

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

September 12, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. In the Gospel we hear Jesus welcomes sinners and He ate with them. That should give us some comfort that He welcomes us this day and He eats with us and feeds us with His own precious body and blood. If this is what Jesus did then this must be what we do. We need to be a welcoming community; we need to be a welcoming person to people who are sinners. We don't judge sinners we welcome sinners. You got that? We don't judge sinners we welcome sinners. That is why on the opening page of our website it says, "Everyone is welcome in our Fathers house, everyone." And I go through a whole list of people you would think wouldn't be welcomed. Divorced, remarried, homosexuals – everybody is welcomed. Everybody then thinks, "Boy, Fr. Larry is a liberal. Uh huh. Then it says, "The Father loves and welcomes everybody but He loves us too much to leave us where we are." You know when someone writes a comment on my book, it automatically emails me from Amazon and tells me the comment.

This past week I got a comment. This is the first time I have gotten to be number one on the book. So every time you think good about yourself, someone bangs you really good. They called me, and I can't even tell you the first word because I still have no idea what it meant. Alex looked it up and he said it means you rejoice in the pain of others. It is not manliness. Look it up. You can read all this on Amazon.com under the comments. You will see we go back and forth. The man says my whole book is against homosexuals. That is what my book is about. Now I don't know if you have read my book but I deal with it on one page saying our job is not to judge people but to love people. But that isn't what he said. I said, "Sir, I am very surprised by your comments because I talk about how we need to welcome people." Then he came back at me and said, "To welcome people you have to accept them as they are," is what it comes down to. We went back and forth. "What kind of Church and what kind of person are you to make people feel bad for their sin?" Oh dear! So I responded and I said, "Listen, are job is to welcome everybody," right?" That is our job. But our job isn't to let it be okay where they are at. That can never be where we are okay. When we all acknowledge our sinfulness there is three times where Jesus says something to us today in the Gospel. What is that word He says to us? Repent! So we accept people where they are.

Everybody here we are all accepted, but we are sinful. God calls all of us to change our life. Accept people where they are, yes, but then you and I are called to repentance of that. Repentance in all things -repentance of if that is your lifestyle, fine; having sex before marriage, fine. If you are gossipy, if you are missing Mass this is what it is. We accept everybody. We are all sinners in this together. But then we all have got to be together in our repentance. It is not a negative concept repent. It comes from the word "Metanoia." See, look over there, there is Jesus right in the Sacred Heart filled with mercy. But this is most of us. We are walking away from Him doing our own thing. Every once in a while, once a week we turn around and say, "Hey, I love you, Lord. Be with me in all I am going to do today," and we keep walking our own way. "Jesus, come be with me and take care of me once again," and we keep walking our own way. And as we keep walking our own way we might once a day say, "Hey Lord, you know I love you," and keep doing our thing. But that isn't what Christ wants of us. What He is calling you and me to is repentance. So He calls us by name and our job then is to turn our life around and start walking towards Him. Then every once in a while we fall into our sin, but we get up and we keep walking towards Him. We are doing it His way.

The foundation of our life is to walk in repentance. That means every day you and I stop living for ourselves and stop doing it our way and repent and do it His way. We must. If I speak anything else but repentance, I betray the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The first words ever out of His mouth were, "repent and believe." All of us need to change our life. Yes, God loves you as you are, but He is not Barney. He invites you to change. The father did not go out to get his son. He let his son leave today; this is the prodigal son. He let him go out. He let him sin. He let him do everything. He didn't go out and say, "Hey everything you are doing is okay." He waited for his son to repent, to change his life and come home. And when he came home his father didn't condemn him. His father didn't go after him. His father didn't put him down. His father loved him. The same Father will love us every time we repent. The only struggle is we are the type of people that don't think I don't have a need of repentance. God loves me as I am. I have been saved by grace and since I am saved by grace it doesn't matter what I do. It does matter what you and I do. It does.

So when Jesus call us to repent that means that the way we do it in the Catholic Church is what? Go to confession. We need to be people that go to confession. When I was in Ireland almost everybody that was with me in Ireland of all the thousands kids and adults, almost every one of them had been to Medjugorje. The whole Youth 2000 event had been because of Medjugorje. So I got back into reading about Medjugorje. I was there some twenty years ago. The Church hasn't said one word or the other about it yet. The Bishop is against it but Cardinal Surin just invited people to come back and to relook at what is going on. One of the things of course that Our Lady calls us all to is repentance, to change our life and that He loves us and He wants us all to come home. And she talks about if the world go to confession, if Catholics would go to confession once a month, the world would be converted in two years. Just simple things like that. Instead of saying I don't need to go to confession, we acknowledge why I need to. I have to change my life. I have to repent. I have got to turn towards God. All of us need to do that. If I go a month, and every once in a while I'll go a month because I have been on the road and didn't get to confession, I feel dirty. I just feel like, "Ugh, I have got to go to confession. So I'll call Father Peterson or I call Father Biebel or I call Father Nick or I call Father Ed and I say, "Ah, can I go to confession?" So I will go and it takes about twenty minutes and usually I go back, we go to each other. It is a great thing about being a priest. You can do that. All of us though need to go.

This weekend I have been offering, because I have had all of the Masses this weekend, after Mass I have been offering confession. People have been coming back. The last Mass I heard confessions after Mass. Last night I heard confessions after Mass. And I will hear confessions today after Mass to invite you to come home, to stop making excuses. I know we are all afraid. Remember I told you the story of when I was a kid and I was going to confession and the priest yelled and screamed at me. He yelled and screamed so loud he said my sins, and I was seventeen years old, and everybody could hear my sins. So when I walked out they all looked at me, "Hmmm." Experiences in our past, different people have had bad experiences in confession. But you have to look at Jesus and Him calling you home. So I invite you, if you are afraid of me you don't have to go to confession today, of course. You can go to confession later on in the week. Or you can go to Father Biebel. Father Biebel has confessions everyday of course at the Cathedral. So you need to come back to confession.

Today after Mass I will hear confessions. I won't go back to greet people, I will invite people to come to confession and I will stay as long as necessary. Now if you have gone to confession in the last month or so, don't come after then. But if it has been awhile like thirty years, forty years, we have heard this weekend just by offering these confessions, Jesus is inviting you home. God is calling you to repent. He is not going to yell at you. He will do anything to get you home. Again if you can't go here you can go to the Cathedral during the week or go another time. But please, He wants you home. You have to repent

to receive the mercy. You can go traditional, "Bless me Father, I have sinned," and tell me your sins. You can go behind the screen or you can go for the questions. Again if you go for the questions you will be done in less than sixty seconds. Just go through the commandments together – do you pray every day; have you used God's name in vain; have you missed Mass; dishonored your parents; got angry; hurt others with your words; made fun of others; had an abortion; helped someone have an abortion; impure thoughts; impure actions with yourself; not married – oral sex with another; intercourse with another; if you are married – artificial birth control; have you looked at pornography; have you had sex with someone of the same sex; have you lied; have you cheated; have you stolen; gossiped; been jealous; got drunk; got high; been judgmental; been proud; is there anything else? And again most of the time it is yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, no Father I would never do that one, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, oh, I would like to try that one (WHACK!!!), yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

God wants you to come home. So please, especially for those of you who don't think you need to go to confession. If you don't think you need repentance there really is no hope for salvation because you don't need it. God can't save you because you don't think you need saved. No hope. But if you know how much you need a Savior, if you are willing to repent, God is always willing to invite you home. You got it? Get it? Good. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.