

## Feast of Christ the King - Cycle C

November 21, 2010

Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning. Today is the Feast of Christ the King and it is the last Sunday of the year. Next week when we begin Advent, we begin a new season and a new spiritual year. I was over at Fr. Detisch's last night and he cooked us dinner. It is always a treat when Fr. Detisch, Fr. Simmons, Fr. Jonathan was there. Fr. Detisch made pasta even though I am not allowed to eat pasta but that is all beside the point. One of the things they asked was, "So, what are you going to preach on?" And I said, "Well we are going to preach on the reality for Christ to be Lord and King of our lives we have to have this daily surrender of our hearts and our lives to Jesus Christ as our King." "Oh I guess you already have it planned, don't you? You say the same thing every year." I had to put up with this for a while then I hit Detisch and he was on the ground. It was over. Maybe he fell for another reason.

Anyway this isn't just a common thing we do. It has to be who we are. I have this book that has to be done in about a week and a half and I am just finishing chapter one so you have got to pray real hard for me. But anyway it is based on the Knowing God's Will CD and the book that is going to be out March 2<sup>nd</sup>, is called "Surrender" with an exclamation point. We went back and forth with the publishing company, the Sunday Visitor, and they wanted to call it something else. Something like, Finding Peace and all of that kind of stuff which is just isn't my style if anybody here would know. Could you imagine a book put out by Fr. Larry Richards you know, "Finding Peace in Your Daily Life." That is the second choice. They kept that on the bottom. Keep dreaming. Anyway the core with me is that it has got to be surrender. So we went back and forth and then finally the publisher says, "Okay, I surrender." I said, "You better." The reality is, this is the need of all of us every day of our lives. That if Christ is going to be the King of my life then I need to surrender to Him every single day.

Now surrender is an altogether different reality than someone who asks God to bless them and asking God to help them and take care of my needs and all of that stuff, which is necessary. But, that is different than surrender. Surrender is putting our will under the will of the Father. Surrender is saying, "Lord my life is totally Yours. Whatever you want this day and every day of my life that is what I want." Surrender is an altogether different way of living. I could surmise and say that 80% of Catholics Christians do not surrender. They follow God their way. They come to church to be blessed. They come to church to get what God wants them to do. They want everything and say, "Here God, this is what I want of You." But they don't come every day and say, "Lord, I surrender my heart and my life to You." And not just the daily offerings surrender, but to really mean it. "I surrender my heart and my life to You. Whatever you want this day Lord. You are King. I have no real say in the matter. You are King. And if you are my King, I am your slave. If you are my King then I surrender everything to Your will."

Every day we say the Lord's Prayer and today when we say it we are going to say it as a community and we hopefully would say it every day by ourselves in different ways, and when we do these things what do we mean? We are saying to God, Your Kingdom come and Your will be done. Both of these things very important, but both of these things I don't think we really actually understand what it means. When we say to God, Your kingdom come that means first of all we are pushing in the way we living our lives God's kingdom and not our kingdom. That we are building up the Kingdom of God. And out of building up the Kingdom of God, by using our talents not for us. Not to just make sure that I have enough money in the bank so I can retire. Not to make sure that I have enough money in the bank so I can keep eating. Not to make sure that I have enough money in the bank so I can build a bigger house and have a nicer boat. I have my money, I do my job to build up the Kingdom of God, not my kingdom.

So the first thing that you and I have got to think about, am I really building up the Kingdom of God with the way I live? And again, concretely, am I doing this? Not like in a la la spiritual way, well yes, I go to church and I give some money every week to build up the body. I give \$95 dollars, whatever it is. Or am I using not just my gifts of money, for goodness sakes, but my talents. Do I use my talents to build up the Kingdom of God? Am I doing something using my talents to help build up God's kingdom? There are two different ways. When I was in seminary years ago, the one I was thrown out of, they were having a talent show. Everybody came up to me and said, "Hey Larry, why don't you do a monologue?" They thought I was a comic and I am not as most people could find out real fast. They said, "You have got to get up," and Johnny Carson was still alive. Remember Johnny Carson? So I am watching Johnny Carson the night before and I thought I am not going to be able to do this. They said, "Larry you are funny." I said, "I am funny looking but I am not going to be able to do this." "Just do it Larry." "Okay." So I got up and I did a monologue. Biggest bomb of my life! It was absolutely horrible.

