

Sunday, June 12, 2005
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! Today, if you listen to all three readings, it starts with God. Everything always starts with God. And as we hear Him, He sits there and says "I have chosen you – you are special to me." From the beginning. And then we listen to the second reading and He sits there and says "while we are still sinners, Christ proved His love for us." That before we turned to Him, He turned to us. And then He says, in that first reading, the exact line I want to get right, he says "therefore, if you hearken to my voice, listen to my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my special possession, dearer to me than all peoples." You see, God has already now done His part. He did His part. He loved us, He died for us, when we didn't know Him before we were created, when we ignore Him, when we fit Him into our life instead of building our lives around Him. He has done His part. He has loved us. And He has told us that He loves us. Now what do we have to do? We have to respond in love. And He talks about a covenant. A covenant is something – it's not a contract, it's a relationship. That what Jesus, the Father and the Spirit want from you and me is a response in love. Not a response in fear, a response in love. So He has chosen you – He has chosen me and He says "ok, it's up to you now." You know, I'm confirmation sponsor to about 35 kids. And I'll sit there and I'll do my part and say "Ok kid, I care about you and I love you and I'll take care of you, but the ball is in your court. I'm not going to go chasing after your, huh? You have to make the response, huh? I've done my part." God does the same thing. Listen, He's the prodigal father who waits for us and He says "I have done my part, I have given you everything I can. Now the ball is in your court – what will you do with it?" The, we hear Jesus and Jesus says "what you have received as a gift, give as a gift." So, God's love demands something from us. That when we respond to Him in love, we freely give to God our love, and then, we freely give our lives, our gifts and our talents to others. So the first part of that though is what we have to work on first. We have to receive that love. Just because Jesus died for you does not mean you are saved. You have to receive that to be saved. You have to accept that to be saved. You have to want that to be saved. You just can't sit there and say "Jesus died for me, He loves me." His love will not save you unless you receive it. You know that? You have to really know that! You have to let that sink inside of you! Just because you are loved does not mean you are going to heaven. You have to receive that love and accept that love, and then the way that you receive that love and accept that love is hearken to His voice. Listen to Him, which means to obey Him. Very simple. To obey Him means that you receive that love – you accept that love! And then to obey Him says that now that you have received this gift from Me of love, guess what you are going to have to do with each other? Ya, you are going to have to love them. You are going to have to love your enemies. You are going to have to love the people you can't stand. You are going to have to give them your life. And so again, with the gift that you and I have been given freely, after we receive it, now we have to give it to others.

Truly! And again, the way we do that is we do that here in the church by making sure all of us do our part, right? And we talked about it – at the other Masses, I gave a different homily because I wanted to make sure that everybody – you know we still have people ministering from this Mass asked to go to other Masses. And I'm glad that you are going to do that and if you don't do that – you are off ministry. Aha-ha! Because what you received as a gift, you need to give as a gift. That means if you don't go to 11:00 Mass, or you go to two Masses on Sunday, tough! That's a good thing. But you have a ministry so you can give it. But what we need to do is know that everything we have has been given to us, and now I must freely give it to others. And that ministry that I have first of all – the talent that every one of us here has – is the ability to love. In our own way, in our own time, in our own personality. But what you and I have to say is how do I build up the Body of Christ in the Church? How do I build up the Body? How do I give back what I have received? Only you can answer that question. And you should know that answer before you leave Mass today. Ya got it? Get it? Good! Five minutes and thirty-one seconds! You have a merciful pastor, I know!!!!