

March 8, 2020 – 2nd Sunday of Lent - Cycle A
Father Larry Richards

Good Morning! How are you? Blessed indeed. You know it sounds like the back is more blessed than the front, I'm just saying. The reality is that as we get into the 2nd week of Lent, we listen to the transfiguration. It's very appropriate how God has brought us here and that the readings are to give us direction on how we are to lead our life and how we are to be in the midst of all the confusion and the fear. There's a lot of fear out there. Again, I just flew. I was outside of Philadelphia all week in Riverton, New Jersey doing a parish mission and got up at 3 o'clock in the morning on Friday and flew down to Charleston, no Charlotte. I was in Charlotte, North Carolina and did a Men's Conference there and flew back here. Got here at 5:30, got in bed and was asleep at 7 o'clock until 4 o'clock this morning and then I prayed and went back to bed and slept until 8 o'clock this morning so, I'm kind of refreshed. Tomorrow, I leave for Miami to do a parish mission but then I'm back for the rest of Lent. But as I'm going in the airport and everything all this time, you see all these people with masks and everybody's afraid and the planes are half full and it's just ridiculous how crazy everything has gone because of what people are looking at and what people are listening to. So, if you are one of those who like to look at Facebook and everything and almost every other thing on there is about the Corona Virus, what to do and what not to do. If you're watching the news; oh my gosh, every other thing: it's all gonna kill us all. We're all gonna be dead. Right? And a woman called when she sat there and said she's not coming to church.

I said, "Are you Catholic?"

"Yes", she said.

I said, "Well, you come to church. You get the Corona Virus, you die and you get to go to heaven."

Right? Everybody's looking at the wrong thing. What if I get sick? What if I die? What if I do all these things? I don't get it and that's all true but Jesus says, "Do not be afraid".

So, you gotta be sitting there thinking am I in fear? Am I letting fear control my life – especially when our Bishops are doing everything possible to make sure that we have common sense about this type of stuff – that we can come and we cannot be afraid. We don't have to be afraid. The worst thing that's gonna happen to you is you're gonna die and go to heaven and aren't we created for heaven?

So again, what are you looking at and what are you listening to? Because today in the transfiguration, we see when God the Father appears with Jesus and He says, "This is my Son. Listen to Him." Then when the Father departs and the Old Testament prophet Moses departs, then they only see Jesus. So, what we gotta do is only see Jesus and only listen to Jesus because if we're listening to and watching everything else, that doesn't mean you don't have to, don't turn off the TV. That's what some people are saying: Don't watch TV. Don't get filled with the fear because again we're always gonna get filled with fear. It you're gonna get it, you're gonna get it. Right? We do everything in our power not to get these things but again, the worst thing it God's in charge.

So, instead of constantly living in this fear, which you know the devil loves when we're in fear. He loves it because then we're doing everything and we're keeping our eyes focused on who – ourselves. How can I be protected? How can I be healthy? How can I make sure it's all about me? Again, God is saying, "You stop looking at you and you start looking at me." God loves us more than we love ourselves. God will take care of us. If you don't believe that God's gonna take care of us then why are you here? Right? Why are you listening to this podcast? God promises that He will take care of us no matter what: whether we get sick; whether we don't get sick – it's in God's hands. We still again do everything we have to do with common sense but we just don't live in fear of everything. Right?

So, are you looking at yourself? Are you looking at the news or are you looking at Jesus. Then, when you are sitting there, what are you listening to because again, sometimes we listen to people around us, listen to people on the internet and we listen to all these other things. You want to listen to somebody, listen to Jesus. How do we best listen to Jesus? The bible – that would be a good one, right? So, we spend time with the bible and then of course in our prayer. We pray with His word. Again, yesterday when I was down in Charlotte and I was dealing with the men down there. I didn't know what the thing was until I got there and it says what are you looking at, you know, what are you looking at. So, I took the scripture and I took when Jesus says, "What are you looking for" and they asked Jesus, "Where do you live" and He said, "Come and see". So, I told them, I said, "Gentlemen, you gotta come and see where Jesus is. You gotta be looking at Him and listening to Him. You must be doing this because if not, you're gonna spew forth your own opinion and nobody cares." Right? I sat there and I said with the crisis in the church or things, if you're not praying and I'm not saying just saying your rosary or that kind of prayer which is very important and you better do it every day, but if you're not listening to prayer, you're gonna give me your opinion and I don't care about your opinion. I care about what God says to us and that means, people, and I told them very clearly and you could tell some of the guys are like, "This guy's nuts." I said, "If you're not praying and listening to God every day, keep your mouth shut. You got it? You keep your mouth shut if you're not listening to God." They were really looking at me but that's the point because when we open our mouth and we just talk about our opinion and what we think about things, we bring fear to other people or we get them angry at other people because of our gossip. Or, we tell them stories about other people and we do all these things that fear, anger and hatred about others. You listen to God and then speak what God tells you. Now, I'll listen because when we listen to God, then we can speak God. We can bring hope to people who are afraid. We can teach them trust because that's what we have.

So, it all comes down, people, to what are you listening to and who are you looking at. Are you looking at Jesus? Are you listening to Jesus or are you listening to everything else. The good way to find out: do you have peace in your heart or fear. Combat the fear. Look at Jesus. Listen to Jesus. Read His word. Spend time, especially in Lent, in prayer. That way, God will say to you as He said to the apostles today, "Be not afraid." That's God speaking to you. Listen to Him.

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