

March 15, 2020

3rd Sunday of Lent - Cycle A

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning! How are you? Blessed! Blessed indeed, even in the midst of all the garbage. Today is also the National Day of Prayer for the people who are suffering from the corona virus and for God's protection. Even though I have not heard it, I want to go back to the book of 2Chronicles, chapter 7, verse 14. It says, "If My people," that is us, "who are called by My name," which is us, "if they would humble themselves and they will pray, and they seek My presence, and they turn from evil ways, I hear them from heaven. I will pardon their sins and I will heal their land."

So that is the promise that we have from the Word of God. But today when we hear also from the Readings that are given to us, we hear about the Samaritan woman. The Samaritan woman was in a country that Israel did not get along with. They hated the Samaritans let us be simple. Yet Jesus goes out of His way and tells her that He has come to save her. That He is the Messiah. That He is the Savior.

Then she goes and tells all these other people in Samaria and they come and say, "We too, have come to believe." This is the faith Christ calls us all to. This is the faith that He comes to save us. And we as Christians should be different than everybody else at this particular moment in time.

The Second Reading I think is so appropriate when you really hear what God is saying to us. It says, "Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace." Do you hear that? We have peace with God, our Father. So, we should be people of peace in the midst of all of the fear. So, the first question I have got to ask you, are we people of peace? Do we have peace in the midst of this? It doesn't mean we don't take care of ourselves.

This past week I was in Miami. This is where all the cruise ships dock. Every night we were standing room only with kids sitting on the floor. Three nights we had we filled two other places that we were live streamed to. Even the last night when everything was going crazy. As soon as I got on the plane, the Bishop there called everything off. We were doing the things we do here, like no shaking hands. But it is hard when people are coming out. Then I heard confessions. What a blessing confession's were. Except the people would come sit next to you. So, I wouldn't talk to anybody. My face was 2 inches from away from their face. That was really nice.

But to have people have peace in the midst of that. You are an instrument of God. You cannot be worried about, "I might get sick." I have to worry about that with all of you people and I am going to go out of my way to make sure that I do not affect anybody in any way, shape, or form. But we need to have peace amongst this. As we talked about last week, what is the worst thing that could happen? We die and go to heaven. Good job. That isn't that hard.

So, we should have peace with God and with each other, of course through Whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand. And we boast in hope. So, we need to be people of peace and we need to be people of hope. Then it goes to the next line, "and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured into our hearts." So, what we are being called to, in the midst of all of

this, is we need to make sure we have peace. We need to bring hope. And the love of God needs to be flowing from us to all the people.

That means that we need to be people, at this time, that don't put ourselves first. Hopefully, nobody here, no one who is listening to me. There was someone that went and 50,000 rolls of toilet paper. And if you did, it is time to share with neighbors. It is time to give some of that to the poor. What you did in being selfish and making sure you put your needs first, you stopped others from getting toilet paper. They may have to use their hand.

Do you ever think how selfish people are? I just read about these two men who wanted to make money. They went all over and bought up all the hand sanitizer. They bought 17,000 bottles. Then they tried to sell on Amazon, and they cost less than a \$1, and they would get \$7 for it. And one they got \$80 for. Then Amazon shut them down. And they should. I hope they lose all their money. Every dime because they were being selfish. Now if they were to buy all the sanitizer and give it away, God bless them! Now they are doing the will of God.

We need to think that a person a peace does not have to stockpile. You need to take care of yourself, you need to take care of your family, of course you do. You get enough for ten days or two weeks, whatever it is. But you don't need to stock up for the next six months. And that is the problem. There are people that say they are a follower of Jesus, but I am stocking up! You are a follower of Jesus, so you need to lay down your life and love for other people. Instead of being so concerned if you are going to be okay? We need to be sure we are calling our neighbors. Are you okay? The elderly.

I was reading where it said it is only the elderly that are really affected. Really? Only the elderly? I mean, TA is elderly. Should we say, well, it is only TA in our parish. So, should we say well this is okay because only the 82 year old's have to worry about it. Is that what we should do? We should be making sure that we are going out of our way to make sure the 82 year old's are okay. That means if you are sick or have a cough or a fever, you don't come to church. You don't put your own piety in front of the good of others. That is like when the Church asks us not to receive communion on the tongue. "I receive communion on the tongue!" Great but you are putting your piety against the health of others.

So, if anyone receives communion on their tongue today, you will know that because I am going to stop immediately, go back up to the altar, clean my hands with Purell, and then I will come back down for the next person. I am not going to let someone piety hurt someone else. Whatever you want, you put yourself first. That is not of God. Obedience is of God. Putting others first is of God. Putting yourself and your theology, and your needs first, is not of God when it comes to piety. But being a person of peace, being a person of hope, being of love when everybody else is running off of fear right now – fear is an insult to our Father. It just is.

Fear is an insult to our Father. God has come to tell us not to be afraid. So, we have got to combat this fear that is gripping our nation. We are praying for this nation. We are going against wickedness. And wickedness is selfishness. So, let us not be selfish during this time. Let us bring hope to others. Let us bring love to others. And let us have peace because God is in control.

Got it? Get it? Going to live it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.