

December 10, 2017 – 2nd Sunday of Advent - Cycle B
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? Blessed indeed. I love the first reading, of course. It's a very ancient reading and we sing about it at Christmas: "Comfort ye, give comfort to my people." It's great. Oh, God tells us we need our sins expiated, we need comfort and that makes us feel good. Then we listen to the second reading and it talks about the world ending in fire. You better be ready because He's gonna come and you go "Oh, maybe I'm not so comforted after all." But the reality is, you know, and again, especially, with that second reading, people talk about, Peter's clear that the world is gonna end. The elements will be fire and so some people talk that the world will end with a nuclear war. We'll just blow each other up and that should really scare us and yet God says comfort, give comfort to my people.

So, how do we get comfort in the midst of all the struggles, in the midst of all the fears that we have on this earth. I think there's three things we need to do. We need to be patient. We need to have hope and we need to be in love. OK? Be patient, have hope, and be in love.

The first thing, we need to be patient. God is patient with us it says in the second reading, before it talks about how God is gonna come back and He wants everyone to be saved. The will of God isn't to get us and damn us. The will of God is to save us and so He's patient with us. So, we need to be patient with ourselves. As long as we're on the road, we shouldn't constantly be focused on ourselves but we need to make sure. You know when I was praying yesterday, I was sitting there reflecting on my life, as you know, you have to always do an examination of conscience. I was so stuck with how selfish I could be, and I know I'm the only person here that's very selfish sometimes – nobody else. But your pastor can be a selfish individual. I was just repenting of that before the Lord. I said, "Lord, what the heck is the matter with me" and there's lots of reasons for it, but that doesn't matter. The reality is, that I gotta sit there and just keep getting up, and keep going on the way of holiness that God's calling us to, right? That's what the second reading is about – how holy we should be. Then we look

at ourselves and realize we're not. As long as we're on the road; as long as we keep getting up when we fall; as long as we keep going and say "Jesus, I want Your will more than I want my next breath, but this walking with You isn't always easy". So, be patient with yourself because God is patient with us. He wants you to be saved. So we need to be patient.

The second thing we need, is we need to have this hope in God, you know, because when He says that God's coming, every reading talks about that God is coming. For some people, God coming, that scares them but it should be the last thing it does is scare us because even all these readings talk about, except for the second, because Jesus had already come. When it talks about Jesus coming, it talks about Jesus coming as the savior, to save us. So, we would be ecstatic and hopeful when God is coming. When we say the Lord's Prayer today and we say "Thy kingdom come", we're praying for God to come and save us, not get us, save us. Right?

Remember, next Monday, not tomorrow, but next Monday will be our penance service and I always preach the penance service on Advent and it's less than eight minutes. I always use the same reading: "You will name Him Jesus, why, because He will save His people from their sins." So everybody's gonna come to the penance service, because some of you haven't been to confession in a while, and you need to be saved. You can't do it yourself. You can't sit there and say, "I'll just go to Jesus and tell Him I'm sorry." Excuse me – you didn't just hurt Jesus when you sinned, you hurt all of us. So, the priest represents Jesus and the rest of the body. If you go and say you hurt someone that you love and you don't say a word to them but you go to Jesus and you say, "Jesus, I'm so sorry I hurt that person I love, my spouse." What's He gonna say? You go to them and ask them for their forgiveness - don't just come to me – you go to them. So, when we sin, it's always communal. There's no such thing as "I just hurt me and Jesus so I just have to go to Jesus."

No, no, no. When you and I sin, we hurt the whole body of Christ so we need to be forgiven by the whole body of Christ, not just Jesus. So, He gave us priests to represent the whole body and Him, so you need to go to confession for Christmas. So next Monday, there will be eight confessors here. We'll have an eight minute penance service, and we'll start, and we'll keep going until the last

person's in line. So, come to confession on Monday. But anyway, when we know that Jesus comes and He wants to save us. He wants us to be saved so we gotta have this hope that God is always on our side. That God isn't out to get us; He's out to save us.

But then the third thing is, the best way to prepare ourselves is for when Jesus comes for us to be people in love with Him and people in love with others. Now again, love is one of the hardest things we ever do because love puts other people in front of us. Love kills selfishness. That's why when I was struggling with my own selfishness, it is saying I'm not as loving as I need to be in any way, shape, or form. What we gotta do is sit there and think, "Do I put myself first before God? Or do I put myself first before others? Or do I put God first and do I put others first". If not, then what we gotta do is, I can tell you what I've done since I've been ordained almost 28-29 years ago, whatever it is now. Every time I go to mass and I've told you this before, every time, every day I'm at mass, every time I hold up Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament, in His body and in His blood, I make the same prayer: "Increase my love for you and for your people. Increase my love for you and for your people." That is a prayer that all of us could say every day. You can never say no to that prayer, right? You ain't gonna say, "No, I'm not gonna do it. Nope, you're not gonna get that one." You and I, if we're praying every day to love God more and to love others more, we have nothing to worry about if He comes in fire and the world ends today because that's what it is ultimately about: to love God above all things and to love others more than we love ourselves, that way Jesus did on the cross.

So, just a little bit of encouragement that:

- 1) We be patient with ourselves. We keep going.
- 2) We have great hope that God is coming to save us, and
- 3) That we pray every day that we love God more and that we love others.

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