

July 13, 2014
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle A
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! Today you know it's gonna be one of those Gospels, don't you? Yeah, that's what I figured. But anyway those of you who have been praying, it's another TEC weekend and it seems like for DME weekend, I always lose my voice so, it's almost completely gone but we'll still get through it – I'll try.

Today, Jesus talks about the parable of the sower which we have heard 1,000 times in our lifetime. You know, it just talks about, we need to hear the Word of God. Hear it! Hear it! Understand it and then live it so that we bear much fruit. Now, this past week, I was watching EWTN – it was EWTN Live with Fr. Mitch Pacwa and he had Matthew Kelly. You know who Matthew Kelly is? He has the book out, Catholicism, and he does a lot of stuff. He has been in Erie and that, but he's a big speaker. And if you ever read the book Catholicism – it's a great book. But, he has another one, it talks about Dynamic Catholics. He talking about when he was up with a bunch of priests, he was going to give a talk and there was all clergy at the dinner and they were having a speaker dinner for him and he was thinking about how his talk was going to be. And one of the younger priests was complaining that he couldn't get more people to do things in the parish.

And then there was an old priest there – he had to be 80 and about 300 lbs. which was an interesting combination but the priest sat there and said, "Listen, I have been a pastor my whole life, various parishes, and it's the same 40 or 50 that do everything no matter where." Then that struck his interest, like, "Huh, I wonder how true that is?" So, he did a big survey throughout the United States of all various parishes and what he found out, according to the survey and according to all these different things is, you know, only 7% of Catholic parishioners do everything for the rest of the church. The money comes from the 7%. The volunteerism comes from the 7% and 93% of Catholic parishes are just there on Sunday. He says, "And we just kept finding this again and again and again." Now of course, he didn't study our parish because we are much more than 7%, I think as I look around, yeah – I think so.

The reality was, he was talking about the 7% people. And then he looked at what makes these 7%. There are four things that make these 7% people, across the board, this is what they do. So, I wanted to really think on this because this is what is it to really bear fruit. You can come to church every Sunday. You can hear God's Word like the people did and then not understand it, not really listen to it, not act on it and walk out. So, what does Jesus say when this happens? You know, the little that the people have, they will lose and will be given to those who are already active. So you have got to figure is "Am I part of the 7 or am I part of the 93?" The 7%, there's four things in common as I said.

The first thing is, they are people of prayer. And it's not just like, you sit down and ask and interview these 7% and they would say to them, "What does your prayer look like?" They wouldn't say, "Well, you know, I pray every day. It depends." Uh-uh – No, every one of these 7% says, "This is how I pray. Every morning I sit there and say the rosary and they do the Magnificat or they do the readings of the day, or they spend time in the Work of God, in the Bible every day, and this is committed, ritual, every single day prayer. So,

if I was to ask you the same question, "How do you pray every day?" Could you sit there and say to me, "Father, this is how I pray. Every day, I go and I meet Christ in this place. I sit there and I read the Bible or I read my Magnificat or I read some prayers or I journal or whatever it is, I say my rosary." Could you tell me that? If not, then that's something I think that's something I think we all have to work on. Do I have consistent, deliberate prayer? Is it a habit in my life? If I was to ask you how do you do it, you could tell me explicitly. You wouldn't have to sit there and say, "Well, you know, usually I pray." That doesn't get it. Consistent, ritual of prayer every day.

The second thing that they do, the 7% do, is they have consistent study of the faith. Not just study like reading books, but reading spiritual books, yes, but listening to CDs you know of weird priests and that. Growing in their faith, going on retreats, doing things they are going to actively grow, being a part of a Bible study. but they are somehow invested in this and they do that by using resources that help them grow as Catholics. So, again, if I was to ask you if you are a member of the 7% or the 93%, do you have ways that you are consistently growing as a Catholic? Are you reading Spiritual books? Are you reading and listening to CDs that helps you grow into a more deeper understanding of the mass or confession? What are you doing to study? Are you a member of the 7% or the 93%?

And think about how sad that is – that 7% of the people in the Catholic Church in the United States do everything in the parishes and 93% don't do anything except show up on Sunday. How very sad for that 93%. Again, I'm not saying it's this way here because when I look out here, especially this mass and it's like we are about 90%, I think here who participates, but we can all grow.

The third thing that these people do is he calls it they are "crazy generous." Crazy generous. What crazy generous is, like for instance, he asked Pastors to identify these 7% of people that are very active in volunteering and that in the parish. He interviewed one woman. And the woman said, she was very active in the parish but she said, "You shouldn't interview me, you should interview my friend." "Well, why would you say your friend is more generous than you?" "Because," she said, "I had cancer and she was a nurse with me at the hospital I work at and when I had cancer, she organized all these people to fill in for my space so that I got paid completely." Matthew Kelly asked her, "How long did that go on?" "Four years." So, these people are crazy generous.

And then he's talking to one person, you know, and he's talking about how much money he gives and Matt Kelly says, "I don't think you have to worry about the money." He says, "No, no, no – if you're not generous with your money, you're not generous with anything else because money rules our lives." So, he talks about these 7% are people that are crazy generous with their money, with their time. They are always trying to give and give and that's part of who they are. Again, you have to watch because I have a priest friend, who will be nameless, but he's not a generous person at all. And I often say to him, like if we're all going to dinner, he would never even think about picking up the check – not even think about it. And so, I put up with that for a while and then I say, "Excuse me, it's your turn." And he just sits there and says, "Well, that just isn't the way I was brought up." "Well, it's time to change, sir. It's time to change." So, you can't sit there and say, "Well, this is the way I was brought up. We weren't taught to be generous." Well, you're not dead yet. You can learn to be crazy generous.

And with the generosity thing as I've said before, "Can you ever out give God in generosity? No. So if you think well I give 20% or I give my time and my energy, I won't have anything left." Really? So God is not faithful. You just show up here just in case. If God isn't faithful, then what are you doing here? God is crazy generous with you. And He says the more generous you are with your time and talents, the more He will bless you. It's just that simple.

The last thing of the four things that the people of the 7% do is they have an evangelical spirit which means they have an evangelist, they want to bring others to God. That it's not just something where it's a personal thing, "Oh, me and Jesus, we spend time with each other every day." No, no – they want others to experience the joy of Christ. They want other to experience their happiness. They want others to experience their peace. They are not in any way self-centered but they want others to share in who Jesus Christ is.

This is the 7%. This is what Matthew Kelly calls the "dynamic Catholic." This is when we listen to the Gospel today, these 7%, are the people who the Word of God is sewed into their heart. It takes root and it produces much fruit. Much fruit. And so, the way that we can really tell if we are the 7% or the 93% is the fruit that's being born in our faith and in our life. Now again, as I look out, we have so much more than 7% here in our parish. But we all need to go some more.

So, those four things I would encourage you to meditate on this week. How is your prayer? How's your study? How's your generosity? And how is your evangelization? Do you have a heart for the lost? If any of those things need growth, say, "Okay Lord, help me to grow in these areas so I can truly be a person who bears much fruit." You got it? You get it? You gonna do it? That wasn't that hard. Oh, I can be much worse – that was just a little – stepping, anyway.