

March 4, 2012

2nd Sunday of Lent - Cycle B

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today we hear about two fathers. We hear of course in the Old Testament the story of Abraham, which is significantly cut down or edited for us to hear this morning. And then we hear about God the Father and his Son in the Gospel. And of course they go together. We have talked before about Scott Peck who wrote, when I was in high school and that those books, you know, *The Road Less Traveled* and that. Some people are only finding that now. But it has been around. We had to read it when I was in high school. And he later on converted and became Catholic, but when he was a young boy he was in Sunday school or whatever and as he was in Sunday school, he heard this story of God the Father asking Abraham to give up his son. And right there he decided he would not believe in such a god that would ask someone to kill their son. And if that is the end of the story, I would agree with him very much and so should you, unless we are nuts. The reality is, you know to go around killing our sons, our daughters, that is something the pagan gods made us do or they talked about, you know? That you had to give up, part of the thing you had to do was give up your first born to god or their pagan gods, not real God of course.

But that is not the end of the story because we didn't hear of course today in the First Reading but it says as we talked about before Isaac looks at his father and says, "Here is the fire and here is the wood for sacrifice but where is the lamb?" And what did Abraham say which we didn't hear today? "God will provide the lamb." And again so here in the New Testament, the Gospel reading today, God the Father provides the lamb, His only Son. And we don't get it sometimes, how much it cost the Father to love us. It's like he looks at Abraham and says, "Abraham please don't you dare hurt your son. I know you'd give up anything for Me. Don't you give up your son to prove that you love Me. Abraham, I will give up My Son to prove that I love you." And that is what God the Father did. And that is what we celebrate every Lent and every day, really. That God the Father loved us so much that He gave us his beloved Son. And we have to enter into that. Listen even to the Second Reading. It says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" If God did not even spare His Son, will he save anything to spare us? And the answer is no. There is nothing God won't do to get us to heaven.

And again we treat him so badly. We just do. We walk around thinking He is this ogre who is waiting for me to fall and sin and then He jumps on me and says, "See I knew you were worth nothing to begin with." And that is sometimes instead of like, this awesome God who loves us so much that He gave His Son. But we have to respond to that. And you know again I was just down in Atlanta and I was preaching a parish mission, but anyway so after, I was talking to them, I just said, "You know, I really don't think any of us get it, including myself. That when God comes and we pray the first thing we have to do is what Abraham did. He listened to God. And Abraham, when God called him by name, "Abraham." "Yes." "Go take your son, your only one, whom you love," that when we come before God in our prayer, we listen. Now let's just take for instance, hopefully and this is a big hopeful that every one of you prayed before you came to Mass today, correct? This isn't your first time praying when you

walked in here. You were praying this morning before you got out of bed or right after you got out of bed. You sat down and you went before the Lord and say, "Okay, Lord, here is my Sunday. I have a whole day planned, but Lord, what do You want of me?" And then, He of course spoke to you this morning. I am guessing. And He said something like, "I want you to make peace with your brother. I want you to make peace with your sister. I want you to talk to that neighbor. I want you to stop gossiping today. I want you to stop judging today. I want you to reach out and take care of the poor. I told you to do something," like He told Abraham. Correct? "Yes, Father because we all did that this morning." And we all listen to God before we came here because we are in this daily relationship with Almighty God.

And so Abraham was in this relationship and so when God spoke Abraham heard it. When God speaks to us every day, do we hear it? Or are we like, I have told you the story before, I just love the story. I tell it at every mission. About the little old lady who goes and she would say her rosary every day in the Cathedral. Do you remember this story? And she would go in and she would go before the image of Our Lady and she would start praying her rosary every day, and she would pray her rosary. They were like one day, here in the scaffolding, once, they were up in the scaffolding once, I'd see this little lady come in every day and they'd look down and one guy says, "Let's have some fun with her." And so he sits there and goes, "Helllllooo." Nothing. The little old lady keeps saying her rosary.... "Oh I'll get her. Helllllooo." Nothing. The little old lady keeps saying her rosary.... The guys says, "I'm gonna get her this time you watch. Watch this I'm gonna get her." And he goes, "Hellllloooo, this is Jesus." And then the little old lady stops saying her rosary. She turns around and she looks up and says, "Shut up I am talking to Your mother!" And she keeps saying her little rosary, huh? And again that is the way some people are in their prayer life. Right? I am praying. Do not bother me, God. I am saying my prayers this morning. This is not about a relationship. It is about a ritual. I say my prayers every day. These are my prayers."

And again how many times have I taught this to you? How many times in the ten years I have been with you? That we must listen or we haven't prayed. We must listen or we are still doing our will. We must listen so when God says something to us as He says to Abraham, we are willing and we know it. And then we act on it. Because again, if we are not listening in prayer, God can never tell us what He wants. And if God does tell us what He wants, we can't put it into action if we are not before Him every day saying, "Hey, here I am," as Abraham did. And again, when I went to prayer this morning He took me to Luke 11:5. It's wonderful, right? Because in Luke 11:5 it is just the beginning of the Lord's Prayer. When you pray, say Father. Just say Father. That again, when I go to pray, when you go to pray, this is about such an intimate relationship, with a Father who loves you and me so much that He gave up Jesus so that we can be with Him forever. What more could Jesus, or what more could the Father ever do then what He does for us at every Mass, when He gives up His son? What He did for us at Calvary, when He gave up His son. We just have to be so appreciative of that. But be more than just appreciative, just be in this relationship that knows, "You are my Dad and You gave up everything for me. Because You are my Dad who gave up everything for me, I want to give up everything for You." And that begins by my giving up my sin because I never want to hurt Him, huh?

You know again as I was down in Atlanta, there was a bunch of people there, because I tweet now. I put my tweet on in the morning and at night. There was a bunch of people who follow me on Twitter down there and so every night they would tweet what I had said. And so again when I am talking about the Mass, talking about how much God loves us, He give everything for us, but that isn't what they tweeted about. Guess what they tweeted about? If you have been following they say if you ever leave Mass without diarrhea running down your leg, don't every come back. Remember my first homily here? However many years ago? That is the thing that got tweeted on more than anything else. And sometimes we get distracted and instead of focusing, listen, we are loved and I am going to do everything that I am going to do as a response of love. That is why Abraham was willing to give up everything for the Father. Because, he loved the Father. Are we willing to give up our sin, our pride, our selfishness, our ego, because we love the Father? Not because we are afraid of Him. How could we be afraid of a God who gave up His Son that we could live forever? If God is for us, who can be against us? The answer is nobody. So today, let's begin again. Let's decide. We will listen to God every day in prayer. And when He tells us to do something, we will hear it because we are listening and we will do it, not out of fear, but out of love. A God who has given everything for love of us that we would willingly give everything out of love for Him. You got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.