

January 24, 2010

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today all the readings, the Gospel, the First Reading and the Second Reading, all have to do with community, every single one. Especially we want to focus on the Second Reading. And it says, "You are Christ's body. Every one of you are parts of it." That what happens is that when we come into Christ when we are baptized, as these people will be baptized and brought into the church, we are made members of the community. And as members of the community we all do our own function but we are all one body. We can't separate ourselves from that. Even in the Old Testament when they came, they came together. You see Christ always deals with people as community. And when God deals with them, He always does it to build the community as we have talked about in these past weeks. So it is all about community.

You know once I was in Iowa and I was doing a Parish Mission out there and while I was there I did one of the grade school masses. I was talking to the kids and this was the second reading was one of the readings being used. I talked to the kids and I said, "Listen, every one of us is part of the body. Some of us are ears. Some of us are toes. Some of us are mouths. Some of us are eyes," and I went on and on and on. And so I said, "What part are you?" And the kids raise their hands. It was funny because some of things they said. Then one little girl raised her hand and she said, "Father," I said, "Yes sweetheart." "I know which part of the body you are." "And what part is that, sweetheart?" "You are the mouth!" And I said, "Well thank you very much." So to be the mouth of Jesus is okay. It is better than other parts I guess. But the reality is every one of us are a different parts of the body. That means as one body we need to work together for a common good.

Now if you read the bulletin article this week it is one of my more challenging bulletin articles. You know there is no yelling or anything because everybody filled up the spaces last week so I can't yell anymore. Lie, lie, lie. Anyway, but I talk about how all us are members of each other and we all need to do that. I come back to the quote of the four marks of the early Church. The four marks of the early Church, we all know what the four marks of the early Church are of today, right - One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. That is what it is today - One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. But the Four Marks of the early Church you can find in Acts, chapter 2, verse 42. The Four Marks of the early Church were, "They dedicated themselves to the teaching of the Apostles, to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and prayers." So, the teaching of the Apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the bread and prayers. From the beginning we have always tried these to be the goals of our community, the goal of our parish - that we dedicate ourselves to the teaching of the Apostles. And we have lots of things that we do that with whether it is Bible Study or Fr. Wright's classes or other things we have done throughout the years. We want to yearn for what the Church teaches. It is very important. We have got to dedicate ourselves to the breaking of the bread and we do that with daily Mass, two daily Masses; Adoration; coming together as community. Notice Jesus when He worshipped, He also worshipped in community. We hear today in the Gospel He went to the synagogue as was His custom. Even though He spent all night in prayer, He didn't say, "Well I pray enough all by Myself. I go and I am alone, all night. I think that is enough." He went to be with the community in the synagogue and He participated in the worship by reading. And everything He reads all had to do with the good of the somebody else. "I have come to set

the prisoners free. Joy to the poor.” everything to do with someone else. He didn’t say, “Isn’t this a nice reading.” and then give a homily on it. What does He say? “Today this is fulfilled.” Meaning that He is the living example of what it is to be a member of the community.

The same thing must happen to us. We have got to know that there are no lone rangers when it comes to being a follower of Christ. Of course you had better have a personal relationship with Jesus. Of course you had better be praying alone. Of course you could be spending days, and days and days in prayer, but where it becomes real is if you are a member of the community. We come together and do this together. And being members of the community sometimes we will get irritated with each other. Sometimes we will go crazy with each other. But we stay members of the community. We don’t stay in a community until you make me mad and then we say I am out of here. That is stupid. We are a community – good and bad, forever. Aren’t you excited?

You know there is no such thing as a communion of the damned. You know that. There is only the communion of the saints. We have talked about before when Theresa of Avila experienced hell she was totally alone, she was burning in quite pain, and she could not communicate with anyone. That is the reality of people. Do you remember Billy Joel? He had that song, “I’d rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints.” That is a lie. The only ones who are going to be laughing forever are the saints. The only ones that are in community forever are the saints. The people who are going to hell or who are in hell are alone and forever weeping forever, and ever and ever. It is the communion of myself only. Some people experience that on earth because instead joining and embracing the community they try to do it themselves. That’s not of God. Jesus sent people out two by two. He called the communion of the twelve around them. He called everything that has to do with community.

So the point is this – God calls us to be members of one another. And the way you become a member is by what you give, right? Remember John Kennedy said, “Do not ask what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” Well that is nice for a country but how much more is that for the communion of the Church? So what we have got to do is to sit before the Lord today and this week and pray about what is God calling me to? What part of the body am I of Christ? And whatever part that is then that is the function you need to do in the body. Everyone that is here, God is calling you to do something for the building up of the body. You can’t say I am just here. No you can’t. I am sorry but you just can’t do that. If you don’t feel part of the body it is because you are not putting enough into the body, right? If you feel separated from the body, well don’t look at the body and say well it is your fault. No, no, no you need to get involved in the body. You need to do what God has called you to do. If I am the mouth, I do that well. I have a big mouth. I say a lot. So I am called to do what I do. This is the one that God has called me to do. But what has He called you to do? When we do this together we make one body in Christ.

So please, this week take time. Pray. What is it that God is calling you to do? Some of you already know it and you are doing it well. Some of you have to know it so you can experience it so you can truly experience the communion of the saints which already begins on earth. When you are a part of the communion of saints on earth you will enjoy the communion of saints in heaven forever. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.