

May 1, 2005

Sixth Sunday of Easter
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! You ready? Yea? There's ten of you! Where are all the girls? Two girls and eight guys - how'd that happen? So, we have eight guys – we have to have at least four of the guys become priests, right? And one of the girls be a nun – whose it going to be? Ohhhhhhhhh! Hee! Did ya all listen to the readings today? Yea, will see, yins did a good job, you know! You know what yins means for those of you who aren't from Pittsburgh? It means 'you' plural. Right? Yins! Two Masters, and I still speak like this. Isn't that amazing? Anyway, today, if you listen to the second reading, there was something in there that has to do with something we did this past year. Anybody know what that is? St. Peter says "always be ready to give the...reason for the hope that is within you." And we just started the Reason for Our Hope Foundation, right? Now, of course, there needs to be what...ladies and gentlemen, children soon to receive Jesus for the first time? What is, or should I say, who is the reason for our hope. Du Du Du Du Du Du Du Du Du... Du Du Du Du Du... What? Jesus, yea Jesus is the reason for our hope!!!! That's exactly it! Good job, what a priest you're going to be!!! So, what's going to happen is, Jesus is the reason for our hope. You know, the world doesn't know that! There world – did ya ever look at people's faces? Most people look sad – they look discouraged – they look – whatever it is. Huh? They just don't look like they have any hope! And we all get that way some days. But the difference between us and others is that we have a reason for hope. And that reason is Jesus Christ. Huh? As I was speaking at the different places, this time, you know we were sitting there talking about --- I come off very strong! And some people, like Mike Morphy said to me the other night – "Father that can come off like arrogance!" Me?? NO! It isn't arrogance at all! It is truth! We have the truth! Period! Comma! End of all paragraphs!! If that is arrogance, then you don't know truth! The truth is Jesus Christ is the reason for our hope! He's the only thing that matters! He's the one for the rest of your lives that will give you hope! He's the one that is going to say you will never be alone, because you have a reason for hope. Jesus Christ today is going to live inside of you! Isn't that exciting, huh? Now, only if everybody else would be as excited as you are today. So often, when people start receiving communion, you know, sometimes people receive their First Communion, and we don't see them again until Confirmation! Isn't that sad? Because then, Jesus isn't the reason for our hope, it's just, you know "I go through, it's a cultural thing, I got my First Communion, yea, I got my First Confirmation." Duh!! But no real reason for hope, because Jesus doesn't take residence in them! They don't get it, huh??? You're gonna get it, right? Because Jesus is all there is! Now, if you listen to the gospel today Jesus, the reason for our hope, and then it says, now this will be interesting to see if anybody got this...It says in the gospel today... "those who love me will...be...."don't listen to Mrs. Walkiewicz back there!!! Come on! Cheating...what...it begins with an "o." Obey!!! Listen to this gospel reading! Isn't it amazing here? It sits there and says "if you love me, you will keep my commandments, or obey me" and it also says "whoever has my commandments and obeys me will be the one who loves me." So the way we show that we love Jesus – you know people say I love Jesus all the time! You know "I love Jesus, I love Jesus. I will do

anything for God.” And what does God want us to do for Him today? Simple - is to...Obey! That’s it! Now, if you sit there – now there is a promise here if you obey! Like for instance God tells you to go to church every Sunday, right? So, that’s the way that you show Him that you love Him, because you obey Him! But then He makes you a promise. He says “if you obey me” what’s gonna happen? Did anybody listen to that? You’ll do it for the first time today! “If you obey me....” You know, you can cheat because you have Missalettes in front of you! But, anyway, “if you obey me...” it says..... “whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love Him and reveal myself to Him” but it says “if you obey Me I will come and I will...be...in...YOU!” I will be in you! So, here it comes! Today, we talk about Jesus is the reason for our hope, and now to know that, we have to obey Him, and if we obey Him and if we obey Him today and every time you go to Mass, what will He do? He will come and live...with you and inside of you, right? So, when you come into the church, what do you do when you come in the church today? First thing you do after you bless yourself and before you sit in your pew, what do you do? You get down on one knee....what do we call that? Pray? Genuflect! There you go! So you come in and you genuflect. Why do we genuflect? Hee Hee! Come on, someone tell me! Why do we genuflect? Because God! Very good, where is He? Is He only in heaven? In us? But where is He...where do we genuflect to? Do we just genuflect to the wall? First Communion! We genuflect to....the Tabernacle! Where is the tabernacle? Right there in the center. Is anybody in the tabernacle? Who? Jesus! Ok, so Jesus is in the tabernacle, but then is He gonna stay there today? Where is He gonna go? In us!!! So Jesus sits here and waits for you and me, every day, and then when we come and we obey Him, He says “come here, I’m going to give you a gift, and it will be a gift that you can never lose.” And the gift is Jesus Himself. You see, just like when we obey our parents, the parents do good things for us, huh? They want us to obey! So with Jesus, He wants us to obey. And when we obey Him, He gives us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of Himself. So we need to be people that always have hope! That when everybody else is getting sad, I don’t have to be sad because Jesus decided that He’s not just going to stay up in heaven, that Jesus is going to come and live inside of me. So, you know sometimes, at night, in the middle of the night and you feel alone? I never liked when I was a kid when the lights went out. I used to have to have one of those little night lights in my room. Can you imagine? I was afraid of the dark. You think that’s weird? Yea! I was terrified! And so I always had that thing...I’d say “Oh, dear!” because I lived up in the attic, and I always thought there were ghosts in the attic! And so I had to have a little light there! And so, when the light was there...and I’d sit there and say...I’d go underneath and cover myself totally with the covers! And here I am underneath the covers and ohhhh... “ghosts are gonna get me!” But once I remember...that once I thought about, just once, ohhhh...I thought about Jesus, and as I was under the covers I said “Jesus, you gotta be with me.” And as soon as I said that, I could feel Him, that He was with me and I didn’t have to be afraid. Because of what happens today, Jesus is going to come and live inside of you. And he is not going to leave you after a few minutes you know. Jesus isn’t just going to come inside of you and then a couple minutes later say “ok, I’m gone now.” How long will Jesus stay inside of you now? Forever! So, are you ever going to be alone? Never. You are never alone! God isn’t up there only! For today and the rest of your life, God will be in here - forever. So you never have to be alone.

And what you do when you receive Him today, is you remind us old people...you think we're old? Us old people, you remind us of the great gift that we receive, that Jesus Christ is our hope, that we are called to obey Him, and that when we all obey Him, He lives inside of us. And it's only when we run from Him, or He says "ok, if you don't want me, I'll never force myself on you." So please, today let's acknowledge the greatest of all gifts, and let's tell Him that He is always worth our time. Let's tell Him that nothing is more important than Him, and come running to Him as often as we can. Because the only thing that will give us hope is Jesus Christ. Ya got it? Get it? Good! May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.