

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 5, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today is a very hard Gospel. We have had some hard Gospels in these past weeks. What Jesus does today, He is starting to thin the crowds. You see Jesus didn't care if His people were packed. Great crowds followed Him, right? When all of these great crowds followed Him because they were all looking for something for themselves, they were looking for what Jesus could do for them. So Jesus makes it clear what you have to do to be His disciple. He says you have to give up everything. Now if you really let this sink inside of you, it is going to make you very uncomfortable. One of my friends who is a young guy going to seminary, he texted messaged me this morning and he says, "Father, what a Gospel today. But we need the grace to live it." And I said, "Great job." At least he is listening to what the demands are of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ demands of you and me everything. Why? Because that is what He gave to you and me everything. He held nothing back. Now again this is not an easy thing when we really think about it.

I know some of you got to watch me on EWTN this week on Life on the Rock and they showed it that night at about ten o'clock up here. If you missed it you can go on Youtube. Just put EWTN and Fr. Larry Richards and then you can watch the whole show. It is on Youtube. There was Fr. Mark and a guy named Doug Barry there. Great guy. We really clicked. I picked a lot on him and he picked a lot on me. I won but that is all besides the point. As we sat there we both talked about the same reality that Jesus wants everything. He wants it all or He wants nothing. He doesn't want spiritual wimps be it a man or be it a woman. He wants you to come to Him and give Him your life or He doesn't want your life at all. He doesn't want part of your life. He doesn't want little things. "Oh, look what I did." He wants it all. That means all of your family, all of your money, all your possessions, everything! Did you hear that? That is what He wants. And you might say, "I don't know if I can do that." He goes, "Well then you can't be My disciple." That is what He says. He doesn't say, "Well maybe later on." He looks at you and me today and says at least three times, "You cannot be my disciple." "But Jesus I want to follow You." "Okay. It is going to cost you everything." "I don't know if I want to give everything." Yeah, me neither, I'll give you a hint. It is hard.

I use to have this nice saying that Brother Bernard gave me and it was, "Sometimes I think I have fully surrendered and then He asks me for something I am not willing to give up." Are you like that? You think you have fully surrendered and then He asks you, "I want some more of this." "Oh I can't do that Jesus." I know. He wants it all. But when He gets it all do you really think you can outdo God in generosity? I have talked about this a thousand times, that when you give it all up you get everything in return. I love to tell the story of the man from Crete. This story is at the end of the Truth CD about the man, he loves the land of Crete and everyday he works with the olives and he works with the grapes. Every day he does the best that he can. The he gets to be ninety-nine years old and he loved the land of Crete and all of the land of Crete loved him. He comes before God and he is dying so he says, "Lay me on my beloved Crete." He lays there and takes a handful of dirt of Crete and he says, "Oh this is everything I have ever loved." It was a symbol of everything. Then he closes his hands and fingers and he closes his eyes and dies. Well when he woke up again there he was before the Pearly Gates of Heaven. He is up there the first time, the gates open and God comes out in these long black judgment robes. He kind of looked like Judge Wapner of the People's Court. He got an old beard and He says, "Old man, number two thousand billion, two hundred and six, you have loved Me, you have loved others, come home and enjoy eternal life. And the old man starts walking toward the Kingdom and God says, "What is it you have got in your

hand?" "That?" "Yeah, that." "That is everything I have left. That is everything I have ever loved." God says, "Sorry, no dirty hands in heaven." The old man says, "I can't give this up. You can't ask me to give this up. It is all I have got left." God says, "You can't come in unless you let it all go." Then the man says, "Then I won't." God says, "Then you can't come in." God slowly walks to the gates of Heaven, the gates of Heaven close and the old man goes and sits down.

A couple of days go by and now the gates of Heaven open again and God comes out as this Bavarian Beer Meister. He is ready for Oktoberfest. When He comes out He has the beer stein filled with beer, the hat on with the feather, and He has all of the badges on and high socks on, the knicker shorts on, He has the suspenders and He has a beer stein and He is singing, "Ya, ya, ya, ya!" He says, "Old man we are having a party and it is for you. Come on home and enjoy eternal life." And the old man says, "Can I bring my Crete?" God says, "Sorry, you can't bring your Crete." Then the old man says, "Then I am not coming. Huh!" God says, "Fine, go to hell. Huh!" No He didn't but He is the only one that could isn't He? So the old man goes and sits down and God sadly walks in the gates of Heaven.

