

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 31, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning! I hate the second reading. It is just one of those things. On my way over here I run into Trevor Murnock, that pagan. You all know Trevor? He is down at Prep, you know. He says, "Oh Father did you hear the Second Reading today?" "Yes." "I was comparing you to what Paul was saying." "Shut up you little pagan!" "Father why can't you be nice?" And I said "You listen to the Second Reading but did you listen to the Gospel?" You see so often when I compare myself to the second reading I always think I should leave priesthood and go be a realtor or something else. A politician, I don't know. Fill in the blank; but not a priest. Father is gentle. Yeah, Father is kind. Yeah, Father does not put on airs; is not short tempered. Yeah, I know, I know. The reality is - listen! Paul, who wrote this beautiful thing, you know we only think of that. Think about Paul in Galatians, the same one who wrote this beautiful thing on love, in Galatians he said, "And those of you who are pushing circumcision, I hope the next time you try it you slip and you castrate yourself." That is the type I can relate with here, huh. The same Paul who wrote both that it is always a process.

If you listen to the Gospel it doesn't sound like Jesus is always gentle and kind and loving. They were angry and they wanted to kill Him. So what it all comes down to is in the First Reading. When you focus on the First Reading we focus on the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah hated being a prophet. Many times he would go into this deep depression and said, "It would be better if I never existed. You duped me Lord and I let myself be duped." But today we hear about the call. Here God looks at him and says, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you. A prophet I dedicated you." He dedicated Jeremiah a prophet to the nations.

And so it is with us. We all have to figure out our vocation. And some people think well my vocation is to be a doctor, a lawyer, a priest or a nun or a garbage man or a realtor. Whatever it happens to be fill in the blanks. That is the way you express your vocation. Our true vocation was given to us when we were baptized. Of course when we were baptized our vocation is to become saints and to get to heaven someday. Then we are anointed with the oil. And when we are anointed with the oil of chrism we are told before we are born God chose us to be a prophet. So what you and I are called to do is to become prophets. And to be a prophet of course is to not to predict the future but it is to speak God's word to the people. That is for all of us. It is not just for me. I am not the only one who was a prophet. I am the official prophet if you will of a parish. But you are all called. We are all called to be prophets. And the way you have got to be a prophet, I'll tell you. You have got to pray. You have got to listen and then you have got to speak. You got to pray, you have got to listen and then you have got to speak. You have got to make sure you are doing things in that order. You don't speak and then pray. We have got to be people who are really listening to God Word because what a prophet does is speaks God's Word to the community whether it is the community of your family; whether it is the community of your work; whether it is the community of the church whatever community it is. A prophet is one and again Paul says, "Oh if only all would be prophet." That that is what the call is and we are. But the problem is most of us don't live that vocation that you and I have been called to, to truly be called a prophet of God. So what that means is that we need to be people of prayer which we have talked about a million times. But when we are doing prayer, we have to everyday ask the Lord and say what do You want of me for the

community? How is it that You want me to build the community up like we had talked about last week. What is it and hopefully you all spent time with the homework I gave you to find out what it is God calls you to do as a community. What it is that God calls you to do.

And if you are listening to Him one of the things of course He is telling you to do is speak His word to the community. And always that word, always that word is about love. But love is not being a la-la. Love is speaking the word of God even if they hate you because of it, correct? Think about Jesus – think about how the Gospel started. All spoke favorably of Him. Weren't they excited? They thought He was the greatest thing. And within one paragraph they wanted to kill Him. Is that not true? When He starts saying things because He loved them because it was truthful they wanted to kill Him. And so when we are speaking God's word we never can speak out of it because it is our opinion; because it is what I think. It is because that is the way I grew up. It cannot be any of those things.

This past week I got to watch and I am sure you all got to watch the State of the Union. I don't care for the President, I never have especially his abortion stance. But I sat there and I was watching and I thought oh please I am sick and tired of the people on both sides just demonizing the other side. When are they going to come together and forget about what they think and how can we help the country? How can we come together whether we agree or disagree and start focusing on what we need to do? Because what happens is none of them are listening to God even the most Conservative. They are not listening to God. They are entrenched into what they believe. And what I believe is right and what you believe is wrong. That is not the way you need to run a country. That is not the way we run a parish. That should not be the way we run. You can't tell them this but as a parish what we can do is we need to listen to God. And God will tell us what to do next. We don't focus on our past beliefs. Well I am a Democrat and I will always be a Democrat. Or I am a Republican and I will always be a Republican. And whatever we believe well that is what we believe. Well, that is stupid people. It is just stupid. What is God telling you? And that's why we must be men and women of prayer. When we come before the Lord we come with a blank slate. We say Lord, what do You want? This is what I have because some of our ideas are messed up whatever they happen to be. Just because you were taught it from being a child does not make it true. Just because you have done it all your life doesn't make it right. Just because you believe something well no matter how much you believe it doesn't make it reality. So when we come before God we have got to come before Him with a blank slate. And here I am Lord. You tell me what we should be doing. You tell me.

And after you come before Him and you are willing to humble yourself and forget about your own formed opinions, to forget about our own way of doing things and this is for all of us, me and you together, when you come before God with that blank slate, that humility that Lord this is the way that I see things but I am not You. Ha, ha, ha, aren't You happy? So, what do You want? So I have got to come before Him with an open heart and I have got to listen to Him so He can tell me what we need to be speaking to the community. And if politicians start doing that just think what could happen in our country. But we can easily blame them or say, "Oh yeah like I was listening to the Second Reading today and I looked at you and I put, because like I told poor Trevor, "Well I am glad you put me through that list. Did you put yourself through that list? Isn't that the way we always do things? We put everybody else through that list. Like oh yeah my wife isn't patient and kind. She should listen to the reading today. Or my husband oh, I hope he paid attention. And when you get out into the car hey, did you hear the Second Reading today? You take that and put it on yourself first.

Yes, I am not always patient. I am not always kind. Yes that is right. God convicts me. But, He convicts you too. So when I come before Him and I say, "Okay Lord, here I am. I want to do it Your way not my way first of all." Then I listen to Him and the He convicts me of whatever it is and then He is going to give me something for the building up of the community. Notice for the building up of the community not the tearing down of the community. Whenever it is a tearing down of the community it is not of God. That is not what we heard last week in the Second Reading. We hear it is about love. So even if I have to challenge you, even if I have to, and you might hate my guts, if I do it because I want your salvation that is the most important thing.

And so it is with our families. With everything I say or do am I preaching salvation to them? Is that what I am asking for? Is it coming from God? Almost every day I get an email from somewhere in the world that says, "Father I don't know what to do with my child. They are far from God. The more I push them the farther they go." You betcha. Absolutely. If you are trying to henpeck your kids back into the faith they are going to run. They are going to say AAAHHH!!!! every time they see you. Well that is what I have got to do. No, you have got to preach God's word to them. And so that means you are listening first. You are not just saying well this is the way I was brought up and I want you to live the same way I was brought up. Well what if you were brought up wrong? You come before God, you pray for your family, you pray for the people. "God what do you want me to say to them? What is the word you want me to give to them?" And then when the time is right when it is His time then you speak that word to them in your family, to them in your work, wherever. That is the way you have got to do it.

So today God tells us clearly our vocation. Our vocation people is to be prophets. And the way you are a prophet is you pray, you listen and you speak. Got it? Get it? Gonna do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.