

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 22, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning. We are at a picnic. Aren't you excited? You can tell I am very excited. I love picnics. This is my life so there had better be a poker game afterwards with money that I can win automatically just so you know. Today Jesus Christ, like I said, these are not easy readings today. They are a kick in the teeth to get our attention, not to hurt us, not to make us feel bad, but to help us refocus on what matters most in life. This past week I was in Ireland. When I was in Ireland we had a thousand young people. Young people in Ireland they acknowledge are from 16 to 35. They are from the whole country of Ireland. It was a free event. They bused them in from all of the four parts of the country. It is the largest event they have for young people in Ireland. So, they didn't know how to deal with me at all of course. I spoke more of hell in the first ten minutes than they had heard their whole lives, these kids.

From years ago for myself I always think, I hope in the deepest part of my being that everybody goes to heaven, no matter what. When God said to Adam and Eve, "If you sin, you will die," He fixed it. So in the same way I really have the hope that somehow when we hear about damnation and hell and everything we hear about, that somehow God can fix it. That has got to be your hope. We need the hope as the scripture says, "that all people be saved." That has to be our hope. If you don't hope it, you are not a Christian. If you hope some people go to hell then there is going to be a problem. My mother looked at me once and she said, "If that person is in heaven I don't want to be there." And I said, "Don't worry mom, you won't." It's just that simple. If I could do that with my mother, think about it. The reality is we have got to have that hope inside of us. Sometimes Catholics and Christians think, "well we are the ones that got it together and everyone else is going to hell."

That is why I like the story at the end of time there are all the people and it is going to be this judgment and we all believe in the second judgment, the final judgment. Particular judgment is when you die you go right before God, you go to heaven, hell or purgatory. Final judgment is where everybody gets to see where everybody else goes. So here all the righteous people, they are all excited. "Look, we did all of this. We suffered our whole life. We obeyed all of the commandments. Now we are waiting for what we get. Then there are those others bad people who are over there. They are going to hell. Nah, nah, nah, nah. I was doing all these good things and you were bad. You are going to hell." Then an angel comes to the crowd and says, "God in His mercy is going to let everybody into heaven." The righteous get crazy and they start screaming and yelling, "How dare you! What kind of a justice is this?" And they are instantly damned. They didn't learn the number one goal of God – His mercy. So that is the good news. Now we look at the bad news.

When we look at our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Fatima said, "Our people go to hell like snowflakes in a snowstorm." The very first thing I taught the boys at Prep for all of those years, when I taught scripture the very first thing I would make them memorize isn't, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." It would be the counterpart of what we heard today from Matthew's Gospel and that is, "Enter through the narrow gate. The gate that leads to damnation is wide. The road is easy and many people choose it but, how few there are that enter the narrow gate. The road is rough and how few there are that find it." I would make them memorize that. I would say, "Listen, God is calling you and me to be on the narrow road." This is the reason I preach the way I do. Some people would say I talk too much about hell. Because in my hope of hopes, in my heart of hearts, I hope every single one of us makes it to heaven. I hope with all my heart, I hope Hitler makes it to heaven to tell you honest to goodness truth. I hope everybody makes it. The person you can't stand the most, I hope they get to sit right next to you in

heaven and me too. The reality is, that is the hope. But if it is not that way, if it is as strict as Christ said, if it is as strict as our Blessed Mother said at Fatima, if people do go to hell like snowflakes in a snow storm, then I want to teach you the right way so you don't stand before God on judgment and say, "Well Father Larry said that God loves everybody. It is going to be okay. So I just did the best I could and that was the end of it." And He will say, "Sorry, go to hell." I never want anybody to hear that. That is why I always preach the narrow gate. It won't hurt any of us if we walk the narrow gate in life and then we get to go to heaven. But if we are just like everybody else, let us look at our own lives and think am I just like everybody else? And in many ways I am like everybody else. Just because I go around preaching, I can go to hell faster than all of you and you know that. You know me.

Last night I was very much like everybody else. I was tired since I came back from Ireland and I am sitting down watching TV and my dog is missing for a few moments. Hmm...I thought that is not good. I'm walking around, I go upstairs in front of Fr. Wrights room and in front of Jesus Christ in the chapel, my dog peed. I almost killed him and I am not kidding. Such rage came out of me he almost died. I thought he will never do that again. This morning I go and for three minutes I do the announcements before the 8:30 Mass, three minute. Literally three minutes. I come walking into the room he took a dump right smack in the middle of the room. And I am very serious, does anyone want a dog? I cannot continue. I am going to kill this dog. As I am going through my rage, you have never seen a rage like I went through this morning when he took that dump, I almost killed him. Unbelievable! I am thinking I am going to hell. I am on the wide road. I am not on the narrow road. So there are things in my life that are very, very, very wide. That just like anybody else, when I get a temper, whatever it is. That isn't what Jesus wants of me. He wants me to be on the narrow road. The road that few people find and that is what He wants of you. That is what He wants of all of us. That we go to the narrow road. Strive to enter through the narrow road. This narrow road of course is a road that is obedient to God. What you and I strive for more than anything else in our life is to obey Jesus Christ, to obey His commandments. To do what He wants us to do is best as we can do it, but to give our hearts and our lives to that. If it goes against our personality then it goes against our personality. If it goes against what the world says then it goes against what the world says. If it goes against what our friends say then it goes against what our friends say because we need to be on the narrow road.

So very simply today as you and I examine our life are we on the narrow road that leads to heaven, to salvation, to being saints. Are we being obedient in our life and killing all sin especially mortal sin in our life? Or are we just like everybody else. When people see us the only thing they see different in us is that we happen to go to church on Sunday for an hour. But the rest of our life is no different. We are just as mad as everybody else. We are just as gossipy as everybody else. We have sex outside of marriage like everybody else. We commit adultery, look at porn. Fill in the blanks. Are we just like everybody else or are we on the narrow road. Jesus calls each of us today to be on the narrow road so that all of us one day can be in heaven, so all of us can be saints. Because in the end that is all that matters. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? Please God. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.