

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

August 29, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today we celebrate this Eucharist and we celebrate the humility of God and His call to us to be humble. Now yesterday was a famous feast day of a particular saint. Does anybody know yesterday's feast day? St. Augustine. St. Augustine is portrayed in our church in two places as we have said before. Over by the altar, the statue on the end of the bishop holding the heart. And again up there in the window the bishop holding the heart. It comes from our confessions that our hearts are yearning, our hearts are burning until they rest in Thee. Once someone asked him, Augustine, "What are the three greatest virtues?" And he said, "The first is humility, the second is humility and the third is humility." Humility is that which everything is based on in the spiritual life. Meaning that we are open to receive all that God wants to give us and we humble ourselves before Him. Now I think that most people have a bad image what humility is. Or they have this screwed up image about humility is, "Okay, I am a worm, I am a worm, I am no good," and we go around playing this game. People do it all the time. You know we have false humility in the Church. We play these games. All of us do it. Bishops do it. Priests do it. We all do it. We all say, "Oh, I am not worthy. Shut up! It is just garbage. We know humility is just truth. It is not playing a game about, "Oh no, I am not worthy." You know Christ was the most humble person on earth. The second one next to Him was Mary, our Mother. When she was confronted with being the Mother of God, she didn't go and say, "Oh, I am not worthy. Oh no find someone else. Oh, I am no good." She said, "Fiat! Let it be done to me. I want what you want." You see that is what humility is. It is a wanting of what God wants.

The first one that gives us this example of humility is God, Himself. The whole experience of who God is, is God is a God of humility. Yesterday when we do Evening Prayer the Cantic is Philippians 2. Anybody remember Philippians 2? "Though He was in the form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave." That is humility. Humility is a giving away of your life every day. It is not playing a game that "look I am very humble." Years ago I went to Fr. Peterson before I took my vow of celibacy, which I was 28 years old so figure what 24 years ago, 23 years ago. And you take it as a deacon and I remember struggling and I go to Fr. Pete and I said, "You know Pete, I am struggling. I am just not sure I can take this vow of celibacy." Don't worry I have been a celibate for fifty years. Don't get exciting ideas out there. But anyway, "I am not sure I can take this vow of celibacy." And I will never forget, he looked at me and says, "Richards, your problem isn't celibacy, it is humility." UGHHH!!! I hate him sometimes, you know. But that was a truest statement he has ever made. Then he adds insult to the wounds because he said, "Larry, if you ever became humble you would put a big sign in front of your forehead that said – I am humble." OHHHHH!!!! Do you see what I have to put up with? But, it is all true. It is this reality of who we are.

But what we have to be is no matter how we come off, you know our personalities, you know if I ever come up here and change and someone gave me a lobotomy or something and I came up and walked around with my head down and I would just say, "Oh, whatever you want, you are all good," you would all think that Father went fake, wouldn't you - absolutely. So you have got to be humble in who you are. My personality, people, is never going to change. Never. Deal with it. This is who I am. But none of your personalities are going to change either. Sorry, just isn't going to happen. But you and I are called to be

humble in our personalities. And what does that mean? That means that what you and I do is empty our selves every day. You and I can't even begin to become humble until we are willing to empty ourselves of what we want and decide what God wants in our life. So what we have to do is come before God everyday and we humble ourselves. We do at least one act of unselfishness a day. That is humility. And until we get that we'll keep playing this game that some people do in the church where they act all humble but they are still living life their way. "Oh look how holy I am," but they are still doing it their way instead of doing it God's way. The humility of God is a God who leaves heaven, who dies on the cross and gives His life for you. The humility of God is the God that even that was not enough, where every day at every Eucharist God gives you His body, blood, soul and divinity. And you and I can take Him in our hands, can take Him in our tongues and the God of the universe lets you and me receive Him every day and God humbles Himself before you and me.

I still don't get how some people don't want to go to Mass and don't think that Mass is important. Do you ever think about this? What an insult to Almighty God. Here is God giving you His body and blood and you say to Him, "You know you are not just worth my time this week." Or, "You are not just worth my time today." Or, "you are just not worth my time. I know that it is going to cost You your life to give me everything. I know You are going to humble yourself before me. I know what You give me gives me eternal life. But, everything else is more important." It is just like, "WHACK!" are you crazy! Don't you get it? If God keeps giving Himself to you, and He wants to be so intimate with you and that is what it is. When God calls you and I to Mass, He calls us to experience intimacy. You cannot experience intimacy in the same way when you are staying in bed or on the golf course. When He comes here, here comes God, He gets before you, He humbles himself and He says, "This is all I got." And He gives you everything. And what we do at least once a week is we have to get on our faces before Him and we begin with Him and we humble ourselves before Him. We say, "Jesus this is all I am and I give everything to You." Then when we learn to do this at Mass, then we go and we start doing this with our families. We give our life to our families every day. Then we start doing it for the people in our community, the Church. We give an act of service. Again, to join our parish, you just can't join - you have got to go through the classes. When I teach the second class, those who do not work, should not eat. That everybody has to do something for the parish, why, because it teaches us humility. To give our life away for the community. Then we don't just do it for the parish, we do it for the community, the bigger community around us - the city, the state, the government. And we give our life away for the poor. We give our life away for whatever way God is calling us to do it. You see humility isn't a stance, it is an action. It is a giving away of yourself every day.

So we can pretend to be humble. We don't fool anybody, trust me. I don't fool anybody, you don't fool anybody. When God says, "You want to be humble, then be like Me. Give your life away every day. First of all to Me, to your family, to your church, to the bigger community." When you learn to do that then you are on your way to humility. Then and only then will we be all that God wants us to be. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? Good! May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.