I don't know if you have held onto dirt any length of time but here this man is desperately holding on to this, desperately. Finally it is becoming like dust and slipping through his fingers. Then finally the gates of Heaven open for the third time and God comes out as this little boy, Jesus. "What are you doing?" And the old man says, "Let me go!!! If You were a God of love You would not ask me to give up everything for You. This is all I have got left. Don't You get it? How dare You call yourself a God of love. If you were a God of love You would let me keep this." And Jesus looked at the old man and says, "Old man it just looks like a bunch of dirt to Me. Old man, let dust go to the wind. Grab my hand and come home." And slowly the old man thought about how hard he was holding onto this dirt and slowly opened his hands and the breath the ruah of God, the Spirit of God came and blew everything he had away. He bent down and took the boy Jesus hand and together they walked through the Pearly Gates. And the old man who was so sad and was so bad because he gave up everything looks up and what does he see, the whole land of Crete. Everything he ever wanted. Everything he ever loved.

What is it again today that you hold on to so tightly that you can't surrender it and give it all to the Lord? What is it you want? With God you have everything. Everything; everything. There is nothing you want that God did not create. Without God you have nothing, but you have got to give it all up. It is an act of faith. But when you give it all up that is when He gives more in abundance to you. It begins with our time. Our time must be God's. When you come before God everyday and say, "Okay God here is my time. Anything You want I will do." So that is why it is easy when God says, "Okay I want you to give an hour a week in the Adoration Chapel." I want you to be with me for an hour. Not even a second thought. "Of course Jesus. My time is all Yours. Gladly I will do that for You. If that is what You ask; I am very busy You know. But of course I can give you an hour."

With our money, you know the only time in nine years you will ever see me write in the bulletin, I have been here nine years now, can you imagine? You have been with me nine years, almost nine. We just started the ninth year. So when you go before God one day and you stand before Him and He says, "Why should I let you into heaven?" "I was many years with Fr. Larry Richards as my pastor." "Oh, you already had hell. Come on home for eternity." Just so you know. You have an excuse. I give you all excuses. Aren't you excited? There are days you think, GRRRR! Anyway so you will have that excuse when you stand before Him. So, in the nine years that I have been here never have I once had to write in the bulletin about money. Never, except for this week. I met with Steve Henderson who is our Finance Director because we have to hire a new Youth Director and he says, "You know Father, we have a \$3000 dollar deficit every week." Oh dear. I was like, "Don't tell me these things." Now we survive because of the Oktoberfest, the car raffle, and all the fundraisers. If our people tithed we wouldn't have to do all of these things, but we don't. Now a lot of you go beyond tithing, praise God. I go beyond tithing. Every

week it comes out. Every summer, of course, we lose money. Why? Because people don't come here. You know why they don't come here in the summer? It is too hot so they go to other places where there is air conditioning. Then what happens we don't get their tithe. One of the best things you can do is sign up for the automatic deduction like we have. Automatically comes out whether I am here or I am not, you get my \$40 some dollars a week. It comes right to the parish. Just for you. Isn't that nice if all of us could do that. Or we need to add on to it. It is kind of like we run a family with the income that we put in every week and we just hope at the end of the year we are going to win the lottery. And by God's grace we do. But that is no way to run a parish. So we all need to come together and start helping out a little more. Those of you who don't tithe think about it – now think about it, God says all your money belongs to Me, every single dime. I will make you a deal, you give 10% to Me off the top before taxes, and then you can keep 90%. Now I think that is a great deal. But most people do not. They say, "I will pay all of my bills and whatever I have left I will give you extra God." He says, "That is not the deal. I can take your breath today. Every cent you have belongs to Me." Now I don't care if you give it to the parish or wherever you give it, we are going to need it here, I am just telling you. You and I have got to tithe. I tithe before God and so do you. We must do this together if we are going to build up the Kingdom.

The last thing is our talents. Our talents have been given to us for God. So we use them for God. Today, in the back - everything kind of fits together with this Gospel today. I was quite happy He gave me the Gospel. It fit in with everything I needed to talk about today. In the back we have for the Oktoberfest 402 slots to fill. There are about 500 and some people here so everybody can't leave today unless you fill out one of those slots. It is our one and only fundraiser that we do a year. So please, if God asked you and me to give everything it is going to have to be practical the way we give everything. But, you and I have got to trust that when you and I give beyond what I think I can do, the God of the Universe blesses me abundantly. And those of you who are generous you know how He blesses you. So I want you to really listen to the Gospel today. Let it sink in and don't care about your pastor. Who cares what I say. But, you ask Him. "Jesus how and what do you want of me? I belong to You. I hold nothing back. Tell me how You practically want me to give You my life everyday" and then do whatever He tells you. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.