

February 12, 2017 – 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle C
Father Larry Richards

Good Evening! How are you? Even in the snow? Of course, we're blessed because of the things the Lord gives us, not just the physical things but we get to receive Jesus today, we have been saved by His blood, etc., etc., etc. But today what we are going to do is focus on the readings and we begin with the first reading and it says primarily, basically, God gives you what you want. Right? You get to choose and whatever you choose, that's what you get. Again, it isn't just in the external reality, you know, it's what we choose in our heart.

I think it was just a couple of weeks ago, I told you about Sr. Bridget McKenna. Did I tell you the story of when I was in Rome, or was I doing that somewhere else, I don't know. I get la-la sometimes and forget where I'm at. Years ago, in 1990, I was at the worldwide retreat for priests. St. John Paul II was there. St. Mother Teresa was there. Sr. Bridget McKenna who by God's Grace will be a saint one day by God's grace, although she is still alive. She is a very holy woman and I still wear a miraculous medal around my neck that she had given all of us at the worldwide retreat for priests. She got up to everybody and she said to all the priests, "Oh Fathers, oh Fathers! Who am I to talk to you priests?" She was from Ireland in case you're wondering. "Who am I to talk to you priests? You're so holy." What she was doing was setting us up, you know that. So, she was talking about how holy we are – OK where is this coming to – and she said, "But you know, Jesus looks in your hearts and so Father, where is your heart before God? Is it filled with resentment toward your Bishop? Is it filled with anger toward others? Is it filled with judgementalness? Is it filled with lust?" You know, she went on and on and every time she opened her mouth, another head of a priest dropped down, dropped down, dropped down. My head was down the first thing out of her mouth. It was just like, Oh. Because, again what she was saying and this is what Jesus is saying today in the gospel; it's where your heart is before God that shows what we are and what we have chosen.

You know, we can choose all kinds of things for everybody to see but if our heart hasn't chosen, it hasn't been chosen. It's where our heart is and that's why it's where your heart is, is where you are before God. That means very simply: are you in love with Jesus? Have you chosen Jesus? Have you surrendered your life to Jesus? Is everything about Jesus? The way you do that is, you know, when it talks about to love God, what that means is, you know like, Ed from the parish. What's Ed's last name? Oh yeah – Root. So Ed comes up to me today and he goes, "Father you know on Saturday night they have your old programs on the radio. You know, I think you were better when you were younger." Shut up! Anyway but one of the things he says, is he says, like yesterday you were talking about you know, if you say you love God and you hate somebody else, you're a liar. I said, "Ed, I didn't say that. St. John said that. That's from the word of God." Right in the letter of John, it says if you say you love God and you hate somebody else, you're a liar.

Now, this is so important for us today because so many people decide they don't like certain people. They don't like refugees or they don't like people who don't agree with them and they go around and they feel like "I'm a good Christian". No you're not. If there's anybody, anybody in your life that you don't like, then you're not a follower of Jesus until you get right with that person. Right? Again, Dorothy Day says we love God as much as the person we like the least. So I want you to think about the

person you like the least. It might be me right now. "Yes it is, Father, as a matter of fact." That's how much you love Jesus because Jesus looks at your heart. He looks at my heart and let me give you a hint; He doesn't like what He sees in my heart sometimes, at all. Guess what? He doesn't like what He sees in your heart sometimes either - at all.

That's why we gotta choose: Jesus you need to be in charge of my heart. I give you my heart. Jesus, God is love so what must my heart be filled with? Love! Right? It has to be filled with love of these people, all people. No, we don't choose who we love and who we don't. You don't have that right if you're a follower of Jesus Christ. You cannot choose who to love and not love. In fact, Jesus says, "Love your enemies." He didn't say, "Now would you try to do that please." He said, "Do it". That's what He demands of us. It's not easy to be a follower of Christ unless we play games with our hearts and our lives and say, "Oh yeah, I believe in Jesus and I do and I think anything I want." If you are a follower of Jesus, you and I are His slaves and we do what He wants. We love who He tells us to love and He tells us to love everybody because you know what, that's what He does. Anyone that God loves, I must love. I'm not gonna do it perfectly.

I spoke with Cardinal Dolan this week, down in Owensburg, Kentucky, great and Dolan and I get along quite well because he's a nicer version of me, of course. I know him really good and we just pick on each other quite well. And so, I was asking him some questions because I needed some real answers on something. You know, when I was talking to these men and there was 1,200 men there in this little place, Owensburg, Kentucky – great, great great people. I let them have it. You know, these guys come up to me and say, "Father, thank you for kicking me in the butt. Thank you for kicking me in the butt." That's all they said. Someone said, "Are you this way at your parish"? Yes, I'm this way at my parish and the purpose isn't because I'm mean, miserable as some of you might think. It's because when I pray and I ask God, God kicks me in the butt and then I come and kick you in the butt because, guess what? We all have a long way to go. As long as we are on that journey, we're gonna be fine. As long as we say, "Jesus, I do choose you in my heart. I do want to love everybody the way you do. I want a pure heart before you." He'll answer that prayer. It's only when you say, "No, I don't want that" that you'll be damned. He said it today, didn't He? It was the opening line of Jesus. You will not enter the kingdom of heaven. That means you'll be damned. So, where is our heart before God, because that's what God looks at. If it's not where He wants it, give it to Him tonight and say, "Jesus, I give you permission. Change my heart." And He will. So, you get to make that decision. Choose to do it or choose not to do it. He'll give you what you want.

You got it? Get it? Gonna do it? May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.