

April 23, 2005

Fifth Sunday of Easter
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! Years ago, when I was still in seminary, in Christ the King, you know the one that threw me out! When I was preaching, you know I was thrown out because of preaching, as I told you before. Well, one of my homilies, maybe this was the reason-I preached on the old game – I don't know if it's even still around – called "Block Head." And you know, you put these different shape blocks on top of each other, and you try to keep it stern, and you started with a firm foundation and kept going, and then if someone would put the one on and make the whole thing fall down, everybody would say "Blockhead!" You know and it was very putting down on people, you know, a terrible thing! So, anyway, in the midst of it, it reminded me of the reality of how Christ has to be the cornerstone! And if you listen to the second reading today, which really gives us the eyes to see all of the readings today, it sits there and says "therefore, it is of value for you who have faith, but for those without faith, the stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. And the stone that will make people stumble will make people fall." They stumble by disobeying the word. So it talks about Jesus as the cornerstone. And so, as we begin this reflection today on God's word, we have to sit there and find out where Jesus is in our life. Is He the cornerstone, or is one of the other stones that are a part of our life? He fits in there somewhere. So, for Jesus to be the cornerstone of our life that means that everything else is built upon Him. Some people have Jesus as the cornerstone of their life, some people have money as the cornerstone of their life, some people have family as the cornerstone of their life, some people have prestige as the cornerstone of their life. That means if you take this part out – everything else falls apart. So the first thing you and I have to reflect on this morning is-is Jesus Christ the cornerstone of our lives? Is He the person, or the thing, or whatever that if He got pulled out of our life, nothing in our life would make sense? Our life would become meaningless. Everyone would know that everything falls apart if Jesus is taken out. This past week, when I was in Chicago before I went to Elkcart, I went to Mass. Oh, dear! And as I went to Mass, I sat there in a regular shirt, sat in the second pew of a church up there in the Diocese Joliette, I thought "Oh, dear" I was so happy with our community because everybody there was dead! The pastor was dead, the deacon preached 20 minutes! I was thinking, "come on, get a point, get a point! Ah! No, he missed that one!" Twenty minutes I'm going "Oh, dear!" Anyway, I'm thinking "no one here is excited about Jesus!" The person next to me was going to be a Eucharistic Minister, didn't give a dime in the collection, didn't sing one song, didn't want to give me a sign of peace, but did, and went on up and "here I am, I'm giving out Jesus." And I'm thinking "would people get it in gear?" No wonder no one wants to be catholic! You walk into a church, and everybody is dead! And I'm sitting there thinking "Jesus Christ needs to be everything to us! Not just something we do on Sunday for an hour, I'll go put in my time. He must be my very life, without Him nothing else makes sense!" And that has to become more real in our lives. Every day of our lives, huh? And so, we jump now to the gospel, and then we deal with the gospel. Jesus says "do not let your hearts be troubled." Do not let your hearts be troubled. And why? Do not let your hearts be troubled. Again,

this past week, after we got Benedict XVI, I was all excited about getting Benedict XVI – I think the Holy Spirit did it just to make the liberals mad! But, anyway, the reality is (clapping), oh, I'm going to hell! Anyway, so, here is and it wasn't two hours later, and I get and IM from somebody, as I went on the internet "Father, are you afraid?" "About what?" "Didn't the new Pope know that about the history of St. Malachi, and St. Malachi predicted all the Popes, and he predicted John Paul because he was born on the eclipse and then all of a sudden, what happens, he dies and then it said that the next one would be a Benedictine or would take the name Benedict?" And, we're all going crazy! "I'm not going to get married - I was supposed to get married in the fall. I'm not going to have any children now because the world is going to end in ten years!" And I was like, Oh, I wanted to say "NOT," but I didn't. I just sat there and said "do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and have faith with me." Why is it that people sit there and say "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ" but go nuts over these wacky things? And the ones that spend the most time are the wackier of the ones! "Father, did you hear about that prophesy on the Blessed Mother?" "Oh, shut up!" "Do not let your heart be troubled!" That is the command of Jesus Christ! Don't go about being worried, don't go about buying into all this stuff, because if your heart is troubled and afraid, that's not from God... who is it from? Satan? Yes! God does not make our hearts troubled if we have faith in Him. Satan gives us fear and takes away peace!! So, if you bought into that prophesy, get over it, it's not from God. The devil can prophesy too. But if it doesn't bring you peace, it isn't from God. Simple. "Do not let your heart be troubled." Then, you jump to the third part. Jesus said "I am the way, and the truth and the life. I am the way." St. Catherine of Siena, a couple hundred years ago said "All the way to heaven is heaven" because Jesus said "I am the way." All the way to heaven is heaven, because Jesus said "I am the way." What does that mean? That when we are in Jesus Christ, we get to experience heaven. So, what does this mean practically? It means practically Jesus becomes my cornerstone. How do I make Jesus Christ my cornerstone? I build my life on prayer. My whole life, every day I spend in the arms of the God of the Universe. I spend my life in the arms of the God of the Universe. Quality time, not just saying prayers, but in His presence – being embraced by Him, because if I'm embraced by Him, and I'm in His presence, I get to experience heaven! Because all the way to heaven is heaven because He said "I am the way." So, you see this cornerstone needs to be a very practical thing. You know, if I asked anybody that goes to church every Sunday "is Jesus the cornerstone of your life" they'd say, "oh, ya, of course Father, I go to church on Sunday, it's cornerstone every week." Is He the cornerstone of your daily life? Can you prove that by your daily committed prayer time? Is prayer that which is the most committed time? Do you pray more than anything else? The most important thing you and I do every day is pray, is that the reality in my life? If not, He's not the cornerstone. If not, we are going to be filled with fear. If not, we are going to be filled with anxiety. If not, all these things are going to happen if our prayer life isn't the cornerstone, because putting prayer life as the cornerstone of my daily life is the way I make Jesus Christ the cornerstone of my life. So, something to think about this day. Is Jesus the one I build my day around, my time with Him? Or do I fit Him in? Do I fit Him in? Yesterday, did you build your day around Him, or did you fit Him in? If you fit Him in, He is not your cornerstone. I don't care if you pray in tongues, I don't care if you jump up and down, if you fit Jesus into your life yesterday, He is not your cornerstone. So, what does this mean?

“I don’t know, Father I’m going to hell?” NO, it doesn’t – well maybe! NO it doesn’t mean that! It means that if He hasn’t been, He must become that! So, before you leave this church today, you sit there – you look at the Lord, God of the Universe in front of you and say “Jesus Christ, from this day forward, for the rest of my life, you will be my cornerstone, and I will make you my cornerstone by having committed, daily time with you. Nothing will get in the way of my daily committed time with you. Everything else will fall, except my time with you.” If you do that, you don’t need to let your hearts be troubled over anything. Pretty simple, huh? Ha! Very simple. The problem is we don’t make Him our priority. It’s that simple. But from this day forward, He can become that, if you promise Him, who is here, for the rest of your life, if you haven’t done it – that you’ll do it now. Got it? Get it? Good! May each of you know His love today and forever.
Amen!