

Third Sunday of Ordinary Time
January 23, 2005
Father Larry Richards

I always love when we have new people here and everybody's clapping and looking around like, "Ohhhhh, are we Catholic?" "Yeah don't worry we're Catholic." I was just in Houston and down there they have a humungous Catholic Charismatic thing run by the companions of the cross. And boy was that an interesting thing with a...well, I'll tell you in a bit, but what was happening with some of the people....But anyway if you listen to the first reading in the Gospel today, it talks about the people who walk in darkness, have seen the great light. And the way the light comes, is an interesting way. You know we sit there and you think about the darkness and we think about the light. But the way the light comes is through Jesus saying one word. What's that word? Repent. That's the way the light comes into our hearts. Yup, that's it, that's the way light comes into our hearts. That's the way finally, the slavery that we have had to sin we're finally set free from. That's the way the death that comes from sin; we're finally brought to life. Is that one word, repent. Now, yesterday was kind of a snowy day so I thought, I hate winter, so I'm gonna go do something different. So I decided to go cross country skiing. So I went out to the peninsula for an hour and a half, the only one out there, it was a great, great time. And so I was real tired last night 11:00 I go, I fall right to sleep and then at 1:25 in the morning my phone rings. And it was one of my kids, John Carol now, one of my old Prep kids. He says, "Hi, Father what are you doing?" Nothing just sitting here thinking of you, what else would I be doing at 1:25 in the morning? He says, "You aren't sleeping are you?" Yes I'm thinking what do you think? "We were talking and we have some serious questions?" Which really means 'we were around drinking Father and we have some serious discussions that come up.' And he says, "Can you answer us some questions?" And there had to be a bunch, like 10 college kids up at John Carol sitting talking to a priest at 1:30 in the morning. And so he says, "Here talk to Mike." And he says, "Hi Father, my name is Mike." And I says, "Yeah, ok what can I do for you?" And he says, "Is it wrong for me to have sex with my girlfriend?" Yes Michael it's wrong it's called fornication and the word of God says no fornicator will go to heaven. "You mean if I sit there and I die I can go to hell?" Yes, Michael that's what I mean. "Well I don't believe that Father." Well God didn't ask if you weather you believed it son, it's what the word of God says. Well I have a theology course and my professor in theology didn't say that. I said you go to a Jesuit college and that doesn't count. And he goes, "Oh." Anyway...so...I says, "This is what the word of God says and so I talked to him and I told him Ephesians 5:5-7. I told him 1Corinthians 9 and following. I said Revelation 1, Revelation 20, the fornicator of the second death. da...da...da....But I said listen, what God is asking you to do is repent. That's what he is getting at....it's so funny...this is the reading's today. He's asking you to change your life. You know here's Peter and James and John and there they are doing their own thing, and God says repent and they left everything to follow Jesus. They left everything. They left their sin. They left their business. They left everything to follow Jesus. So what Jesus is calling us to do...so this is what I said to this kid and he said, "Well, Father most people do it." So I said, "Son, people go to hell like snowflakes in a snow storm." Look outside. See those snow flakes. Our Lady at Fatima says people go to hell like snowflakes in a snow storm. God is calling you to repent. So it's up to you what you're gonna do son. Well I thought God loved me and He'll always forgive me. I said yes of course He'll forgive you if you repent. If you say I'm not gonna do this anymore. But if you keep doing it....I said, what if your girlfriend....you have this girlfriend now and you really love her...."Yes I do." Well what if she went and had sex with the guy down the hall, tonight. And then she came to you and said I'm sorry. "Oh I guess I'd forgive her 'cause I love her." Ok then she does it again an hour later and she comes back to you and says I'm sorry. What would you do? "Uhhhhh" And then she does it an hour later and she comes back to you and says I'm sorry, what would you do? "Uhhhhh I don't like this example, Father." Well this is the reality of you and God. If you sit there and gonna come to the God of the Universe and say God I am sorry, then you have to repent or you're not sorry are you? And I says everything you do to some girl, son, someone will do to your daughter some day. "I really... that's why I'm not gonna have any

