

Fr. Larry Richards
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Good Morning! Are you ready? Are ya hot? Yea, me too! Wait until you get under all these things, well some of you maybe, someday! Today, if we listen to the gospel, it's not a nice gospel, now is it? It's not this gentle, loving Jesus, tiptoeing through the tulips. He says "if you love your mother, father, son or daughter more than me, guess what? You're not worthy of Me." Now, if you are listening to that - that should slap you in the face and go "oh, I don't think I like that." Because most people - nobody here - but a lot of people really fit God into their life. They you know, love their family and then they love God, and you show that by "I go to church every once in awhile, or on Sunday" and that's it for the hour. But Jesus is saying "you must love me more than you love your family." Now, again years ago when I was at St. Luke's and I gave this homily and after I was done saying you know, you have to love God more than you love your family - I guy waited for me at the end. And as he waited for me at the end he says "I COMPLETELY disagree with you." I said "that's nice, you're wrong." You know and he goes "AHHHH! I just don't believe that you are called to love God more than anything else!" Well, tell that to Abraham. Tell that to God the Father. Tell that to Jesus. You see, if we just love our families with our love, that's a very petty love isn't it? We get mad at each other, so we don't talk. Or we yell and scream, or we put conditions on our love. And love our families with a human love. And what God says is "if you love me first, then I will love your families through you." That means we love our families more than we could ever love them in our own power! We love them through the love of God! But we do that by putting God first. So the first thing you have to ask yourself and I have to ask myself is do I love Jesus more than I love my husband or wife. Let it sit. Do I love Jesus more than I love my children? Let it sit. Do I love Jesus more than I love anybody on this earth? Let it sit. And if I don't, it's not an option. I must. So what you and I have to do is say "Jesus, I don't love you more than anything else. I do love the people in my life more than I love you. So Jesus, change my heart. Give love of you who are the God of the Universe. Change my heart, and I give you permission to have me love you above all things." So that's the first thing you have to do. Then we have to look at examples of this. The first example we have of course, is Mary. Yesterday, I was saying the rosary and I was meditating on the gospel, when He says that we have to put everything in front of Him. Those who save their life will lose it; those who lose their life for my sake will find it. That's what Mary did, huh? Go through the Joyful Mysteries, when she is confronted with the will of the Father, she says, "not what I want God, what you want." When she finds out she is pregnant in this visitation, she doesn't say "I have to take care of myself and my family first." She went and served Elizabeth. When she was born and she said "yes" and finally let the God of the Universe be born, and she could have run to some palace or something, but she went and had that child, the God of the Universe in a barn! Such humility of Mary. Then she goes and when she presents that child in the temple, the greatest gift that was ever given to her - she acknowledges it is not hers, and she gives Jesus back to the flock. "God, I know that He belongs to you." Do we know that about our family? Do we know that they are all God's, and I give them back to God because they belong to Him? And then finally, at the last Joyful Mystery when she is caught with Jesus in the temple, now she really knows that this son of hers doesn't belong to her,

because He says to her “don’t you know I have to be about my Father’s business, mother? Not your business, my Father’s business. I have to be doing His will.” And that sword that pierced her heart as she knew that Jesus didn’t belong to her, and she had to let Him go. And so often we have to do the same. And then too, the example of Jesus himself, whose whole life is to do the will of his dad; who in the Eucharist gives us His life again and again. You know, Jesus just doesn’t die for us once and for all. He gives His life every moment of every day in the Eucharist. The God of the Universe keeps giving and giving and giving. The God who is now in heaven could sit there and say “ok, I’ve done enough.” But he doesn’t. His Holy Trinity is about giving to us. Now, what this calls us to is to live the same type of life. And so how do we practically – practically, day in, day out live what the gospel calls us to? Well the first thing we have to do is we have to deal with sin. And the second reading talks about when Jesus died, He died to sin, once and for all. And then he says Paul, that “you must consider yourself dead to sin.” So the first thing to make practical in our life – to die to self – is what sin is Jesus asking you and me to get rid of today? Now all of us sit there and we go to confession and we say the same sins over and over. Well let’s stop – right now – bang! What sin will you turn your back on forever in front of Jesus? What is it today that He is calling you to give up forever? It could be explicit judgment or gossiping or lust or idolatry with money – whatever it is! What is He asking when He says “you must consider yourself dead to sin?” What is it that Jesus Christ wants you to get rid of today. First thing. The second thing is with others. You and I have to sit there and think every day – how do I make this concrete? What do I do in my daily life that makes me commit at least one unselfish act? One unselfish act with people – first of all in my family, which most of you who are mothers you do this automatically. Fathers don’t do it as automatically as mothers, just as an aside. Some do, but some don’t. So what do I do unselfishly for my family, everyday? But then, what do I do unselfishly for the people I work with, or for the poor? How do I give my life away? How do I die to myself so as to live for God in service of other people, as Mary did when she found out she was pregnant with Jesus? Finally, how do I die to myself so that I may live for God? And that is with my prayer time. Now, first of all that means that if you and I don’t have committed prayer time, everyday – and again, as you have heard me say 1,000 times – everybody needs a half hour of prayer every day, except of course when you are busy – then you need an hour! Ok? So, first of all, do you and I give God quality time every day? Don’t give me this “oh, I say my prayers every once in awhile.” Uh Uh. Are you and I giving Him quality time? He wants us to die to our selves, and that begins when we give time to God in prayer! And if you give Him that five minutes, I think He wants more! Hmmm. How will you die specifically for God? So three areas we have to die to our self in: to sin, to selflessness in giving our lives in service to others, and to live for God, by dying to time spent for ourselves and turning that into time spent with God. If we do this, then Jesus promises us “we will lose our life, but in losing our life, we will gain everlasting life.” So the question of course, is that for each of us do you want to win your life or do you want to lose your life? If you win your life, forget it. It’s over. If you lose your life for Christ in His gospel, you will live forever. So, where do you want life, on earth or in heaven? Your decision. Don’t you hate me? Ta hee!