

March 25, 2005

Good Friday
Fr. Larry Richards

Good afternoon. I wanted to focus on the Passion and Death of Jesus, but put it in the context of what our Holy Father asks us to focus on this year – The Year of the Eucharist. And, they are both one in the same. The Eucharist comes forth because of the Passion and Death of Jesus. But this all begins the very beginning of time, when God created us and created our first parents. He told them “this is what I want of you – only this – that you don’t take from the tree.” And they took from the tree. And because of that, he promised them that they would die. And right from the very beginning, they and us are thrown out of Paradise, and we all suffer and we all die, because of one act of disobedience.

Whether a person believes in it - whether a person doesn’t - whether a person believes in God, whether a person doesn’t. It doesn’t matter – we all suffer – we all die. Believe it or don’t. We’re all a part of it. You can be an atheist, you can be a Christian, you can be a Muslim, you can be a Buddhist, you can be anything you want. But you are going to suffer and you are going to die, this is the reality of us. We suffer, we die, because of sin. Huh? But way in the very beginning when this happened, already God had started promising the “I’m going to take care of it.” And what happens, again when you have to sit there and figure this whole reality out and put it in the context of eternity, when God said to the “if you do this, you will die” because God is a God of justice he must fulfill His own justice, or God is a liar and God cannot be a liar and be God. Huh? So He thinks to Himself, if you will, if we can look into the mind of God, “I told them if they do this they will die. What am I going to do, because I love them so much, how will I fulfill my justice?” And then, know how God does this. He says, “I know, I will become one of them. And in myself, I will fulfill the justice.” So again, what happens is God, who is Jesus Christ, becomes one of us and He Himself pays the price for our sins. Huh? That He fulfills His own justice – this is mercy – but we have to know that Jesus died because of the justice of God. He had to fulfill His own justice. He had, and you know again, in Hebrews, Chapter 9, verse 22 it says “there is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of the blood.” There can be no forgiveness without shedding of the blood. And so Christ had to bleed – he had to die – he had to suffer – he had to be like us, so that we could live forever. Huh? And if we go back, and again, we will use the crucifix from the chapel you know, to bring in the reality that this is about the Eucharist. And we also have this picture here, which we have in the chapel. And on this, if you come up to venerate, if you’ve never seen it – I hope everyone has been in the chapel. But this, we go back, from the beginning, we go about 2,000 years to Abraham, or whatever it is in the beginning, however long that would be. And here’s Abraham, and again, think about how God is. God says “Abraham, do you love me?” “Yes, Lord, I would do anything for you.” And He says, “Ok, Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only one, who you love. The son of promise. The son you’ve put all your hope in. The son that you give everything for. And I want you to prove to me that you love me Abraham. I want you to offer up your son to me.” And Abraham says “ok, sure, ha, ha.”

And he takes his son, again not child, could have been as old as 33, and as he's carrying, he puts the wood on the guys back – his son's back and he takes the fire, and his son is carrying the wood and the fire up, and again, I hope you get it, the son of Abraham, Isaac is carrying wood up on his back, up the hill to sacrifice. And again, Isaac looks at his father, Abraham and says "father, here is the wood, and here is the fire, but where is the lamb for sacrifice?" And Abraham says "God himself will provide the lamb." Huh? And again, you look, because right before he takes his son, he puts him on the altar, he binds him and he is going to kill his son. And when he goes to kill his son, God the Father says, "Abraham, don't you dare touch your boy. I know that you would withhold nothing from me." Let's stop there for a second. Could God say that about us? Would we hold nothing back from God? Not that you're going to go kill your kids. There might be times you want to, but that's beside the point. Would you hold nothing back from God? In your own heart, at this moment. What is it that's more important than God. Is there anything that you and I would hold back from God, knowing that God, in fact, later on, when Paul talks about this, he said that "Abraham knew that he could do this, because he knew that the Father could bring resurrection out of his son." Hmm. That Abraham knew that if he did this, God would bring resurrection out of it. Because he trusted God so much that he knew God's love was greater than anything he'd ask him to do. And of course, God does not take his son, now does he? You know, we play this game, "well God wouldn't ask me." Well, what if He would, for whatever it is? What is it that we would hold back from God? Knowing that if we give even that, He gives it back to us even more than we could imagine. But what is it that we hold back from God? So then, he says "don't you dare hurt that son of yours, Abraham. I know you would hold nothing back from me." And then, what does He do? Spiritually, we don't hear this in the scriptures, but this is what's happening. And we know this because of what happens later. God looks at Abraham and says "Abraham, don't give up your son to prove your love for me. Abraham, I will give up my Son to prove my love for you." And then you go 2,000 years down the line. And there is Jesus come walking. And John the Baptist sees Jesus, and the very first thing that John the Baptist says when he sees Jesus Christ is what? "Behold the Lamb of God." God himself provides the lamb. But God doesn't stop His Son from dying as He stopped Abraham's son from dying, because now God knows in Himself, in His Son, He must fulfill His justice. And God cannot just tell us that He loves us! Love is cheap! I hear people, I do it everyday, I say "God I love you" and then I sin and I spit in His face! We do it everyday, "Oh, God I love you." And then He asks for something and its "Oh, no, I'm too tired." Or "God I love you." The only way to prove love is to give everything. There is no greater love than this, to lay down one's life. So Jesus proved love. God the Father proved His love for you and me. And He gave His only Son. That's why if you look at the picture, there is Jesus on the cross, and there is Abraham. Abraham didn't have to do it. God the Father did. For love of you - for love of me. Behold the Lamb of God. On the back altar here, if you looked at the back altar, and I'm sure you've seen it, maybe you haven't. But here it goes all the way to the end of time, to the Book of Revelation. And in the Book of Revelation you see again, He saw a lamb that was slain. Behold the Lamb of God. You will hear today and at every Mass, we take this reality and we hold up the God of the Universe in the Eucharist and we say "Behold the Lamb of God." That every time we look at the Eucharist, it says to us that God loved us so much

