

March 5, 2017 – 1st Sunday of Lent – Cycle A
Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning! How are you? Blessed!

Yesterday I was up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Friday and Saturday I was there and came back into Pittsburgh at 9:38. Drove up here and got to bed at midnight. Woke up did the other mass, and now this mass, at 3:00 I got to go out to the airport, and fly to Jacksonville, Florida. I know shut-up. I'll be there until Friday, and Friday I fly from there to Grand Rapids, for another Men's Conference. I'll come back Saturday evening God willing. So please pray for me.

But as I was on my way to Green Bay on Friday, I was getting in line. They let the First Class in first as always, I always fly Delta, then they let the people who fly priority, which I am, so I get in line, getting ready, and as I'm going in there's all these other people coming with me, and they call us and we get up and go in line, a guy goes and pushes me away. He jumps in front of me. In my mind, I called him a bad word, but it came out of my lips at the same time, and I won't tell you what I called him. Except it's a stinky part of the orifice of the body of a person. That's all I will say. And so, as soon as I said it, I was thinking I'm in full clerics, people know me, here's this priest. "Oh is that Fr. Larry Richards?" I felt like garbage. He turned around to me, and I let him have it. Now I know nobody here is surprised I would do something like this. Not in the least bit. But I was surprised and I was just feeling bad about the whole thing and thought if the plane goes down I'm going to hell. The reason I was feeling bad, is I was a bad example, but it all had to do with me, it didn't have anything to do with the man, I thought I was better. I could have hit him, but I just said that word.

I was thinking what the heck is it with us and sin? Especially our core sins that come up again and again. And so Jesus, first off all, in the second reading, God tells us Jesus is the one who fixes our sins, right? He paid for our sins, not Larry Richards, I don't pay for my sins, Jesus does, and so often I can see the cheap grace, make excuses about that. "You know I'm just a sinner, I just say these things, I have anger issues, but Jesus has paid for my sins." No that's not right, it's not right if I do these things, it's not right if you do these things. It's not right when we sin. Yet, we all do it, so don't sit there and say "I can't believe you did that Father." You've done the same thing. May not like I do, but we've all done stupid things. Period.

Now, Jesus is telling us how to deal with our sins, how to deal with our temptations, and we see two examples of that right? We see the first example of the First Testament, and the devil comes and he tempts Eve, and she falls. I fell. That's the thing we don't want to do. That's the thing that's wrong, the thing we have to confess. But then Jesus shows us how to deal with temptation, now in Him. So the first thing that happens is that He goes and is led by the Holy Spirit, into the desert to be tempted... for us. We are always going to be tempted every day of our lives. So the first thing we are going to do is be led by the Holy Spirit. It's interesting isn't it that the way Jesus goes and He deals with temptation is the Spirit had just come upon at His

what? Baptism. God the Father looked at Him and said “you are my beloved Son with whom I’m pleased.” That gave Him the strength to deal with temptation from the devil.

So the first thing you and I have got to do, is if you and I don’t have this daily surrender to the Holy Spirit we need to. We need to remember who are before God that you and I in Jesus are beloved daughters and beloved sons of the Father and again when we do this, we do not have to be protecting ourselves, we don’t have to be going out of ourselves, we don’t have to be going crazy. Most of us, including myself, goes most crazy, when we forget who we are. It doesn’t fill our pride to know we are a beloved son or daughter. It gives you humility. Me with all my sins, me with all my faults, I’m still beloved to you God? Yep! We are still beloved. That’s who we are. We can be ashamed when we’ve done things wrong. We can be better than that, as beloved sons or daughters of the Father.

So first of all you gotta know who you are, the second thing that happens is that when He confronts the devil, He confronts the devil using the Word of God. He takes the Word of God and He shoves it down the devil’s throat. Now the devil tries to throw back at the second temptation “well the Word of God says...” That’s the lie he was using, he was taking the Word of God and perverting it, Jesus who is God, who is the Word of God, and then again one final time takes the Word of God and shoves it down the devil’s throat. Now for this we got to remember who lives inside of you? Jesus. So the Word of God who conquered Satan today in the Bible, in the gospel, is the same Word of God who lives in you and me. So the point of it is, we get out of the way. If we try to do the fighting our self. We lose. We let Jesus do it for us. The way we do that is through the Power of the Holy Spirit but also by using the Word of God, and shoving it down the devil’s throat. So what do I mean by that?

You gotta know, we all have our core sins correct? You know what your core sins are and you all know my core sins. We know our core sins. I know them quite well for myself. We need to learn Scriptures that deal with our sin. If you struggle with lust, find Scriptures that deal with lust. Put it in Google and all the Scriptures you find that deal with lust you find one or two that is going to give you the strength. You memorize that and when you’re being tempted, you use that, you verbalize that, and you shove it down the devil’s throat, and the devil will run from you too. You don’t do it, it’s the Word of God who has the power and its Jesus who is the Word of God within that will deal with the devil.

Now there is one other thing if you are entrenched in our sins and Jesus shows us this and it’s especially important in Lent. What did Jesus do when He was tempted? Before He was being tempted He did what? Remember in the Scriptures today? He fasted. If you and I really struggle with lust or anger and different things and you want to deal with it. Then I’d encourage you to start fasting and ask the Lord to set you free from that through fasting. That’s the one thing that takes all this to the next level that really sets us free. Because why? When we fast, we empty ourselves of self and then God fills ourselves with Him. Right? So today we are given hope from the Second Reading that it’s Jesus who dealt with me and my sin. Then though that doesn’t give me an excuse to sin, it gives me a desire all the more to deal with my sin. I have this daily prayer

to the Holy Spirit that I say every day. That I realize through the Holy Spirit who I am. I am a beloved son or daughter of the Father and in this power when I'm coming and being tempted by the devil, I get out of the way and let Jesus who is inside of me with His Word. I take that Word and shove it down the devil's throat. Then our struggle with temptation will have the same effect as Jesus, the devil left Him, the devil will leave us. That great last line of the Gospel is what? Do you know? And the angels came and ministered to Him.

Your same Angel, your Guardian Angel that was given to you at birth. The angels will then come and minister to you and to me. So Jesus teaches us how to overcome the devil, overcome sin, how to overcome temptation. If we listen, we too will be victorious in Him.

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