

November 23, 2017 – Thanksgiving Mass
Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning and how are you? Blessed! We are blessed! As you hear every year this is my favorite, favorite, favorite holiday! My favorite one, my favorite one, yep it's my favorite one because we just come to say thanks to God. It's just a time where we don't have to buy any gifts, for the women you have to do a lot of cooking, sorry, some of the guys, but the rest, it's just Thanksgiving. It's just Thanksgiving, it's just Thanksgiving, and it's a joy when we can come and we almost have a full church, thank you for coming to Mass that was very nice.

And when we come, what we do, I purposely put this picture on the booklet, if you look at it, on the gospel and I put this together because if you see what's happening here is the beggar comes and he lays at the feet of Jesus and gives thanks. And that's of course exactly what happened, one of them realizing that he had been healed returned glorifying God in a loud voice and he fell at the feet of Jesus and he thanked Him. This is something we have to do on Thanksgiving but every day, to fall on our faces and thank God. Why? Because when we fall on our faces we really mean, we're really grateful. You know it is one thing to say "oh thank you that's very nice of you." But to fall on our face before God? So the first thing I encourage ya to do today is, sometime in your prayer, you don't have to do it in a loud voice in front of everybody it would take too long. I was gonna make everybody come up here and take turns but I thought we'd be here until tonight, it could be a good thing. But in your own time today, you go and fall on your face and thank Him for all the blessings He gave you.

This morning I was up as always, this morning I got up at 5:15 to do my holy hour and I began falling on my face in front of the God of the Universe, just thanking Him, now what's the first thing we should be thanking God for and everywhere, that Jesus died on the cross for us. Thank you! That's exactly right. The four of you that got it. The reality is that's the most important thing that could ever happen to you. As Jesus Christ died on the cross, and we should be forever for that. We should be people who every day who says thank you Jesus for dying on the cross for me. Thank you.

You know I was just dealing with a friend of mine, who just fell from grace and different things so I wrote him an email and I says "Listen, I know all this happened to you, but I want you to know you have to sit in the arms of the Father and you have to let Him love you. And the Father and I love you and we will always love you." And this person who has been petrified to even deal with me, was so grateful. And he's talking about how he's finally learnt that God's love isn't conditioned on by what we do, God's love is God's love. He loves us completely and I just emailed him back and says "Well thanks be to God, you finally discovered what Grace is."

We should be so grateful to God for the grace that He loves us because He loves us, not because what we do. He died for us to save us, not for what we do for Him. He died for you before you even liked Him, He died for you. The first thing we should always fall on our faces

before God is that we thank Him for dying and taking on our sins upon Himself and that's when we start knowing that we are blessed.

And so then what I want to encourage you to do is then we start living this. There's a bunch of ways I'm going to suggest we start living this but the first way I'm going to suggest is you start a thank you journal. You know a journal to God, where you find at least one thing you are thankful for and you thank God for it. Because again we find what we look for, right? Now most of us, most especially me, the way I was taught in seminary so often was that you always, you know, like again, we might have been doing 99 good things in our life but our prayer life is good, I'm talking from experience here I'm telling ya, but our prayer life is doing good, and our other things, and there's one thing but BAM, and every evaluation; you know you have this, this, and this. You gotta change this, this, and this if you're gonna be a good priest. And so we're constantly looking for what was worst in a person. And that's what makes us pastors right? We are always looking for what isn't going right. Everything else, ah there you go I got it. And that's what we become. And we start looking for it. And we all do this, somehow we've been patterned to look for what's going wrong in people. Instead of what's right, so if we decide we are going to be people who start looking every day for something to be grateful for and then we write that down. Wouldn't that be a different way to do things? To sit there and go "Listen Lord I am grateful for you today." It's not just about how bad I am and how much you have to help me and dah ta dah, but I'm grateful. And if you can't find anything else to feel grateful for you can always be grateful for that Jesus died on the cross for you. Even on that bad, worst, worst day.

So that would be one thing. Another, I read a couple years ago a great book, it was called, I can't remember exactly what it was called but one man decided every day for 365 days he was going to write a thank you note to somebody in his life. Can you imagine? That every day you would write somebody a thank you for something they did for you. And it wouldn't be just in your close family, but someone who was nice to you. He would do this and he said what happened, it was an interesting book because he started changing inside, what he started doing exteriorly, he started doing inside and then he found himself being more grateful for things and he looked for things to be more grateful for, because every day he had to write a letter to someone of gratitude and so he had to look for it. Can you imagine if we started looking for it?

Another thing you could do, you and I can decide that if you can't do it every day we do it once a week for a year or maybe we do it for a month, every day, I don't know but just something to think about. Another thing we can do is those of us who are on Facebook and Twitter and everything else let me give you a hint, some of ya I can't stand looking at them I'm just telling ya now because it's always a controversy and you're always going to make a comment. WHY? Is what I wanna know. Just why? Why can't you sit there and instead of your thing, let's try to be for a year that every day on your social network, on your Facebook, on your Twitter, instead of talking about the Pope, instead of talking about the people who don't agree with you, just say something you are grateful for today, could you imagine? If you just put every day something you are grateful for online instead of something you want to complain about today or show how smart you are or show how great you are or show who's on your side or who

isn't. Could you imagine? You might even get more followers when people sit there and not only see negative that come out of you or see controversial things or things that are going to make you go "oh!" and if you can't just do that, do your other stuff but put at least one thank you every day, wouldn't that be different? And then again what would happen? You'd start thinking attitudes of gratitude. You'd start thinking I'd gotta say something nice today online. Oh what am I going to be grateful for today?

But you see how if we start as a people of God who always have something to be grateful for that that's what we start looking for first. Instead of all the other things. Today let this Thanksgiving be the day where it's harder to change our heart that we do every day come before the Lord and thank Him, fall on our faces before Him. That we do every day look for the good in people and we learn to have that gratitude for people and proclaim that. And then we start looking for the good and not always the bad and we will be people of gratitude.

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