girls, Father." Really, God's probably gonna give you all girls, son, but that's all beside the point. So anyway here I am with this kid last night and then after 45 minutes I finally try to go to sleep but I was up for an hour 'cause it kept going through my mind. But repentance is what God calls us to and the number one thing we hate the most, we don't want to come to God after we repent, we want God to accept us as we are. But that's not God, you know I'm in, I read one book in one day, which is a phenomenal thing for me, it's called "Wild at Heart." I found my spirituality. This is where it's at. And it talks about you know men are wild at heart. You look around at most Catholic churches or most churches and you look around at the men and what are they? Bored. You know, here we are. And it says we are wild at heart, which helps me tremendously. You know, so anyway it says, nobody would kill Mr. Rogers now would they? But we want everybody to be nice, just be nice. Priest, be nice, just be nice. Just tell me nice things. That isn't what Jesus Christ did. He came to the whole world and he says change your life. That isn't Mr. Rogers. That's in your face, you better change. Now a lot of us will sit here and say Father I agree with you 100%, that's a good thing, Father, those kids should stop having sex out of marriage. Isn't that nice. Now let's go to the second reading. Did you hear the second reading? What do we have to repent of? Oh I don't know let's see here. I urge you brothers and sister in the name Lord Jesus, that you all agree in what you say. That there be no divisions among you. That you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. Divisions among us? Never Father. Again sometimes there's divisions among us whether you are conservative, whether you are liberal, whether you're a charismatic or not, whether you are a member of Bread of Life or a member of St. Joe's. There are still, trust me. I hear all the complaints. Trust me on this. There are still divisions, and still God is calling us to repent. Change that. This is not what we are called to be as a community. We are called to be one in intentions. And one must be must be the one intention that we are around. To only do the will of God. This is to only do the will of God. Now again when I was at Houston this week after...you know I was there Sunday, and the guy says Oh wee not going to do your Sunday night the Pastor looked at me. Were gonna do Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday cause nobody will come back Sunday night. I said HUH? I said I wanna go back in the plane now. Forget it I have to get back to my parish. And he says, "Oh OK." And so I said you trust me, you let me preach and were gonna get...and they'll come back Sunday night. Sunday night you should have seen the place. It was a big church in the round. It was so crowded they sat on the floor in all the isles. There were 5 isles. They sat up here in the sanctuary. All the way around. They had people 5 deep standing all the way in the back and then it went on the way to the center, people all the way out in the center listening. And that was every single night of the mission. And so when we talked about all the things we talked about the last night I'm hugging everybody on Wednesday night and one guy comes out 'cause I said I was a charismatic catholic. And he waited until I was done. And then he grabbed me and says, "Charismatics give us a bad name." HUH? "There's a charismatic community here and they're all nuts Father." I said HUH? And then he started with me. And again I have an anger problem, huh? You don't want to start with Father with an anger problem. I sat there and I says,"I told you not to judge. Is that what I said for the last four days? And here you are gonna come in here and judge. God wants you to repent. And I told him I told you I have an anger problem. But I am telling you. You and I gotta stop making these distinctions. We gotta stop making ourselves better in judging other people because...well you know...I don't have an anger problem. I am very gentle. Father has an anger problem but I don't. We all have our problems. Don't you. And all of us need to come together with one with all the good with all the bad. And we need to repent of doing it our way. and say the only thing that matters for all of us is that we do the will of God. We don't ever judge the way somebody else does the will of God. But we desire with all our hearts, do God's will, because like what I said to that man, they are doing what God's calling them to do. You might not agree with it, but that's what God's calling them to do. And if we can sit there with all these different things and know that we are very different in lots of ways and we never sit there and say that we're not different because that would be a lie. We are. But God wants us to be one. One in doing his will. So what is it in your life and in my life that keeps us divided. What is it that I judge in my heart and my life? Be it judgment that God wants me to repent of so that we could be truly, truly be one. Got it? Get it? Good. May each of us know his love today and forever Amen.