

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

September 26, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today we hear in the Gospel and the first reading, you can almost get a sense in the First Reading the imagery that is used. Here is a person laying on their nice couch or bed and they are plucking on their harp like David did. No concerns for anything except himself or herself. He is very complacent and boy, God really comes at him. And then we hear the Gospel. In the Gospel Jesus is talking and there are four things we are going to be dealing with here. First He talks about the reality that there are Saints. He deals with the Old Testament Saints and talks about it with Abraham, which we will come back to. He talks about the reality of Hell. He talks about how we need to take care of the poor. And He talks about the Resurrection. His own resurrection but our resurrection too, ultimately, that we have to live for. Let's focus on each one briefly.

First let us talk about the Old Testament saints. We in the Catholic Church have the tradition of praying with Saints to Almighty God. Some people outside of our tradition, even some people in our tradition who think that they are way far advanced for Saints and that, just show their own ignorance. Christ who is God, talked about the intercession of the Saints here when He talks about Abraham. Abraham was an Old Testament Saint and they are talking to Abraham here. God gives us all the Saints not just so we can pray to them or have intercession to them or go to them, but that they can pray for us. That there is one body and they are there to help us. To go to the Saints, to go to our Blessed Mother, to go to St. Joseph is a good thing. Christ already set the precedent. So nobody is getting in the way of when you go to a Saint. It is like coming to me and asking me for prayers. I can pray for you. I am not taking the place of God, I am just an instrument of God. Same thing with the Saints they are instruments of Almighty God for us.

The second thing we have to be clear on is Jesus is making it clear there is such a thing as eternal damnation. There is such a thing as hell. It is interesting because the way He says you go there and the way He illustrates this is the same as we hear it in the final judgment of Matthew, chapter 25, correct? So the reason most people go to hell is not because of the sins of commission sins of omission. How we fail to take care of the poor. As I was telling the new members class as they came in, when I was at Prep I taught every year always either scripture or morals depending what the year was. But no matter what every week I would give them the questions and the answers to the final exam. Every Friday was the test and every Thursday I would give them the test questions and answers, every week. There wasn't one time I did not. I would say, "Okay gentlemen, pull out a piece of paper. Tomorrow this is the test. The first question tomorrow will be who is Abraham? The answer gentlemen is the Father of the Faith. The second question will be who is Sarah? The answer will be the wife of Abraham." Pretty simple, correct? I should have had all 100% of all my boys every year, correct? On an average I failed 8 boys a year even when I gave them the questions and the answers to all the tests. Not because they were stupid, it is because they didn't care. Well God today is giving each of us the questions and answers to the final exam. He gives it by illustration today. He explicitly does it in Matthew, chapter 25. "I was hungry and you didn't feed me. I was thirsty and you did not give me drink. I was naked and you did not clothe me." "When did we see you like this and not take care of you?" "Whatever you failed to do to the least of these brothers, you failed to do to Me."

So Jesus is saying today Lazarus is who? Jesus. It is Himself. So you and I must be people of, and I know many of us here in this parish are unbelievable people who take care of the poor. But if we are not that is something you must do for your salvation. It is something you must do. It is not an option. So you always need to put God first and the way that you do that is by making sure you take care of the poor, correct? That is why the very last question I ask if you come to confession to me and you go for the questions the last question is always what? Do you consistently take care of the poor? Consistently means that you have to have it built into your life. It cannot just be every once in a while you give to the poor. You must consistently take part of what you make every week and give it to the poor. That is just a consistent thing. You can do it through the church. You can do it many ways. One of the ways that I do it is I have one of the kids in CFCA (Catholic Foundation for Children and Aging), and you can go online and every month it automatically comes out of my account and I pay for this kid in South America automatically. Never met this kid; never talked to him. But he automatically gets this money from me. Because why? Because he is my brother or sister in Christ. Can you imagine if you and I when we stand before God, He looks at us and says, "How come during your life time there were 30,000 children that died of starvation every day?" And you are going to look at Him and I am going to look at Him, "Well, they weren't my kids." And He says, "No, they were Mine and I gave you an abundance so that you can take care of them." So are you doing something consistently in your life to take care of the poor? You can help out the food pantry here. You can help the clothing store. I don't care but you have to do something for your own salvation. So here is the rich man and Lazarus and he hears very clearly, "You are in hell" and the rich man is in hell, because why? There was a poor man right outside his door and he was more concerned about himself and what he wanted and what he got and what was good for him then he was about that man dying at his doorstep. So you and I must, must, must take care of the poor consistently.

Finally because of all of this it is because of the resurrection. The resurrection, you and I and everyone will live forever. Absolutely, positively. Even if you blow your brains out you are not going to die. You are going to live forever but it is not going to be happy. Reality. There is nothing you and I can do to stop existence. Can't happen. Once God gives you the gift of eternal life, once He gives you the gift of existence there is nothing you can do lose that gift. Every one of us here will exist forever. A billion years from now every one of us here will be alive. Some happy, some miserable. That is what Christ says. So the point is if we are going to live forever then we have got to do everything in our power while we are on earth to make sure that where we live forever is going to be a place where we want to be. It is going to be a place where we want to be with Christ. It is going to be a place of eternal happiness. And Jesus tells us explicitly in Matthew 25 and explicitly today in the Gospel that the way this will happen is if we take care of the poor. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.

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