

July 15, 2018 15th Sunday of Easter - Cycle B
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? We're told we're blessed in the 2nd reading, right? It says, "We have been in Christ and we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens." So truly, for those of you who don't like saying, "I don't like saying blessed", well you go against God's holy word because that's who you are. You are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens but that's not what I'm gonna preach on. What I'm gonna preach on is the next line of Ephesians Chapter 1, verse 4 and the way I've talked about this before and the way I'm gonna preach on is still the way it is in the Breavery which is what the priests pray every day. They change it a little bit from what we hear in the mass but it says, "God chose us in Him before the world began to be holy" and it says here to be "without blemish" – in love it says but the one I grew up with and the one that is still in the Breavery; it says, "God chose us in Him, before the world began to be holy and righteous in His sight, to be filled with love".

So, that's what we want to focus on. First of all, let's focus on before you ever came into being, God wanted you. He chose you before you came into existence. So, you have a purpose. God gave you a purpose. He wanted you. You did not have to exist. I did not have to exist. He wanted you and me here. We are not a mistake. We are created by God for a purpose. He wanted us here. What He created us to be is holy. Now, we know that holiness means set apart for God. Holiness means to be like God. Forever, I only focus on what holiness is, is obedience but only to my stuff so I can check off my bars. Holiness is praying every day – check! Holiness is saying the rosary every day – check! Holiness is doing the Divine Mercy Chaplet every day – check! Holiness is taking care of the poor – check! Holiness is sitting there and being pure to your state or being a virgin like moi – check! All those things I can check off, I must be holy. But, it's quite interesting because holiness isn't just about obedience to those things that make us moral, it is that, of course, but it's much deeper as we've talked about in the last weeks. Holiness is to obey God but what's the greatest and the only teaching of Jesus and the greatest commandment? Love one another as He has loved us – uncheck. Hmmm.

You know, a couple weeks ago a friend of mine who I've known since he was a doctor and he went to LECOM and I used to go to LECOM and do their bible study once a month. Dr. Chris came and made me go there and he invited me up and he's a good kid – well, he's not a kid anymore. He's married to another doctor; they have two great kids and they live in Jacksonville, Florida. Every once in a while he reads a book. He's an avid reader and then he sends me a copy of it and he says, "Father, this sounds just like you preach." Hmmm. I wish he would have said, "Father, this sounds just like you live" but he did not. I see the difference there.

This is the book he sent me. It's by Bob Geoff and it is called Everybody Always. Everybody always. The subtitle is: Becoming Love in a World Full of Set Back and Difficult People. So when he sent this to me, I thought that I was the difficult person there, right? So, I was like, I started reading it and it was one of those books that I said, "I hate this book" and I put it down. I hate, I hate, I hate, I hate it – I love it, love it, love it but I hate it, hate it, hate it. I have more underlines in this book than I think I've had in years in any book and it's written by a lawyer of all people. How could a lawyer write anything good? But anyway, here it is and it's a lawyer who's challenging us how to be good Christians. Shut up!

Here's what it begins, you know, it says everyone always means we're called to love – everyone always. You know, it's easy for us to love people who agree with us, right? They're easy. The people who

have the same political background as us, they're easy. The people that love me back, they're easy but, to love everyone always? Who does that? God. So just in the prologue, it had me feeling really bad about myself because it says here, and just the prologue, I have it all underlined here and it talks about those people that live love. Those amazing people spend their free time loving people in housing projects, etc. They give away love like they're made of it. Can you imagine people that give away love like they're made of it? Yet, what are we made of? Love, because we are created by the God of love. To be holy means to be like God and God is love – so, that may be uncomfortable. Like my friend, they do this because they have developed completely unrealistic ideas about what their faith can do in a world when it's expressed in love. They decided to spend more time loving people than trying to gain the system by just agreeing with Jesus. You see, they wanted to follow Jesus example. Instead of telling people what Jesus meant, they just loved people the way He did. Don't you hate that? I hate it. I'm like, "Shut up. I don't care."

It's easy to obey. It's easy to be moral. It's easy to follow the rules. I'll be holy that way but when God tells me to be holy, I gotta love the way He loves: everybody always. Now that makes me mad because I don't do that well. I have issues as you all know. I have issues and so when I am sitting there and I'm looking at what I'm gonna be judged by God at the end of my life, I'll be judged by how I loved; how I became like God. What God is calling us to be is love because He is love. That's the goal of our life: to become love like God is love. Now, that is something that we gotta strive for; something we gotta live for; something that I don't think is very easy to do. Some of you might think it's easy. I don't.

You know, some people are naturally good. Did you ever meet people who are naturally good? Do you ever remember Mr. Rogers, do you remember Mr. Rogers? He was naturally good. I loved Mr. Rogers when I was a kid. I thought he was the greatest thing ever: always nice. I'm not Mr. Rogers. Could you tell? The reality is, I don't know of many Mr. Roger's in this church either. I just don't know any of them. I don't know if I know anybody who is a Mr. Rogers here. So we gotta sit there and ask God to make me more loving with all people, with those I agree with; with those I don't agree with; with those I like; with those I don't like; with those who are rich; with those who are poor. To love everyone always is to be like God: to be full of love.

So, what I've been asking in my prayer that last weeks as I've been reading this book is help me to become love, because that's who we're called to be. Help me to become love. Now, I'll tell you how that's going throughout the time but that's the goal. That has to be all our goals. Things that make us holy are not things that keep us focused on ourselves. Things that make us holy are those things that help us to forget about ourselves: to love God, to love others. It doesn't mean we don't say hard things. We have to tell people if you keep doing this you're gonna die, you're gonna go over the cliff. Please don't do that. But, we do what we do because we're in love with them. We're like God. We become the God of love. That's when we eat Him every day or once a week in the Eucharist, we're called to become Him; not just listen to His teachings but to become Him in the world. So today, let's ask God for this grace that we become love in a world that doesn't know what love is; that we become God in a world needs God.

May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.