That is not where God calls me. But every time I go to do a Parish Mission or a Men's Conference everybody says, "Father you are missing your calling. You should have been a stand-up comic." But, I can't do it for me. I just can't. The gifts that God gave to me He gave me not to build up my own kingdom. Not to build up my own humor. He gave me the gifts I have to build up His kingdom. You see, I can do it in the midst of a homily or I can do it in the midst of a big talk but I can't do it just to do it. God gave me the gift to build up His kingdom. And so it is with you. God has given you gifts that He wants you to use to build up His kingdom. The kingdom of course begins here in the parish. You use your gifts if you can sing, you sing. If you do financials you join the Finance Committee. If you are a builder, you build. Whatever it happens to be. If you can pray you pray. We have two openings on Saturday night. Like I told you last week, please don't make me say this again. I have to say it again, two openings on Saturday night. "Well Father I can't do much." "Oh, you can pray." "I guess I could." "You could wake up for God." "I guess I could." Sure you could. God has given you the same amount of time, He has given you talents to build up the Kingdom. So am I building up God's kingdom or am I building up my kingdom?

The second thing we are saying is your will be done. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. It means in my daily life that I am asking God's will to be done in my heart and in my life. That first of all means that I am dealing with sin in my life. If Christ is my King there is no room for Christ to be both to have sin reign in your life and Christ reign in your life. Because Jesus Christ says everyone who sins is

what? A slave to sin. So you have got to make the choice – are you a slave to sin or are you a slave to God? If you are a slave to sin then you cannot be a slave to God, correct? That is what has to happen so you have got to deal with sin in your life. You have got to say, “Lord, I have been a slave to this sin, these sins, my whole life. Lord, I want you to be King of my life and I want to be a slave of righteousness. I want to be a slave to my Holy God. And the way you do that, I think it is in Ephesians when He says, “Offer your bodies as a” what? Do you know? “A living sacrifice.” The way we become a slave of God is when we offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.” Now sacrifice means we give up our lives for something. Living means we are still a live and we do it. That means it is going to hurt. That means when I come before God the best way and the only way I can show that I love God, which I have said a hundred billion times is to obey Him. If you say, “Oh I love God so much” and you are doing things your way, you are a liar.

The only way you can prove you love God is to obey Him. That is the hardest thing in our hearts and in our lives. I know it is for me. As I have said before when they talk about priesthood and “oh the hardest thing you do Father is you had to take the vow of celibacy.” No, nobody would be with me anyway when it comes right down to it as you all know. For me the hardest reality is that obedience thing. And every time I have struggled with obedience in my priesthood, every time when I have done what I didn’t want to do, every time when I fought with the Bishop and argued back and forth with him and said, “No, I am not going to do tha.t” One of the things being when he asked me to become pastor of Bread of Life, and I looked at him and I said, “Absolutely not! You will make me the head nut of the nuthouse.” My exact quote to the Bishop. And we went back and forth. “There is no way. They are all crazy.” And I found that to be very true. We went back and forth. “Absolutely not!” Then after 45 minutes he looked at me and he says, “I am not asking.” GRRRRR, that obedience card. I sat there and I did it but I didn’t like it. Then it grew on me and look around and you can see the blossom of everything that happened from one act of obedience and going against the will of yourself and to start to do the will of God.

With all of us our daily struggles have got to be, “Lord your will be done. Lord, I will obey you even when I don’t agree with it. I will do your will even if I go against everything in my being. If this is what You want, this is what I will do.” And God will bring great life out of it. When we say today, “Jesus Christ, King of the Jews,” as we heard in the Gospel, that was a horrible reality about how He became King of the Jews. He gave up everything and died giving up everything. But that was the most powerful moment of Christ’s life when He gave everything for you and me. That can be the most powerful moment of our lives when every day we give up building up our kingdom, we give up doing our will and we build the kingdom of God and we start doing His will. It will always bring life to ourselves, it will always bring life to the world around us beginning with our families.

So today let all of us do a true examination of conscience. Let’s all of us truly think about it – whose kingdom do I build on a daily basis. Whose will do I do on a daily basis? Is my life fully surrendered to Christ Jesus? If not, let’s make it a commitment that we will not leave until we fully surrender our hearts and our lives as a living sacrifice. Got it? Get it? Going to do it? May each of you know His love today and forever, amen.