

December 25, 2017 – Midnight Mass – Cycle B
Fr. Larry Richards

Merry Christmas! How are you? Blessed! Yeah we are blessed on this most holy of nights! It used to be, and still is, that Midnight Mass is my favorite mass of the year. But as I am getting older I have to take naps before I can come to say mass so I had to take a nap with the dogs and then I woke up and go “okay we gotta get going here.”

But as we focus on Christmas and what’s happening here, there’s Jesus came and He did there things for us, there’s many more but the three things I’m going to focus on tonight is the first thing Jesus did is He came to save us. Right? We hear in the gospel, a savior is born for you, for you, for you, that the reason Jesus came was to save you; to save me. I don’t know about you but I need a Savior. The more I live my life, the older I get, the more I know I need a Savior. That I need someone to save me... from me. From my sins, and I got a lot of them as you all know. But I need a savior and Jesus came to save me and He came to save you. One of those things that should make us so grateful, that someone else paid for my sins, that someone else saved me, from me. That’s what Jesus was born for, was to save us. A savior will be born for you.

And then He came to prove that the Father loves us. You know the one who started this whole gift giving thing was God the Father. God the Father gave us the gift of His Son. And it says again in John 3:16 which we all know “for God so loved the world, He gave His only Son.” And think about it, if God so loved the world He gave His only Son, that all who believe in Him may not die, but have everlasting life. And then it says God didn’t send His Son into the world to condemn it but to save it. Again that this is the God of love who comes to save us and until you’ve come to experience the love of God and I mean to really experience it. You know on my radio show, and different things and I’m talking to people, my biggest thing is that most people have not experienced it.

You know sometimes when they finally come to a conversion instead of focusing on how much God loves them, they are constantly focused on their own sinfulness and how they bad they are and how “I’m never going to get it right and how I’m such a sinner!” I just want to sit there and shake them sometimes “Excuse me! You’re a sinner, we got it.” I’m a sinner everybody knows it but we are loved sinners; loved: met where we are. That’s why that piece of paper you got when you came in here, that’s what He says “God loves you where you are, as you are, but He loves you too much to leave you there.” He’s constantly calling us to grow, to become the men and women that He died for.

And so that leaves us to the final thing that Jesus came to do for us. That Jesus came to save us, He came to love us, and He came just to be with us. You know, I think the greatest sickness today, it’s a spiritual sickness, but it’s loneliness, people constantly are filled with loneliness. It’s not that they’re alone, they can be in the middle of a crowd and be lonely. You know, people go and they’re on Facebook and they have friends, woooo, you know on my

Facebook, on my private page I have 5,000 friends, 5,000. I don't know any of them. Maybe about 100, if that many. Don't know anybody else, they're all on there. Oh Fr. Larry got 5,000 friends, no he doesn't I haven't a clue who these people are! I'm sure they're very nice people. But the reality is Facebook and all this social media does not give us more friends and does not take away our loneliness.

The only way someone going to take away your loneliness is if someone who loves you as you are that knows all your sinfulness, because most people don't really know us. They know the mask that we show them. Jesus knows us and He loves us and He says I call you my friends. That Jesus comes and gets into our skin and walks with us so in the middle of the night if you wake up you're not alone, when you're in prayer you're not alone, you come to know that God will always be the one, who always stands by you.

So our God was born for us, to save us, to love us, and to be with us the Emmanuel, and so He gives us the great gift. You know every Christmas is about a gift exchange, if you only have people around you all they do is take and receive gifts, and never give you anything, what the heck's with this person? They don't get what Christmas is about, it's a gift exchange. Now for me this year, I actually counted all the gifts I gave, it is 249 gifts, and out of those 249 gifts, I sat there and wrapped about 198 of them myself. I don't have anyone else, I don't have my staff wrap my private gifts, they don't even wrap the staff's gifts, but I usually get them at least three. I think about they can do, what they like, you know I'm always online trying to figure out something for all these people. And so this is the first year I got everything done a week ago, every gift was wrapped, it's the first time, usually I'm crying, literally tomorrow morning, wrapping the gifts for my family. It's all done, it's very nice.

But the reality is, it's an exchange of gifts, so Jesus gave us the greatest gift He could give us but now it's His birthday and so He sits there and kinda looks at you and me and says "So what did you bring me?" Now again, today after mass, after communion, we will do as we always do, we will give our life to Christ, that's what we do, we commit, or recommit our life to Jesus. That's the gift but it isn't enough, right? If I went home tomorrow and I said to my family "Hey you know what my gift is to you people this year? It's me! Hahaha!" I don't think they'd be impressed. I think they'd say we got short changed this year, and if the only thing we do to Jesus this year and say "Hey guess what your gift is Jesus! It's me! Hahaha!" He'd go "Oh promises, promises, isn't this great?" He wants something, something.

So that's what I'm going to do tonight after we do that, as always we will kneel those who want to will commit, or recommit their life to Jesus and then right after I say "I give you my life forever", and then I'm going to say "this year Jesus I give you the gift of" and then I'm going to be silent you need to fill in the blank. What is the gift you will give Him this Christmas? And it can be something as very simple as "Lord, I promise you this year my gift to you is I will spend more time with you," and don't just sit there and say more time because that doesn't ever cut it. "I promise you five minutes a day, ten minutes a day" whatever it is. This year Lord I'm gonna take a Holy Hour, I'm gonna do that extra hour. That will be my gift to you, I'm going to

take a Holy Hour” Or “this year Jesus I am not going to miss a Mass on Sunday that will be my gift to you! Cause I know you want me to be with you. This will be my gift to you.” Or “It could be dealing with our sinfulness, this year Lord I’m gonna stop gossiping. I’m going to really deal with it, this is my gift to you.” Or “this year Lord, I’m gonna really sit there and deal with my anger, this is my gift to you.” So whatever it is, I want you to think about from now until after Communion, what is it that you will give to Jesus on His birthday this year? And you can’t take it back you have to give Him a gift, each one of us will give something different, I would imagine. But it’s a personal gift, Jesus will hear it and He will receive it.

Remember my favorite of all, you know what my favorite Christmas program is? I used to make the kids watch it every year “The Little Drummer Boy” remember that one? And in “The Little Drummer Boy” you know everyone is bringing a gift, he had no gift, so what he does? He drums. He gave Him that gift. And that was the gift that was accepted. So tonight there is no getting out of this...what gift will you give to Jesus this Christmas? He’s given you many all you have to give Him is one.

Merry Christmas, may each of you know His love today and forever, Amen.