

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

August 8th, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning. So, do you see where I get my stuff? “He will be beaten severely,” or beaten lightly, depending on the day. So I am only doing what Jesus told me to do. This whole week has been a weird week because I have been on retreat trying to finish the “Surrender” book. I had to go, I thought, on Wednesday to speak at Legatus in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. So I drove up Wednesday and got twenty minutes from the place. It is 2 hours from the retreat house and I just happen to look at the sheet and it said Thursday the 5th. Grrr..... So I had to turn around and drive back. The next day I went up when they wanted me of course. Then last night I spoke at the Sanctuary of the Divine Mercy in Chicago. Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, old church. It was the biggest parish in the United States at one time. Filled with Polish people. There is a great pastor there. I had Mass, said the Rosary with the people, then I gave an hour talk. It was on Ave Maria Radio. I said, “I have to leave right at 7:30 because there is an hour difference so I can get on the road because it was already 8:30. So they got me out of there at 8:30 and I was going to get a hotel in Toledo. So I got to Toledo at one o’clock in the morning. Do you think I could find a hotel? No! Not one. I went to six of them. “Well Father we just gave the last one away.” “Thank you.” So I went to the next exit and tried four hotels. “No Father we are all booked.” It is a Saturday of course, you know. So I drove all of the way home last night. I stopped for about 45 minutes, I got home about five o’clock, I tried sleeping in the car for a little bit. You know you can never really get comfortable. Then this creepy guy pulls up next to me in the middle of the night. It really freaked me out because he kept looking over. Oh gosh. So 45 minutes got back in the car and got home about 5:30 this morning. So I haven’t had much sleep. Which is typical I guess.

I was reflecting yesterday with the people up there and as I was driving home last night throughout the night, I just kept reflecting on this thing about faith, faith, faith. That what God calls us all to is faith. Like I said to those people last night, I believe that most Christians, most Catholics are really just people that are filled with superstition. They do what they do so they don’t go to hell if hell exist; if God exists. They are not really sure whether God exists but they want to use this as fire insurance just in case. So they do all these things and they try to be the best they can. They go to church and they are bored and they don’t get it. Half the time most of these Christians and Catholics don’t go to church anyway because they don’t get it. They don’t have what the core of the Second Reading is calling us to, faith. Faith by definition is believing God is who He is and His word can be trusted, right?

You have heard this story before because I have used it before about a guy named Fidelis. Do you know what fidelis means? Faith. So this Fidelis was from Africa, he was one of my classmates at Christ the King Seminary, the place that threw me out but we won’t go there. He was walking through the jungle one day in Africa and as he was walking through the jungle, I am making this story up of course, as he was walking through the jungle he heard something behind him. “Oh my!” and He turns around and he couldn’t see anything. So he keeps walking and whatever was walking behind him gets closer and closer. He turns around and there is a lion. Well Fidelis starts to run. Guess what the lion did? He ran too. And he is running towards Fidelis. Fidelis is running real fast and he is turning around and the lion is getting closer. Fidelis is turning around and the lion is right there and as he turns around to look at the lion he doesn’t see that there is a cliff in front of him and he falls over the cliff a thousand feet. Aaaahhhh....

Half way down the cliff there is a branch. He is a very athletic person. He grabs the branch. Whoa! Here he is holding onto this branch, holding himself up. A thousand feet, 500 hundred feet up and 500 hundred feet down. He is thinking, "Now what am I going to do? What am I going to do?" So he cries out, as all of us would cry out, "Hello, is anybody up there?" Nothing. So he says, "Hello. Is anybody up there?" Finally he hears a voice. The lion says, "I am here." "Good. Can you throw me a rope or something?" in the middle of the jungle, 500 feet, "Yes, can you throw me a rope or something please? Help me get up there." "Do you want to know who I am?" "I really don't care who are. Just get me up there." "Well, I am the Lord, your God." "Great Lord, my God. Can you do something? Great Lord, my God can you get me out of here? Can you help me?" And he says, "Do you believe in Me?" "Yes I believe in you." "Do you trust me?" "Yes I trust you." Then let go of the branch." And Fidelis as he is hanging there looks up and says, "Is there anybody else up there?"

And that is the way we are. We are always looking for something else. Maybe money; maybe prestige; maybe my family; maybe this; maybe this doctor. Is there anybody else up there because when it comes to God He says you are going to have to let go of everything and you are going to have to trust in me. "HUH!" It is going to cost you your life. "HUH!" You have got to let go of everything. Nothing left to hold on to. "HUH!" It is kind of like flying. You have got to trust. That is about as simple as it is. Will you and I trust God with our lives? The only way you and I will trust God with our lives is when we know that He loves us, when He is our treasure. Did you get the Gospel today? "Where your treasure is, there your heart is." So is my treasure is my faith in God? Or is it another things? Is it in my ability? You know how many times have I said this – you can't even take your next breath without God saying okay. You think you are in charge. I think I am in charge. We are in charge of nothing. We can't even take our next breath without God saying, "Okay I will let you take that breath right now. Okay you can have another one and you can have another." We are totally dependent creatures. Until we get that we're not in charge of anything. We are not even in charge of our next breath. Then we are going to learn to trust in God instead of trusting in ourselves or trusting in our bank account or trusting in the doctor or trusting in who ever. You and I can only trust in God and we must do that with our lives.

So first of all is that even your goal to have a daily committed relationship with God? As I have said before the day you and I drop dead God will love you so much because this great God of love will look at you and say, "I love you very much. I will give you now what you love the most forever." And if that is anything else that is your treasure. And because He loves you He will give you your treasure forever. And if that treasure is anything other than God that is what you get. And that by definition is hell. So the purpose of life is our day in, day out, not even knowing, I can't even take this next breath. The only thing that is going to last forever is God. I can't wait until the end. One of my Prep kids use to say, "Well Father, I'll come when I get old I'll come and give my life to Jesus when I am old. You know, like around 35." "Come here." WHACK! Anyway, 35 old! But sometimes we think we will wait until then. Later, when I get sick; when something happens; when I need something. Then I will come to God. It is too late. You know I love the T-shirt that says, "Those who wait till the midnight hour to convert usually die at 11:30." So you can't sit there and wait until the end. Everyday could be your last. Everyday God looks at you and says, "Do you trust Me? Do you have faith in Me? Are you living for Me or are you living for yourself? Am I the reason you take your next breath? Am I the reason you do everything you do?" Am I your treasure or is something else your treasure? Again if something else is your treasure that is what you will get because He loves you. Yours and my treasure must be Christ and that must be the daily walking of our life in faith. God, I will let go of the branch. God I will trust in you because you are the only one worth trusting. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen