

August 28, 2005

Fr. Larry Richards

When we listen to the second reading today, it's a powerful reading! If you listen to the second reading, it says "Offer to God your bodies as a living sacrifice." Now, what is a living sacrifice? A living sacrifice, of course, is God gives us the example first, in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a living sacrifice - something or someone who lives their life for others. But there are two things I believe that the second reading is calling us to today. One is offer your bodies as a living sacrifice to God who is your spiritual worship. So what that means - it is going to mean two things. First, is that in our bodies we need to worship God with all our bodies, and two, we need to let God use every part of our bodies to do His work. One, is we use our bodies to worship God and two we allow Him to use our bodies to do His work. Let's focus on the first. To worship God with our bodies as a living sacrifice means that we are here to worship God. Now again, at this Mass, it is a little bit different than other Masses. But at other Masses at other Catholic churches, most people kind of sit there and look like this...even, you can tell when the new people come in, they are like, "oh Father I was brought up Catholic, what's this?" What we are called to do is worship God with our whole bodies! You can't worship God and stand like this...just like you can't watch a football game or a basketball game or watch Notre Dame kill Duke next week without sitting there, jumping up and down! You do things with your body! When you are intimate with your spouse, you do it with????? Your body! Your whole body enters in, if you love something, or somebody. So, the whole thing, our bodies need to be offered to God as a living sacrifice who is our spiritual worship. So, we worship God with our bodies, with our hands. You know Bob Heinlein likes to make fun of me! Can you imagine? Bob!!! Cause I jump up and down a lot!! Can you imagine? Making fun of a priest!! Hell forever!! But the reality is you need to worship God with your body!!! If that means you get excited and you jump up every once in awhile, praise God!! You get excited about other things! Do we worship God with our bodies? Do we put all of our being into our worship or do we just sit there and might say a word or two, Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed by thy name....but we need to worship God with our body!! How do you worship God in your body? Catholics, we do it a lot...we stand, we sit, we kneel, we raise our hands in this parish, and we do different things! But I want you to think, today, God is calling you to worship Him in your body. Do you use your body to worship God, with all your being, or do you just go through the motions? First thing. The second thing we are talking about is to offer God our bodies as a living sacrifice, means that we offer to God and we let God use us for all that He is. Everything that we are is only for you Lord, God. I give you my hands, that I may worship you, I give you my hands that you may use them as yours! So, what happens is to be a disciple it says I offer everything to God. That means I am going to????????? Die! Those who seek their life will lose it...but those who lose their life will find it. So what that means is every day I come before God and I say "God, this body is yours." Use me for yours. I am going to read you a prayer, and I want you to pay attention because you are going to have to write a prayer... you are going to get homework this week. Aren't you glad when I give you homework?

Yea, it's a great thing! So you are going to have to do something like this, because this is part of how to offer to God, concretely your body as a living sacrifice. Ok? This was written by a 19 year old kid.

“Lord, take my hands. I give them to you, so that you may continue to bless, to heal, to work, to feel, to comfort and to love. Forgive me for using them for things against your will. Lord, take my mouth. I give it to you so that you may continue to speak, to preach, to build up, to comfort, and to love. Forgive me for all the times I have hurt people with my mouth. Lord, take my nose and my senses. I give them to you so that you may continue to sense good from evil, and smell the fragrance of your love. Forgive me for distorting this for my own will. Lord, take my eyes. I give them to you so that you may continue to see the good in all people, the spirit of your Father, the spirit of your love. Forgive the times that I have seen only the evil, and then judged others. Lord, take my ears. I give them to you so that you may continue to listen and hear and cry the cry of the lonely and the poor. Forgive me for all the times that I have closed them to your truth and your people. Lord, take my feet. I give them to you so that you may continue to lead myself and others in your path of love. Forgive me for using them to follow a path of selfishness. Lord, take my body. I give it to you so that you may continue to suffer so as to carry on my dying to myself. Forgive me for wanting to use it for the desires of my own flesh. Lord, take my heart. I give it to you so that you may continue to love and to understand and to love others through me. Forgive me for all the times I have let my heart be hardened. Lord, take my life. I give it to you so that you may continue to live through me. Forgive me for wanting only to live for myself. Lord, I give you my very self everything. All that I am - just as I am. I give myself to you so that you will do your will and I will not do my will and always your will will be done in me. September 12, 1979.”

I was 19 years old and in Seminary when I sat there and offered to God in my body, myself as a living sacrifice. That God would use every single part of me for Him. Now, notice there is a lot of asking for forgiveness, because as much as I may offer to God these last four or five days when I was silent up in the monastery, I had to keep saying, “God you have to live, and I have to die...God you have to live and I have to die....God, you have to live and I have to die!!” And it is an ongoing battle! But what you and I have to do is truly, completely give God every part of our body. That it may be His. So, this is what I want you to do this week for homework! Just sit there and write that letter to God. That you sit there and on paper you say “Lord, I give you my hands, forgive the times I used my hands for myself, and Lord I give you my hands – that they might be your hands, and that they may bring you glory and that they may work for you. I give you my eyes, that I might see people the way You see them, instead of me being so judgmental. Lord, give me your eyes, to love and see people and your image in people.” However you want to do that. But this week, sometime today, tomorrow, when you sit before the Blessed Sacrament, you write God a letter, offering your body and every part and every sense as a living sacrifice, to be used for Him and for His glory. And then I want you to sign it and date it and keep it. I don't care if you are 17 or 14 or 50 or 90! You sit there and you do this as a concrete expression that “Lord, today, forever, my hands are yours, my eyes are yours, my feet are yours, my heart is yours, every part.” Then, you and I become living examples of a living sacrifice. Because, though we still live in our bodies, our bodies are no longer ours, but they are to be used for God.

And notice when He says all this “offer your bodies” why? That you may know God’s will. So what you do, when you and I give our bodies to God and all that it contains, the only thing that will matter to you and me is that we do the will of God. Doesn’t matter what we want anymore – it only matters what He wants forever. And when you and I do that, just like Mary, it is going to cost us something, our lives. But we will get eternal life. Forever. So what are you going to do this week? You are going to write a letter to God. You are going to give Him every part of your body. You are going to sit there and make sure that you offer your body as a living sacrifice, and you make it concrete, and you sign it and you date it and you keep it to remind you that your body, your heart, your life, everything about you – is no longer yours – it belongs to God. You gave it to Him. Forever. Got it? Get it? Good. May each of you know His love, today and forever. Amen.