

August 12, 2018 – 21st Sunday Ordinary Time - Cycle B
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? Blessed indeed. I was talking to the 8:00 mass last week and I was talking about my mother. My mother called me last week and she says my cousin had died who was my confirmation sponsor, John Basso. She said, "So, say a mass. Say a mass." I did more than say a mass. I went down and buried him last Monday. But then, a couple weeks ago, I told you she called me crying because the medicine has been messing up her mind and so she called me and she said, "Larry, you gotta say a mass for me. You gotta say a mass for me." Anytime anybody dies, anybody's sick, anytime anybody needs something; my mother calls me and says, "You gotta say a mass for me. You gotta say a mass for me" because she knows the power of a mass. There's great power that happens at this mass. All mass has great power because here at the mass, Christ offers Himself to the Father and then He feeds us with His own precious body and blood. That's what we hear today in the gospel.

Here's Jesus and He talks about that I am the bread of life. Now, you need to know that in John's gospel, it's high Christology. That means it comes and it focuses on the divinity of Godness of Jesus Christ. He is God. It's very clear to make that real. So, we have these "I AM" passages throughout the gospel of John. Today, "I AM" the bread of life; "I AM" the vine – you know He says all these things – I am to good shepherd. The I AM should be in capital letters because it refers to the I AM of the Father in the Old Testament. Right? So when God says to Moses and Moses says to God to being and he says, "What is your name and God says, "I AM Who Am". So what Jesus is saying is I AM God who is the Good Shepherd. I AM God who is the true vine. I AM God who is the bread, who is the flesh that will keep you alive forever.

So what happens too often, I believe, is that we take this as common place because most of us have grown up with the mass since we were children. We know the mass, it's part of it, just like they knew Jesus. Right? And they were murmuring, they were murmuring, "Hey, don't we know His father. Isn't that Joseph's? Don't we know His mother? Don't we know His family? How can He say He comes from above? We know all about it." The same thing is for us at mass sometimes – we know all about it; we go every week. It's kind of like, it's kind of sad because it becomes commonplace. Like at the last mass at the 8:30 was very good and I know you guys will know the answer to this but what is necessary for a sacrament to work? I'm gonna cry. The teenager who was serving knew it. What's necessary? Faith! Right? Again, how many times have we talked about this? A lot – thank you!

Faith is necessary. When you come to this mass with faith, you watch the power. It gives you strength. It gives you eternal life and that's again the difference. A lot of times people, not here, other people maybe who are listening will come up and receive communion – the body of Christ and say Amen and walk out the door. Not here but in other places and other people might come up, receive the Eucharist and say "Amen" and go back and sit in their seat and read the bulletin – again not here because you don't get it – but might go into la-la land. What happens today is you come up and say I would stake my life. You are going to God and He gives us the strength. The mass is phenomenal. We enter into heaven. You know, yesterday and the day before, I was at Columbus, well Sunbury, which is right outside Columbus, doing an Alpha – a Catholic Alpha group came together. So, when I was there, I was at the hotel and in

the morning, I went to wake up as always, and I asked the Holy Spirit to speak to me and I opened up the word of God which is always next to me and I opened up the word of God and it came to Luke, Chapter 23, verse 32. Any good Protestant know that Luke Chapter 23 verse 32? Anyway, it's what Jesus says to the good thief. He says, "Today you will be with me in paradise" and I was ecstatic. I says, "Really, again because if I die and I get to go to heaven and He promises me I'm gonna go to paradise, let's do it now, right? So, I'm thinking OK I'm gonna be with God in paradise so I'm thinking that on my way home I'm gonna get in a car accident and die and if that happens, don't be all upset about the pastor being dead. Don't be happy because he's not with us anymore for some of you but you need to be happy because I get to go to paradise. So, when I came home and I didn't die and I was sitting there thinking, "Well" and then when I was talking to the Lord about it, He goes, "Excuse me, you were with me in paradise today when you said mass. Oh, you were with me in paradise when you did adoration. Oh, you were with me in paradise when you were at your brother and sisters and you spoke of me." You see, sometimes we're just looking for later and we forget that every time we go to mass, we go to paradise.

Today, Jesus looks at you and says, "You are with me in paradise." We gotta have these eyes of faith that see that reality. What happens here is when you and I come as we heard in the first reading and in the first reading we see that He just wants to die, right? I want to die, take my life, I'm done. So, what does God do? He feeds him to give him strength. Do you ever struggle when you come to mass? You want it to be over or you don't go that far but there are days that you're just struggling so much. Well, when you come here with faith, Jesus feeds you with His very body to give you strength. You don't have to do this alone. He comes and feeds you so He lives inside of you, He lives inside of me and He says, "Together – together we'll face this. Together we can do this. You're not alone. I live inside of you."

That's to get us through the now but then there's the promise that no matter what life sends us, we're gonna live forever. Again, some of the saints used to say, "What is this compared to eternity?" We are created forever – for eternity. So when that's true, then we don't get so focused on every little thing that drives us crazy on earth. I am destined for eternal life with my Dad in heaven forever and this body and blood that I receive is that which keeps me alive forever because people of God, Jesus Christ is not a liar. He says, "If you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will live forever." I believe Him when He says that. That's what happens at this mass. That's the power of the Eucharist. That's the power of one mass. So, every time we come here, it should never be like, "Oh yeah, I know about it. I'm not gonna sing. I don't buy that kind of stuff." You and I should come here and give everything, sing with all our hearts, be here with all our being because it cost Him everything to give us this mass. In this mass is such power that we get the strength that we need to deal with everything in this life. We're not doing it alone and He promises us we will live forever.

So, when my mom calls and says, "Larry, say a mass for me. Say a mass", she knows and believes in the power. Do you know and believe in that power?

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