

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

June 20th, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today in the Gospel Jesus asks people who they think He is and Peter responds. Then He tells them what it must be to be His follower, what we must do. We need to look at that because the first question determines what we do with the next question. Or the next command if you will. Jesus asks, "Who do people say that I am?" When you go to any bookstore today you can find out who the crowds say Jesus is. Some crowds say Jesus is a prophet. Some books say and philosophy say He was the Son of God, but a son not the Son. Some people say he was just a man who deceived many people. There are all kinds of things out there that people say. If you watch the Discovery Channel or you watch the History Channel, when my kids use to come in when I taught at Prep every week and say, "Father it said on the History Channel that Jesus Christ wasn't God." And I said, "Oh." "Well it wouldn't say it if it wasn't true on the History Channel Father." I said, "Really." So we can listen to what TV says about Jesus and all of these other places but ultimately it comes down to Jesus looking at you and saying, "Well who do you say that I am?" And how you answer that question determines how you live your life, simple enough, huh? To find out what that is, Jesus asks you, "who do you say that I am," and you have to answer that for yourself. So who do you say Jesus Christ is? Is He a good person who gave us some nice moral ways to live life. You know, that love stuff. We have to love each other and care about each other. That is all nice. Or is He really the Son of God?

I remember when I was still in high school seminary. I entered seminary not believing Jesus Christ was God. Can you imagine? I kind of had a messed up theology but many people do and I entered seminary. I will never forget I would question the whole reality that I thought Jesus Christ was the Son of God. No problems with that. But I didn't believe He was God. My father, I've told you before, I talk about it in my book, my dad when I got in an argument once with my dad, my dad believed in the God of the Old Testament. He believed the God of the Old Testament gave these rules and all obligations and all the commandments. He believed that Jesus Christ was God's Son. But then Jesus started changing the rules. It used to be and eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you is this love your enemies. Do good to those who persecute you. So my dad thought the Father got mad at His Son Jesus and had Him killed. Kind of a weird theology. Hmmm...That was my family. As I was growing up I thought that Jesus of course He was the Son of God, He talks about His Father. But He isn't God. So I am talking about all of this stuff to my spiritual director because almost anything I have ever believed I first disbelieved because I didn't want to believe something just because someone tells me. That is a stupid reason to believe anything. If any of you here believe things because I told you, well that is stupid. You need to believe because it is real. Not because Fr. Larry told you something. Is it real or isn't it real? So, I will never forget talking to Fr. McCullough, God rest him. We are driving along I say, "Mac, you know I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God but I just don't believe He is God." He looked at me and he said, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was with God." Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. Okay, I got it now. It all fit into place for me. The word of God had to be spoken to me in such a way that I could hear and incorporate it in such a way into my being. I was already in seminary, that is what I am trying to tell you.

Somewhere in our lives we have to really make sure that we have the faith of the Church. That we believe what we believe; that we know that Christ is God and if we don't really know that then we have got to search until we find that out. Once we come to know and believe that Christ is the God of the universe, the Alpha and the Omega, the One that each of us will stand before on judgment, the One that keeps us alive by His resurrection, once we believe that then we just can't follow Him as a moral teacher. We must follow Him with our lives. Not part of our lives on Sunday. Not trying to be good people. That doesn't cut it. Jesus said, "No one can be My disciple unless you," what? "Deny your very self, take up your cross daily, every day and follow in My footsteps. Those who seek their life will lose it. Those who lose their life will find it." It is the exact opposite of what the world teaches us. To follow Jesus Christ you must die. There isn't coming to Jesus to get what you want to make yourself feel good. Some people say, "Well I like this particular church. Or I like that particular church because it makes me feel good." Please! That is no reason to follow anything because feelings change, right. One day you can feel real excited; let us just think of your spouses. I'll bet you there are some days you look over and you are madly in love with your spouse. Then there are other days you think what did I do? Why did I marry you? You ever have those days? No Father. But, for those people outside of here that have had those type days where you don't feel like you love this person you married. It has nothing to do with reality. You gave your life for that person the day you got married, correct?

So it must be with Jesus. When you and I come to Him, He says this is a daily dying to be with Me. It is a daily dying. Not just once. Well I was crucified once – no, everyday. That means to be very practical that we seek God's will each day in our lives and we live His will instead of our own. A lot of people, again nobody here, but a lot of people when it comes to following Jesus they just go into automatic pilot. It is like saying the Lord's Prayer. Some of you very much disappointed me last Sunday when you started to say the Lord's Prayer. I told Fr. Michael, I said, "Michael make sure you go slow." He said, "Oh Father, they will gladly go slow. Your parish will do it automatically." Then you start saying the Lord's Prayer last week and you went into automatic pilot. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come." And I thought, I am going to have to kill them next week. But that is all besides the point. The reality is do we go the motions? Do we go into automatic pilot in our following of Jesus? I go to church on Sunday. I say the Lord's Prayer. I say my Hail Mary. I say my rosary every day. This is what I do. It is just part of my life or am I daily seeking God's will in my prayer and saying, Jesus, I have plans today but I am willing to put all of those plans aside if You have another set of plans for me. That means every day we deny our very selves, pick up our cross and follow in His steps.

Now some people will tell you to do that by fasting and doing all of that other kind of stuff. If that is what God is calling you to do that is exactly what you do. But I think it is much easier to fast every day and to give up whatever than it is to deny my will. I like to do things my way. Can anybody here relate to that? Everybody here knows that Father likes to do things his way and that is a sin, isn't it? Yes Father. It is a sin when Father likes things his way, even on Father's Day. We need to say every day Lord it doesn't matter what I want today. I want what you want. You tell me and whatever it is I'll change my life today. I'll deny myself, I'll pick up my cross and I will follow you even if it kills me today Lord. And every day the more we die to ourselves the more Christ lives inside of us. But it is daily dying that gives us life. The best way to explain that is when I live for myself I am dying. But when I say yes to God what I am doing is making room for me. Emptying myself out so God can give me more life. You see the only way to get life is to die to self so that the more I give up myself the more Jesus will pour life into me. And Jesus by definition is life. If you and I really want life the more we die every day, the more that Jesus comes into us, the more that He gives us life. And the more we do that the more that while we are here on this

earth then come the time when we finally take our last breath then we get eternal life. Every day of our life we emptied our self so that Jesus could fill us more.

So today He asks you a question – who do you say that I am? And you answer that with your life. Got it? Get it? Going to live it? May each of you now His love today and forever, amen.