

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 7, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today if you were paying attention to the readings, the First Reading and the Gospel say the same thing but two different ways. The reality of someone caught up in their own sinfulness; the reality of the God of the Universe touching them, cleansing them, and then give them a mission. It is the same with each of us.

The first thing that has to come out of all of us is the reality of who we are before the Holy God, that we are sinful people. I've talked about this before that scripture I used when I had to do a prayer group in the seminary in high school was the Gospel today. Because when Peter falls down on his face and says, "Depart from me Lord I am a sinful man." Peter knew who he was. And we have got to know who we are. In the Old Testament today the prophet falls down and he says, "Woe is me. I am a sinful person," if you will, "and I have seen the Holy God." both of them when they been caught up in the holiness of God they realize how small they are. Some people have never come to that reality that they never come to this experience that is so holy, that God is so other. You know just to come into our church when you come before the tabernacle.

We have been getting our surveys back and everybody has their own little things to say. Some people say to me, "Father why don't you let people talk before Mass? You have got to let that start happening again." I do let it happen people until 5 minutes before Mass and then I tell you to shut up. Why? Because then you get caught up in the holiness of God. Let me give you a hint here people. Mass isn't about you, it's about Him. When you come to church it isn't here so you can gossip and talk to each other and get excited. It is so you can fall on your face before the King of kings and Lord of lords and fall down and worship. This Mass before all Masses should be so silent because you are focusing on how holy He is. That the total focus of our life must be Him especially when we come to church on Sunday. So it is not about you, sorry. That is how I said it in a gentle, kind, compassionate manner. We all got to realize why do we come here to church? We come here to worship God. That is why we are here. And when we are here we need to fall on our faces before Him. And we acknowledge woe is me that I am in the presence of the Holy God, of the Mighty God. The first Pope, the same as the early church, fell on his face and said you had better leave me Jesus. I am a sinful man. So have you had that experience of the holiness of God? How totally other He is. You should when you walk into our adoration chapel and there is the Holy God right before you humbling Himself before you. Or if you come to us on Wednesday nights and we are all before the Lord and we are worshipping Him. Or if you come to TEC and when we put out the Blessed Sacrament on Saturday night and you have a hundred people and some people on their knees up here focusing, worshipping God. Crying, pouring out their souls because they know for the first time, some of them, that I am in the Holy, Holy, Holy God. And that should bring such humility to us, such awareness to us that I am nothing. I don't come to church about me. I come here to honor Him, to worship Him. That has to come out of humility. And I know I am the last person in the world to be talking about humility, we know well. And Fr. Peterson who is my director, who has been sick so I ask you to pray for him, Fr. Peterson often when I've gone for spiritual direction to him he says to me not all the time, but a lot, he says "Larry, you know you are not doing God any favors by being a priest." "Huh? What do you mean?" You know what he is telling me? That I am not that important, you got that right.

Pete knows it well. And neither are you. We are not doing God any favors by at least I go to church on Sundays. At least I am here. We sometimes think we're doing God a favor, don't we. Look at me God, here I am. I even sing. I even clap. I even get real excited. Those pagans around me don't; whatever it happens to be. That sometimes we all think that we are doing God a favor by coming to church. God is doing us a favor by allowing us to come into His presence. He is giving us the gift of eternal life. His Holiness is beyond imagining.

So when we come to church that's where we need to start to focus. And when you and I start to focus and we humble ourselves before the Holy God, this Holy God doesn't just let us to sit there in our misery. Isn't that a great God? He doesn't let us sit and realize I am a sinful person, depart from Me. He just doesn't want you to realize you are a sinful person, Lord I shouldn't even be here I am just a sinful person. The God of the Universe reaches out to you and me when we humble ourselves before Him. If you want this experience of God then first you humble yourself. First you realize you are here to worship. You are not worthy. None of us here are worthy. We have got to get there first. And when we get there and we are on our faces before God in adoration, then always, always after that once we have humbled ourselves always He comes and touches you as He did Peter, as He did the prophet. And He heals us and He cleanses us; He empowers us, right? That is the thing. And then after He does that, after we humble ourselves He reaches out to us, He embraces us, forgives us and heals us and then He lifts us up and then He commissions us to do His will.

I spoke at three different places this past week. I was up at Indianapolis, in Carmel and I picked on them. I said to those poor people at Carmel, near Indianapolis I said, "You people have a football team up here?" "BOOO," I got. Hmm. And I was picking on them pretty bad. "Well, of course God is a Steeler fan." "BOOOO!" And I said, "Don't you want the Saints to win this one because the Colts already have one?" "NOOOO!" I said, "You're all going to hell!" Anyway, I am talking to them those three days I focused again and said, "Listen, God wants you and me to embrace His vision for life." The problem is when we end up in failure it is because a lot of the time we have tried to put forth our own will, and our own vision, and our own agenda instead of the will of God. So we try to do things the way we want to do. "Hey God this is what I want you to do." And then when it doesn't happen we're all upset and we are depressed. "Why didn't you bless me God?" God says, "Because you are doing what you wanted instead of what I wanted." When you and I have the vision of God, when He reveals that vision to us, because we want that, He commissions you and me for a purpose. You are alive for a purpose. The reason you are here cause God has something for you to do and it has to do with other people. Guess what, it doesn't have to do with you. Isn't that amazing?

"Don't be afraid," He says, "because I am going to make you a fisher of men." He doesn't say, "Don't be afraid Peter cause I am going to take great care of you." He says, "Don't be afraid Peter because I have plans for you, for others." And that again is when we come to church and at the end of Mass we say, "Go in peace," the dismissal, the word mass comes from the word go in peace or you are dismissed. It means now you have to go out there and do something. When you come to church and you experienced the Holy God and He has touched us and He has fed us with His own Body and Blood, and He has healed us, then He says, "Now go out. I have got things for you to do." So what you and I have got to do when He says go out we have got to be like the prophet. And how does he respond today? "Here I am send me. Here I am send me." And how many times have we sang that song throughout the last 30 years? Here I am, send me. So when you experience the Holy God, when you have humbled yourself, when He

comes and heals you, then He empowers you. "I have a plan for you." And you say, "And that's what I want. I want your plan for what I am going to do for others this week." You see, what he does is gives us the pattern. And you and I when we come to church must fit into that pattern so that we can go forth and live His will. So we humble ourselves, He embraces us, He gives us a vision for what He wants to do and then He asks of us, He wants us to say yes, that is what I want to. As Mary did; as Peter did; as the prophets did and let's pray that we do. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.