn’t part of that part is called sin, people. So if there is any single part of your life, even if it is just going to the bathroom, if God can’t be there, there is a problem. God wants to be and rejoice in every part of our lives, right? And what He does is He brings benefit by the Holy Spirit and what you and I do every day is surrender ourselves and let the Spirit of God take over. Then you take the water of our lives and make it truly wine, a wine that brings joy to others, a wine of benefit.

Again let’s go for a second to that first reading. It says, “We will be called my delight because the Lord delights in you.” The readings in the last month or so have been very much this strong leaning that God delights in us. That God wants our benefit. That God isn’t out to get us. That God wants to give us joy. That God wants to transform our lives. He doesn’t just want us to go be going through the motions, He wants to be truly alive. Again, St. Augustine says, “A Christian is an alleluia from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet.” Or you can do it the other way around. Our life needs to be this living life alleluia type of life. That we don’t go around moping all the time, we go around rejoicing all the time. And when we bring benefit it will come from the Holy Spirit.

So the key that you and I got to do and I am telling you most people here are not doing it even though I have preached on this many times. You need to have a daily handing over of your life to God’s Holy Spirit. It needs to be explicit. It can’t be just, “Hey God bless my day today.” Stop that stuff. That means you are in charge. It has to be “God I want you to take over my life today. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Transform my life so I can transform the world. That is what we have got to be doing. And when we start doing that we start bringing life to others. We start bringing benefit to the world and not just sitting back and complaining how bad the world stinks. It does so do something about it. That’s the point. When I was in High School seminary, Fr. McCullough, God rest him, who was my spiritual director at the time, I sat there and I was in one of my modes of complaining. I never do that. It is one of the rare times in my life. But anyway, in the midst of complaining McCullough looked at me and he said, “Richards, you curse the darkness more than anyone I know. Why don’t you light a light and show you can be different.” And that is what we have got to do. We have got to chose and show that we can be different. We can offer the world hope. We can offer the world benefit. We have got to offer the world joy in the midst of the darkness. And that will all come from a very simple thing – when you and I surrender our lives completely to God’s Holy Spirit every day. So that is the key. I told you before. Most of you haven’t done it. Some of you have and you can tell. The rest of you it is time.

You got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.