

August 21, 2005

Fr. Larry Richards

Today – well in this past week, everybody is getting ready to go back to college. And so, I got to see some of my old college kids, there are going back to college. And a few of them, as we go at the end of it, they come and they say “Father, I think I need to go to confession.” Really? Huh! So, we go to confession. And so, just like the other day when I was out with one particular one – at the end of it he went to confession, everything was fine and I said “son, this is your problem – are you ready?” And this kid had just graduated from college! I said “you are still trying to be a good person, instead of being in a relationship with Jesus Christ.” And that is where it’s at! And I think that so many people are still there. They are trying to be good people, instead being a person madly in love with Jesus Christ. To be a person who is just in a relationship with Jesus. That Jesus and my relationship with Him affects everything I do! It is so much more than being a good person! It is so much more than going to church! It means that I can do nothing apart from my relationship with the person I love more than anything else, and that I know loves me! That is what He calls us to! But so often we just fall into this “I have to be good...” You have to be good, but you are not going to be good by trying to be good! You will be good because you are madly in love with somebody! That is the way things will change in you and me! But see, Jesus – if you listen to the gospel today – here He is challenging them and He sets them up! And I love when Jesus does this! He sets up the apostles, and they fall for it all the time! They might as well put “stupid” across their foreheads. You know “who do people say that I am?” And they start telling Him what everybody says who they think He is! And again, get this, we have heard it before everyone one of them were wrong! Catholics are very big on this today! Now, this is a little bit different Mass – the other Masses I could expand this much more – but I have to go a different way with this Mass. But if I was going to stop the Mass right now and start going down and asking each of you “what are you reading? What are you reading right now?” Most people at most Catholic Churches – 95% would be something secular right now! They are reading a book – a novel – The DaVinci Code! One of these things and they sit there and think “oh, I’m really smart, I’m reading these things!” Now I know more of you here read more spiritual books, huh? But there is still a group of you that would rather read a good novel than to spend time with the word of God. The novel isn’t going to get you squat except to Hell, just giving you a little hint!! But anyway, so there it is – “oh, I love my novel!” Shut up!! How much time do you spend in the word of God? If you are reading novels, do you spend as much time reading the word of God as you spend reading novels? What is a novel going to get you? NOWHERE! Why waste your time? But if you want to read novels, that’s just fine! Hmm! So, but the reality is that most Catholics waste their time to try to find out what other people think about God. Well that’s very nice, but it has nothing to do with reality! Because most people are wrong!! Brown in the DaVinci Code is 100% wrong! And yet, people buy into this! “You know, Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and it’s her womb which is the cup!” Shut up! It has nothing to do with that reality! But a guy writes a novel, people will read that more than they will read the word of God, and they will buy into it!

So He shuts up the apostles and He says “what are they saying about me?” And they tell Him and they are all wrong! And that is normally what we project onto God what we think He is – we are almost always wrong! Now, He asks them, He says “ok, Peter” or He asks all the apostles “who do you say – you have been with me – who do you say that I am?” And Peter looks right up at Him and says “You are the Christ. You are the Christ.” Now, get this though, Jesus looks at Peter and says “Blessed are you Simon Peter, son of Jonah, no mere man has revealed this to you, you didn’t get this from reading the book – you didn’t get this from reading the DaVinci Code – you didn’t get this from watching the Seventh Seal on TV yesterday! You got this because of my Father revealed this to you! You got it from my Dad!” And see, when we spend time with the Father, God Himself will tell us who Jesus is! So, what we have to do, first of all is we have to make sure we get two things today from the gospel. God reveals to us two different ways – through the word of God and through – we find out you are...ROCK... “And upon you I will build my church...” and through the teaching of the church. So, you and I have to sit there and think “how am I growing in my relationship of knowing Jesus?” And we all have to do it – if you know Jesus, don’t sit back and say “I already know Jesus.” Get a clue!! This week I’ll spend five days in silence at a retreat so that I can get to know Jesus more. And I have to do it at least once a year, five days of silence, just to get to know Jesus more! I’m never going to know Jesus the way I need to know – even in heaven there is still going to be more to know! But sometimes we think “well I have the gift of the Spirit, I know Jesus!” You are just scratching the surface - - you haven’t got a clue!! What are you and I going to do to make this even deeper – our relationship with Jesus Christ? He is always calling us deeper! He called Peter to go deeper into relationship with Him. He called the apostles to go deeper and he disciplined them! Sometimes we don’t allow ourselves to be disciplined. We just think “I know it – it’s a once in a lifetime thing or whatever,” but Jesus wants to disciple us – He wants to reveal Himself to us more!! And so the things we have to do are the basic things. We have to spend time with Him in the word of God. How many times do I say this? Hmm!! Many, many times! But I say it – that we have to spend time every day reading the word God! We have to spend as much time as possible in His presence in the Blessed Sacrament, especially here, 24-hours a day. You know, there is a priest right down the road, you can come up here almost every night around 9 or 10 PM and this priest from down the road spends an hour in front of Jesus. He is a young priest, but I can promise you the Lord will bless Him abundantly! Priests are very busy, huh? And he still makes quality time for the Lord, as we all must do. That’s how he gets to know that HE is the Christ! Because everyone here – let me think – I think everybody here believes that Jesus is the Christ, is that correct? So does the devil, so? Is he your Christ? Is He your savior? Have you accepted that completely and surrendered yourself more fully to Him every day? You know, every day this has to be ongoing!! Because unless – you know yesterday I married the Gustafson girl, huh? And there she is, she looks are her fiancé, they have been going together for five years – but they couldn’t enter into relationship unless they gave their lives to each other. And now, their relationship and who they are is defined by that relationship. So when Kristy would look over to her husband Jeremy, she says “Jeremy, who do you say that I am?” And he could say “you are my wife.” And then Jeremy could look at Kristy and say “Kristy, who do you say that I am?” “You are my husband.”

You see, it is determined by their relationship and the giving of their life – the same thing that has to happen with us and Jesus. That our relationship and who He is to us is determined by the true relationship. “Jesus, you are everything to me. You are not just something I do on Sunday, you are not just the faith I profess once a week. Jesus, you are my life. And Jesus there is no part of my life where you are not there.” Ya Got it? Get it? Good. May each of you know His love, today and forever. Amen.