

September 10, 2017 – 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Cycle A
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? Blessed indeed! We listen to the readings today and the 2nd one is what we are gonna look at it - the all three readings through the eyes or the lens of the 2nd reading. The 2nd reading starts and says, "Oh, no debt to anyone except the debt that we love one another. Love fulfills the law." So this got to be, this is the summary or the gospels, right? When we talk about God, God is love, right? So, how do you square that when you get the gospel and the gospel sat there and Jesus says if someone sins against you, first go and tell that person one on one. If they don't listen to you, take a friend. If they don't listen to you and the friend, tell the church. If they don't listen to you and the church, then treat them as you would a publican and a tax collector which means according to Jesus, how do we treat publicans and tax collectors? We love them. So, it still has to do with that. We, love is to do everything for someone else's salvation.

So, the purpose of our life must be so you sit there and think, "Why and I created? Why do I exist?" You exist very simply. I exist very simply: to love the way God loves. Remember, He says in John 13:34, "This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you" Verse 35: "This is how all people know you're my disciples by your love for one another." So, this has gotta be the purpose of our life. You know, so it can't be "so what's your purpose". "Well, I don't know. I'm supposed to be a good person." No. The purpose of your life is to love like God.

Now, we all know what it is to love like man. We know what that is: how to love your spouse, how to love your children, how to love those who love you. That's easy for all of us, normally. To love like God is very difficult. What does that look like? To love like God means that first of all we love those who hate us. We love our enemies, right?

Now again, I remember a couple months ago I gave a homily on loving our enemies, how we are called to love members of Isis and a woman wrote to me

and said, "I'm so sick that my kids had to listen to a homily like that. How dare you! We're called to kill our enemies." So I told her to, uh, I ain't gonna say it.

Anyway so, but again though, people that are like that, that sit there and think that we're not called to love our enemies have not heard the gospel, have they? There is no other way around it – we must love our enemies. Period. That means that we want them to be saved and we do everything in our power to save them.

The second thing of what's it look to love like God is that we must forgive those that have hurt us. Right? We must forgive who – everyone who's hurt us. And that means, you and I gotta go through am I living a life where I have a forgiving heart for anyone who's hurt us and again we've talked about it before; it's meaning that we're making the act of the will. God, I forgive them. I ask you to forgive them. We're not disciples unless we're doing this.

The third thing that I want to focus on that makes us love like God is we take care of the poor, right? We love the poor. Again, if you haven't, if you're not on my Facebook or Twitter pages like that, I encourage you to go to YouTube and just type in my name and the Atlanta Eucharistic Congress and watch the video. For those of you who think I'm harder on you than I am to other people, watch the video because in there, I let these poor people have it and I was the last speaker. Cardinal Tobin and then six speakers later was me – no break. I just sat there and I said, "Listen, we must first of all never speak truth unless you love people first. If you don't love the people, keep your mouth shut". Period – in my gentle way.

I had dinner with Fr. Nick on Friday at my house and there was a bunch of other people there and he says, "Larry, you know you're very blue collar." Can you imagine and am I? Yes, I'm very blue collar and I'm happy and proud of that and I don't care. You know, I'm very, very blue collar. But then, I sat there and I says, and again all these years, as a priest, people come to confession to me constantly, and that's a great thing they come to confession and "I had a dirty thought or I had this", I get it.

Do you take care of the poor? "No, Father" and they never change. People who go in there every week, like Fr. Wright says go every two weeks, that's a lie, don't listen to Fr. Wright. Once a month is plenty, trust me on this.

Anyway, it drives me crazy – two different things being preached from the same pulpit: once a month unless you have mortal sins and then you go running in that confessional. Anyway, people go in and they sit there and they're trying to deal with their sexuality and all that stuff and I get it but all that keeps themselves focused on who – themselves and that's not loving like God loves.

You, when you go to confession, one of the main things you have to focus on is: are you loving the way God loves? Are you taking care of the poor and if you aren't, you're gonna start, correct? Because if not, I can't forgive you even if I give you absolution. If you have no heart that's gonna start taking care of the poor, even if I give you absolution, it doesn't cut it. You're still in your sin. You die – you go to hell? Isn't that miserable?

But you need to know that because that's what Matthew 25 talks about. So you gotta make sure that you have a forgiving heart, that you forgive others when you go to confession or even if I give you absolution, does it take? No, that you love your enemies and you need to know that when you go to confession. Those are the things you need to focus on when you and I go to confession. Am I living my purpose? Am I loving like God loves? If not, what are we called to do – to repent. That means to change. We don't go back in there and say, "I don't take care of the poor two weeks ago or I don't take care of the poor a month ago, oh, I don't take care of the poor". Well then, you don't have a heart that's changing so you're wasting your time coming to see me because even if I give you absolution, you're not forgiven, cause you don't have a repentant heart.

So when God tells us in the second reading today that owe no debt to anyone except for that we love one another, love fulfills the law. This is what we must do – period. We must love the way God loves. Is it easy – no – but it will help you and I live forever because heaven's the place of love and we learn to love here so that we enjoy heaven. So examine our conscience and I'll do mine. Is this the purpose of our life: to love the way God loves? If not, we need to repent and change our lives that we live the way God lives and love the way God loves.

Got it? Get it? Gonna live it? May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.