

February 19, 2017 – 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A

Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? I'm blessed but I've been sick all week. I got the flu from one of you. I'm just telling you now. Someone gave it to me. Drinking all this stuff and being with everybody. I was fine and then boom; three days in bed. Just got up to do my holy hour, say mass, Dr. Ray was here on Thursday. We filmed thirteen episodes of the Season 7 of the Live with Dr. Ray or Living Well with Dr. Ray. And then I had my radio program and then I had to drive to Toronto and I did three talks yesterday in Toronto, drove back last night and I'll have the masses today, do the baptisms, get in the car after the 8 o'clock mass tonight, drive to Pittsburgh, get up at 3:30 in the morning and fly out at 6 a.m. from Pittsburgh to Wichita, Kansas and I'll be in Wichita all week doing a parish mission. So you got to pray for me as things go on because I'm still like awe.....so I'm saying, I hope I don't build myself back up to fall down to be in bed all this next week. Anyway, enough about me. It has nothing to do with anything.

We're listening today to the Gospel, and, if you didn't get it, the theme for the Gospel and the readings were "Be Holy." Did you get that? But isn't it amazing when we talk about this holiness, each one whether it's being perfect as your heavenly Father is being perfect, is you're the temple of the Holy Spirit, the temple is holy, or whether you hear in the Old Testament, "be holy, and it says, love others, be good to your enemies, "whatever that holiness doesn't have anything to do with us. Right? It's all about God and it's all about others. And that is the exact opposite of what we've learnt. Or, you know, some of the traditions it's had about us and what we think about holiness is. Too often we think about holy people as they do these holy things and they look holy, holy, holy, you know, and you go they are so holy.

And as I talked about before appearances can be quite deceiving. You might think someone's holy and yet have no idea what going on in their hearts. We can never tell just because someone appears to be holy. The appearance of holiness has to be acted on which means, a holy person according to the scriptures again today, right? Like that's a nice cross, right? But it doesn't makes us holy does it? No. It's how we act, correct? What a good priest you going to be. You're going to be the best, the best, the best. I know. And it's says, after it's says in the First Reading, it says, "Be holy for I am holy." And then it says, "You shall not bear hatred for your brother or sister in your heart." That's what holiness is about. About how we treat one another. So if you're thinking about how I'm going to be holy, oh, I'll go to mass or I'll go to daily mass, I'll say ten rosaries every day. I will never have an impure thought ever the rest of my life. You're on the wrong track. Holiness is about how you treat your enemies. Holiness is about how you treat those that don't like you.

How can you read the reading today and consider yourself a good Christian? I can't. Because I don't do anything in that Gospel today, do I? Do you, I should say. And it's sits there and says, "You have heard it said, an eye for an eye, but I say," now listen, who of us would do this, "I saved you, offer no resistance to one who is evil." I offer great resistance to evil. I can't stand Planned Parenthood. I prayed for it to be cursed forever. I pray for it to die. But the difference is

it says, "no one who is evil." So I can go against Planned Parenthood, I just can't go against the person who runs Planned Parenthood who has the same name as me but that's all beside the point. "When someone strikes you on the right cheek turn the other one as well." Now again, I might do this once, someone slaps me in the one face I'll turn around and give him the other, then I'll knock him out. Right? It doesn't say what to do after you turn the other cheek, let him have it. Bam! Okay, I feel much better now.

Okay, this is what it is to be a Christian. If we were to take this Gospel today and say this is what it is, not being impure, not have, this is what the Gospel is. Let's try it on. Who of us can say we're followers of Jesus? It's a very hard reality. What we do is we listen to this when it comes up once a year, whatever, and we let it go one in one ear, and go out the other and continue to live my life the way I live my life. Is that not correct? Because again and it as goes on. "If someone wants your tunic hand him your coat as well." Oh sure, sure. "Should anyone press you to go with them one mile oh go with him two. Go to the one who ask you. Never turn your back on the borrower." Never turn your back on the borrower. So every time someone asks you, every time you give to them. That's what it says. So this is the Gospel of The Lord. The holiness that God calls us to.

So what are we going to do with this? I think the first thing we need to do is acknowledge this is what God wants of me. Whether I like it, whether I don't. Whether I think I can do it, whether I don't think I can do it. This is God's will for me or He wouldn't tell me to do that. These are the exact words of Jesus Christ. This isn't Paul, later, or Timothy, or someone else. Jesus says this to us. Oh....so the first that I got to do is acknowledge just what God wants.

The second thing I got to do is surrender my heart to Jesus, and say, Jesus I can't. I just can't. But You can. So Jesus You live inside of me. I give You permission to live that kind of life in me. Because left up to myself Jesus when I turn the other cheek, I'm going to knock the guy out. It's just that simple. But if You don't want me to do that then You got to take more control of my life. Because in my humanity, I don't have the power to do things like that; this call that You're giving me. Again, it's easy for us to sit there and focus on ourselves and focus on whether I'm doing holy things or not, but, that's not what holiness is about if you listen to the readings today. It's about how I treat others. And then, again, when I tweeted it this morning and I just say, you know, please, it's hard to love your enemies. That's what it says. So love your enemies.

So again, like Derek Sanford was here again the other day and he talked about when he was here talked about the Good Samaritan and he explains the Good Samaritan. And you know, we all have, you know, to Jewish people the Samaritan was someone they don't like. And then, Derek says, so the best way to sit there and explain that is to replace the Good Samaritan with a member of Isis. A member of Isis comes along, Father Larry walks by and leaves the person there, Derek Sanford walks by leaves the person there, a member of Isis comes along and picks him up and takes care of him. And every one of us there and you can tell that some of the people especially the really anti-Isis people that were there, that wrote the letter I explained to you last week, were all like, how dare you? But that's exactly the way the Jewish people thought when Jesus said a Samaritan came.

When He says love our enemies this is very radical people. And this is something that we cannot just play with and let it go in one ear and out the other but we have to bring it on. Would I love a member of Isis if they were in this congregation? And most of us and if we're honest with ourselves we say no. It's this simple. But is that God's will for us? No. He wants us to love our enemies. And I would think that everyone here could say that Isis is an enemy to all of us right now. So what does He say? He says, "love them." Oh.....and then He says to, "pray for those who persecute you." So okay Lord it's impossible for me to do these things. You take control of my life more. You Lord Jesus help me.

And then what do I got to start doing is, I would just think that for all of us, I talked to you before about having a piece of paper and praying for people that need prayer for. On that piece of paper also I start putting the people on there that you can't stand, your enemies and start praying for them intensely as you pray for your family members. And then when you and I start doing that kind of stuff then God can start doing more things in our heart. Then we can become like God. Because again, think again about who God is. God who created everybody and loves everybody wants us to be like Him.

Again, not easy. But if we desire and know that's this is what God's want in me, I say Lord You have to take more control of my heart and love these people through me because I can't. And then start praying for them specifically. Then we'll be on the road to holiness and we'll start living what God wants us to live and not just what we think He wants. He's very explicit today about what He wants for us and from us. We either listen and obey or disobey, but we can't do nothing with it. You got it? Get it? Going to try to live it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.