that He gives everything for us. And it isn't a one time thing love, is it? It isn't like, ok, 2,000 years ago His Son died on the cross, and that was the end of the sacrifice. That's why at every Mass we call it the sacrifice of the Mass. We participate in that one sacrifice. And the sacrifice is perpetuated every time we receive Him. So today when we sit there, that one sacrifice is perpetuated in an un-bloody way at every Mass. Now today is not a Mass, but today, the same God of the Universe will be present to us in the Eucharist, and we will say as we always do, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, happy are we who are called to His supper." And then this God, who gave up His life for us, just like the lamb that was in sacrifice in the beginning, when they would sit there and sacrifice the lamb at the Passover, after they took the blood and put it on the doorpost, the blood was spilled and then the Angel of Death passed over them, then after they offered this lamb for sacrifice, what did they do with the meat of the lamb? They ate it. That they would have life. So something had to die for something else to have life. You do realize that that is what all life is about. You know these people don't want to get into death – everything- for you to be alive today, something had to die! For you to eat every meal, something had to die! When you ate your turkey last night, or your chicken last night, or your roast beef last night – that poor chicken or turkey or pig or cow had to die, so that you could live! Now you might sit there and say "Well, I'm a vegetarian, Father." Well, that poor little lettuce had to die, out of the ground so you could live. There is no way that you and I can live, unless something else dies! Isn't that a nice thought? And just like it is physically, so it is spiritually, somebody had to die so that we could live forever. One of the biggest struggles we had in major seminary was when the priest looks at us and says "In the person of Jesus Christ, God became that which He absolutely is not, when Jesus died on the Cross." That when Jesus died on the cross, Jesus became what He absolutely is not. Relationship became non-relationship. The God of the Universe-the God of Life dies, that we might live. And the way that we get to absorb that is that when Jesus Christ died on the cross, God the Father, whose life is eternal embraces the death of His Son, and as He embraces Jesus and His death and His suffering and the pain and the reparation for our sins, His love is so strong for His Son, and His love is so strong for us that death dies and His love conquers, and His love brings Him to life. And that's why when we were baptized it says in the word of God that we are baptized into His death. And so, what happens is that when God the Father embraces His Son on the cross, we are embraced by God the Father. And we know that Good Friday is not the end. That as the love of the Father brought Jesus to life, that the love of our same Father will bring us to life forever. And for God the Father to leave us go, He would have to let go of Jesus. And He will never let go of Jesus, which means that He will never let go of you and me. But remember today, He had to die, so that we could live. And what that means for us, what's the practical reality of this is you are next, and I am next. And the way we give life to others is by dying to ourselves every day. That the only way for others to have life is for us to give our life in service. And when we do that, then others live because then we become one with the Lord Jesus. So Behold the Lamb of God – Behold the Lamb of God, who just didn't die the one time, or who did just die the one time, yes, but still continues to give us His own flesh and blood – still continues to give us everything in the Eucharist. And if we too will be united with Him – we too give our lives to Christ once, but we live that everyday by giving our lives for others as Eucharist

that they may too live. Ya got it? Get it? Good. May each of you know His love, today and forever. Amen.