

March 1, 2015
Second Sunday of Lent - Cycle B
Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. If you don't mind, we're going to stand right here today. When we listen to the First Reading, often we come before God and say, "God, what can you do for me? This is what I want You to do for me. I want You to bless me, I want You to take care of my family, I want You to give me strength, I want You to make sure I'm healthy and make sure dat-dat-dat." But today, God turns everything around. He says "Abraham, I want you to do something for me." And you wonder if God said this to us if He turned the tides on us in our prayer and says, "Listen, this is what I want you to do." And what He asks of Abraham, He asked him to give up His promise that God says he would make his offspring numerous and this was the child of blessing. Would he give up his vision, would he give up his hopes, would he give up everything for the love of God? So he says, "Abram, take your son, Isaac, your only one whom you love and offer him to Me?"

And it reminded me about a thing I talked about before but I used to have it on.....I tweeted it this morning, when I used to have it on my wall, and it says "Sometimes I think I have fully surrendered and then He asked me for something that I am not willing to give up. What is it in our lives that we're not willing to give up for God? And yet when He asked that, that's the exact thing He asks us to give up. Sometimes the little things like the beginning of this week, I was in LA and it was wonderful in LA. I got off the plane and it was raining and I thought it doesn't rain in LA and the next day, 75 every day, pure sun, every day. I'm in bed every day with 103 temperature, gagging, taking these pills to get me through the talk at night and I'd be like literally like passing out for six days. I'm thinking, "Lord this isn't very nice." But the reality is there are no souls left in purgatory. Father Wright can stop saying his masses now, I got them all out. (Audience – laughs).

But the reality is that sometimes, again we come before God and say, God when I come to You, You're going to bless me and everything is going to be fine. I'm going to enjoy life and everything is going to be this perfect thing, and then we get Lent, and then we get this story of Abraham, and he says, "no I want everything from you, everything." And so we got to sit there and say, "Ok Lord, You proved that You loved me by giving me everything. I need to prove that I love You by giving you everything." And so I got to think about those things I am not willing to give up, the self-will, the little things that I say God has to do for me if I am going to be His follower. I am going to say, "OK Lord, here's what I do." When you and I finally surrender that which we hold back, that's when we are finally free. And that's when we are finally blessed.

You know I've told the story a thousand times, and if you go next door into the chapel, you see when you walk into the chapel and when you turn the lights on, that picture of Abraham, and his son Isaac below him. It says, you know when God says to Abraham "Give up your son". When Abraham goes to do it, God stops him and says, "Don't you dare! I know you would hold nothing back from Me." And then what does God do, as we have talked about before as Lent is about, God the Father looks at us and says, don't you give up your son to prove your love for Me, I'll give up My son to prove My love for you." So every time we come into a Catholic Church, every time we look at a crucifix, that's God the Father saying, this is how I prove My

love for you. I give up everything for you. The only thing when He asked us to give up everything, when we're willing to do it, He gives it back to us and then blesses us a thousand times more.

The whole point is that the call of God is to trust Him, no matter what, trust Him. Do we ever think that when God ask us to give up our little things that we hold onto, that we're going to lose out in generosity? Do we ever really think that we can ever be more generous than Almighty God? And the answer again, and again, and again, is no, never, can't be done. So as we enter this Lent, more deeply and He proves His love for us by giving us Jesus, what am I willing to give up every day to prove my love for Him? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.