

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 9, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today when we listen to the Gospel Jesus of course as always is trying to tell us something. And today He tells us who loves Him and those who don't love Him. So often we want to tell Jesus, I love you, and then do what we want. But He tells us today who the ones are today who love Him and who the one are who don't love Him. "The one who loves Me," does what? "Keeps My word" or "stays true to My word and the Father will love Him and we will come and dwell with Him." Okay. Then He says, "The one who does not love Me does not keep My word." So again the way we prove that we love God is by obeying Him. Later on Jesus will say, "If you love Me obey the commandments." Right? So that's the only way. So often people say I love God. I would do anything for God and He says well this is what I want you to do. I want you to obey Me. Very simple. I can't do that. You mean I have to give up sex before marriage? Yes you have to give up sex before marriage. You mean I have to give up swearing? Yes you have to give up swearing. You mean I've got to go church every Sunday? Yes you have to go to church every Sunday. You mean I have to give up drinking? Some of you, yes you have to give up drinking - whatever it happens to be. If you say you love God then you need to obey Him. And He says if we do that "those that love Me are true to My word." Now we are all weak human beings and we fall. But, the desire has got to be that I do God's will.

My greatest example of the Old Testament which we use again and again and again is David. David was messed up. Why they often use him as an example, why I often use him as an example, why the New Testament often uses him as an example, I don't get. He was a murderer, a rapist, an adulterer, and everything that you could possibly imagine. And yet what does God say about him? "He is a man after My own heart. That in his deepest desire of his heart David desired to please the Father and to do the Father's will in all things. That was his desire. That needs to be our same desire inside of us. That we have one point - that Lord I just want to do Your will. I want to live Your word. I want to obey you in all things. And when we have this desire even if we fall the Lord will honor us because He knows our deepest desire. So first of all that has to be the question I ask you first. Is your deepest desire to do the will of the Father? To obey Him? To live in God's Word? And the best way to do that we talked about last week or the week before is to spend time with His Word everyday so you know what it is.

A lot of people have no idea what is right and what is wrong. Someone came to me the other day and we were talking about when you can go to Communion and when you can't. And someone said, "I never even heard that before, Father." Okay. Most people have no idea of what you can and cannot do in the church. That is why you need to spend time in His Word and He will tell you. That is how we prove we love God, we live in His Word, we obey His Word. Then He gives us a promise if we do that. That here is the God of the universe, is not just a God of rules. If it is all about rules you might as well forget it. Last night I think I shocked some poor people, which I like to do of course, and we were talking about I was talking to another priest. The other priest is much more into the rules than I am. Can you imagine? And people think I am conservative. I am not. Well I guess I am. It is all relative, is it not? Conservative according to who? Anyway, according to the Bishop, right of Trent. According to some other ones, who knows.

But the reality is here is a person who thinks that everyone is not going to make it to Heaven. You are going to sit there and spend a lot of time in Purgatory most everybody here. Well I don't buy it. I just don't. If everything is about if God is that much of an ogre then again I don't want to be with Him as I have talked about before. And if that means I am going to be damned well then let me be damned. If God is this person that just looks at the rules and says okay you messed up now. Get out of here you are going to hell, well then there is no hope for me. None, zilch. And that is okay because I don't want to spend time with a God who is worse than Fr. Larry Richards. Think about it. God is worse than me. If I let people in, okay I'll have mercy on you but God won't, then God is worse than Fr. Larry. Could you imagine spending forever with that! Think about it. That the reality is, is that God is much nicer than Fr. Larry Richards. Much! Everybody should rejoice in that. I rejoice in that. That this is the God of love. Then He looks at you and me and says, "If you love Me then obey the commandments that I give you. That is how you will show that you love Me." He doesn't say obey the commandments so that you go to heaven or hell. Obey the commandments and you go to heaven. Don't obey them and you go to hell. He said, "If you love Me." So this whole thing that we need to be doing here must be an act of love. I do it because I love Jesus. That is where it has got to be.

So is that why you and I do the things we do - because we love Jesus or because we are afraid of going to Hell or purgatory or whatever? We need to be a people of hope! That when I am in love with Jesus and I am trying with all of my heart that if I have a good friend and he sees or she sees that I am trying, this friend I would imagine would support me and help me do better, would they not? Think of the best friend that you have. That is a person who is on your side that when you mess up, okay I am done with you, they keep being with you. Well God is that good friend who is always going to be on your side. As long as you have a heart that wants to do what He wants you to do. You do it out of love not just out of fear. Not just out of won self preservation. You do it out of love. And then He says that when we love Him this way then the Father will love us back. Love always receives love or gets love. So when we love God, He is going to love us back. Then when He loves us back, He does more than just love us back, He dwells with us, right.

Today little Giovanni, where is he? Look how little, huh? He is so good. He is so quiet. He must take after his father. Look how nice and quiet he is. What happens today when he gets baptized is the God of the universe will take and dwell within him. That he is going to become part of the life of the Trinity. That the universe of God, which is beyond all things, will take up residence inside this little boy, the same thing that happened to us when we were baptized. That we are never alone. That we are part of this community. Some people think what did God do before He created the heaven and earth. You know what St. Augustine's response to that was, don't you? "He created hell for those who ask those type of questions." That is what St. Augustine said. He said, "God has never been alone. God has always been a community of love." And the day we get baptized, like little Giovanni today, we take up our part of that community of love.

So forever and ever and ever it is not just life without end as the good Holy Father, Benedict talks about in his encyclical on hope. Everlasting life isn't life without end. Because it would all get very bad. You know that is why when you talk about the vampire movies and all of that stuff. It is a curse to live forever if you don't live forever in love. We are not cursed by God, we are loved by God. And when we enter into a relationship with this God because of love then He lives inside of us forever. And this God who lives inside of us is the God we are called to bring to everybody else.

So today Jesus says, "Those who love Me will be true to My Words and My Father will love him and we will come and dwell within him." What a great promise. So today let us just ask that we just fall more and more in love. Every day at every Mass I ever do when I hold up the Eucharist, my prayer always to God is every time for the last 21 years is "increase my love for You and increase my love for others." Because that is what it is to live forever. People who are madly in love with God and others.

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