

## Christmas Day – Cycle A

December 25, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Yesterday if you have read the paper they did a great article on the parish, front page article and you saw our Nativity Scene and you found out it said Fr. Larry Richards and another priest from Erie went over to Germany. Well I got a call from the other priest from Erie yesterday. He said, "Oh, I guess I am just the other priest from Erie. That is Fr. Michael Kesicki. "I told them your name. They didn't carry through on it." Anyway the other priest that was with me was Fr. Michael Kesicki of course. When we went over there the very first night I saw this and I loved it and said okay we are going to get it. There are 51 pieces and it is beautiful. Hopefully all of you will come up and look at it later. Almost everything you could imagine is in there. Even things you wouldn't think about. You have the typical jackass, and the cow. They are always there. You have a guy playing a bagpipe. You usually don't see that. You have a chicken, a hen, you have up there the Christmas miracle, the cat is with the chicken and the rooster and staring away from them. There are all of these pieces. Pretty good.

But there is something missing. Anybody looking to see what is missing from that? And don't say Jesus. I will beat you. He is in there. You is what is missing. You! If you just came here for Christmas to see the decorations and come to see the Nativity scene and say that is pretty, you have missed the whole point of Christmas. The point of Christmas is for you to be in that manger with Christ. To be in that Nativity scene. So you are what is missing. So what we have to focus on is you who is missing and how we get to be part of that. So we are going to focus on the word you .How do you spell you? Y-O-U. That is pretty smart for Christmas. That is pretty good. I am still sleeping because I did not get to bed until 3:30 this morning. We are going to focus on those three things letters of the word you.

The first thing when we focus on the letter "Y" is the word yes. When we come to Christ, not only on Christmas, but every day, we have got to say yes to God's will. Think about it, if Mary had not said yes none of this would have happened. When she was confronted with the will of God she put her own will aside and said yes to the will of the Father. And because she said yes all salvation came to the world. So will it be for us. When we are confronted with this relationship with Jesus, again way to many people are just culturally Catholic or Christian. They just go to church because it is a good thing or I was told I had to go to church, or I don't want to go to hell when I die so I am going to make sure that I do all of the right things. Stop it! Think about it, if that is all you are you are probably going to end up in hell because God will look at you and say, "Listen, to me you always looked at me as a burden in your life, something you had to do to be a good person. I don't want to make you feel guilty forever." What He wants of you and me is a relationship. When you are in a relationship of love with somebody you want to be with them. So you and I have to look at Him and say, "Yes Lord. I want you in my life. Yes Lord this Christmas I want you to be born in my life but I want you to be there every day.

I was going to make a realistic manger scene and put real manure in there and urine because the reality was that is the way it was. At Christmas we make all of these nice things and we gold leaf them. But the manger it was filthy. It was dirty. All kinds of people wouldn't shower. You could smell their perspiration.

It wasn't a very pleasant place in that manger. And yet Christ still wanted to go and be in the midst of it. It is the same with our lives. Some of us come and think, "You don't understand Father. My life is a mess. Father, I have sin in my life. Father I have this in my life." What we do is we stay away from Jesus because we don't think that He wants to be part of our dirty mess. Don't you get it? That is the whole point. He wants to be in the very midst of our dirty mess of our life. He wants to be in the midst of the urine. In the midst of the manure. In the midst of all of the goodness, the badness, He wants to be in the midst of it every day. He wants to be the center of your life as He is the center of this Nativity scene. But you and I have to say yes to that and let Him be born. To let Him take life inside of us.

The second thing that happens is when we say yes to the will of God it always invites the "O" in the word which is for others. It is never a lone ranger type of existence. I would never just come before Jesus and say, "Hey Jesus, it is me and You, buddy. We are going to be together just you and me forever. Look at that manger scene. When He came to earth He wasn't alone. Many people came to be with Him. And what He wants all of us to do is not follow Him alone but follow Him as a community. That is why we come together every week at church on Sunday. That is why it is not enough to pray. "I stay at home and I pray in my pillow." Stop it! It is always about a community. I have talked about it before, but there is no such thing, when I taught at Prep the kids there would sometimes look at me and say, "Father, you know I am going to go to hell but that is okay because all of my friends are going to be there. I would say, "Well isn't that nice." But you are not going to be able to talk to them. Hell is this total aloneness forever. Always alone. There is no such thing people as the community of the damned. It doesn't exist. Oh, your friends might be there but you won't be able to talk to them. It is total aloneness forever.

The exact opposite is what happens when we give ourselves to Jesus Christ. We become a member of the community of the Saints, thank you very much. We become a community of the Saints. We belong to each other forever. It is a community of love. When God left heaven to become a man on earth He did it to love us. To become one with us. And what we have got to do is to desire to become one with each other. To become a family. That is what you came to create. That is why we come together to be a family. And if we come together every time we come to Mass we are saying I want to be together with Jesus and all of my brothers and sisters forever. And every time we come to church we get to experience heaven on earth just a little. Just a little. And the more we experience this heaven on earth the more we can enjoy that one day, that anticipation that one day we are going to be together forever. Jesus is always about others. It is always about community.

That leads us now to the very last letter and that letter is "U". And when you get to the "U" this "U" is the ultimate gift. Jesus Christ gave to us the ultimate gift, His life. Everything. He is the guy who will give us a second chance. All of us need second chances. I need third chances, fourth chances, fifth chances, sixth chances, seven chances. We all need this. Christ came and gave the ultimate gift of Himself. What you and I have to do to participate in that is give the ultimate gift of yourself to Him. And when you and I do that we get the ultimate gift of peace. The ultimate gift of God is life to us. We give Him the ultimate gift of life our life every day, then we receive ultimate peace when we finally surrender ourselves to Him and His love. This is about total giving of ourselves to Him. So the question today is have you fully surrendered yourself to Him? Have you given yourself to Him? Are you just a cultural Catholic that participates? You can go to church every day and still be a cultural Catholic. The question is will you say

yes to His will? Will you let Him be born in your life in the middle of your darkness and the dirt and everything? Will you know that every time you come to Him it is as a member of a community? Will you give the ultimate gift of your of your life for the ultimate gift of His life and have ultimate peace this Christmas? I will give you the opportunity to do this of course after Communion. So make sure that this day as Jesus comes before you say, "Jesus today is your birthday. What do You want?" And He looks at you and He looks at me and He says, "What I want is YOU." Give Jesus today what He wants. May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.