

August 13, 2006  
Fr. Larry Richards  
Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Now we see today that the altar has been moved back three feet, so that it is in the middle of the sanctuary, and we do that on purpose, because if you listen to the gospels today, the gospels are very clear about what God wants. And if you sit there and listen to the first part of the gospel Jesus says “anyone who believes will have eternal life...” So, that is the first question we have to ask ourselves today – do we believe and what do we believe? Do we believe that on this altar the bread and wine actually become the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ? Do we believe it? That is the question. Do you believe that that becomes God? Not something that just reminds us of His flesh and blood – but the true body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. That is the ultimate question! You know, this past week I was with the ministers that I always meet with once a month – and I was with them and someone was talking about creationism and I didn’t deal with it at all – but the reality was one of the guys said “I believe in creation so much that I would be willing to take a bullet for that!” He would be willing to take a bullet for that – he would be willing to die for the reality of God is the creator of all things! That is a glorious thing! But then it made me think – what would I be willing to take a bullet for? What would I be willing to die for? And what God asks us today – would you and I be willing to die for our belief on the Eucharist? Would we be willing to die for that? Because ultimately what you believe is something that you would be willing to die for! So, if someone came in here – like today, when you come to Communion – to myself or one of the other ministers – they will sit there and say “the Body of Christ” and you will say “Amen” correct? That is exactly what you will say! And it is more than just saying “I believe” it is saying that I would stake my life on what you just said. So, what you do when you come up here today is you profess with all your being that you would die for what you just said! You would be willing to take a bullet that Jesus Christ is truly present in the Eucharist. Is that what you believe, and do you believe it with all of your heart? So, that is the first question that we have to ask. And if you don’t believe that in your heart of hearts – if you don’t believe, then don’t you leave this church – don’t you leave this place until you ask for that belief, because if you ask for it – Jesus, who is so faithful – will grant it. But you have to ask for that gift - that grace of faith, so that you would be willing to die for what we believe. Because the belief of Christ in the Eucharist is one of the core beliefs of our church, and it has to be more than just going through the motions every week and saying I believe. You have to be willing to take a bullet for it, because He took a bullet for you and me, when He died on the Cross. He believed in us that He took a bullet – if you will – and He died for us on the Cross. And then He even went deeper and gave us His own body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. And so the first thing we have to do today is say do you believe? And if you don’t believe, then you and I have to beg the God of the Universe that you do believe. Then we move on in the gospel, because then He says “this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone that eats it may not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven – whoever eats this bread will live forever.” So you and I can’t just believe – “oh, I believe – I would be willing to die that Christ is in the Eucharist...” we have to be willing to eat that. What happens if we don’t eat? We die! Now, again, if I was to ask you “did you eat

yesterday?” “Well, of course, Father.” “Well, did you receive Eucharist yesterday?” “Well no Father, I go once a week, isn’t that enough?” Well, in some ways, yes, but you know, why do we minimize? Why is it the least important thing for us? “Oh, I have to go to Mass once a week...” Eating is the most important thing we have to do to stay alive! If you don’t eat, you die – same in the physical life – same in the spiritual life. For you and I to live forever, you and I have to eat the body, the blood, the soul, and divinity – the flesh of our God present in the Eucharist. And yet so often – oh, nobody here – but in some places – they don’t go to Mass every week! They go to Mass when they feel like it, and so, what happens – if you stop eating, what happens? You die – exactly! You die! Well, if you stop eating the bread of life – what happens? You die! If you miss Mass on Sunday, what is that? It is a mortal sin – very good! And a mortal sin – if you die in mortal sin, what happens? You go to hell! And now, again, people hate when I say stuff like this. They say “well, Father, don’t say that...” or they get mad at me, or whatever. And my thing is don’t you blame God for your lack of priority in your life. Don’t blame God if you are lazy. Don’t blame God if you say “well, golf is more important...” Don’t you blame God because He is not treating you right - it has nothing to do with Him! He gives you His body, blood, soul, and divinity every day – but you choose not to receive Him – just like He gives you food every day. If you choose not to eat it and you die, it is not His fault. So don’t you dare blame God if you die spiritually because you don’t want to receive His body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist. Don’t you dare blame the God of the Universe for your lack of discipline, or your laziness, or your lack of priority by not going to church. And it is very important that you and I decide that, because again, we blame God – “if God was a God of love, He wouldn’t do this.” And, again, I might be stepping on some of your toes, and I understand you might be going “oh, I don’t like when Father does this...” But you know, three or four years ago when I was diagnosed a diabetic, my doctor, who cares for me, he is a great guy, and we were sitting there talking and he says “Father, I have bad news – you are a borderline diabetic.” And he says “these are your options – you can die, you can lose your eyesight, or you can lose your legs.” Well, he got my attention. And I said “ok, what’s the problem?” And then he said “You’re too fat!” Well, that wasn’t very nice! But I was 50 pounds overweight! And somebody had to step on my toes so that I would stop doing the things that were hurting me! Now, if I had died, or lost my eyesight, or lost my legs – it was not my doctor’s fault, it was not God’s fault – it was my fault, because then I knew something and I didn’t make any difference – I didn’t change anything in my life. Well, when I did find out, I did change things – I had to give up sugar, I had to start disciplining myself with my body – I had to start taking care of myself so that I could be healthy! And so, just like the doctor told me what was necessary – and you know, I didn’t like hearing that I was fat, but it was necessary because he wanted me to have true life! And so sometimes when I have to come and tell you, “listen, you have to go to Mass every week, or you are going to die...” because more important is spiritual eating, than physical eating! It is much more important. Physical eating will keep you around until 80 maybe. Spiritual eating, according to the word of God – eating His flesh will keep you around for how long? Forever! And so, the first thing is we have to believe that God is present in the Eucharist, the second thing is that we need to receive it – or eat the God of the Universe, if you will, who humbles Himself before us in bread and wine, and becomes food for us – food for the journey of life – that we might live forever. And that is more important than anything

else. So we believe, we receive, and then finally, we need to become Christ, we need to become what we eat. Because you have heard that before – you are what you eat! And if we are what we eat – we eat the body, blood, soul, and divinity of our God, Jesus Christ. And so, what does that mean? It means that you and I must become Christ to the world! And again, let's go back to that gospel today “and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world...” That Jesus Christ comes and gives us His flesh, that we would live forever. And so what we have to do is we need to be people who give our lives so that others may live. Again, let's go back – what did it cost Jesus to give us His body, blood, soul, and divinity so that we would live forever? His life! So He had to die, so that we could live. And so what does that mean for us? It means that every day we have to be Eucharist for others – we have to give ourselves away in service. And where does that begin? Please, God, it begins with your family! So again, you and I have to think every day “how am I life-giving to my spouse?” Do you give life to your spouse? Do you always put their needs in front of your own? Do you exist every day to serve them? How do you do it for your children? Do you put their needs in front of yours? Most people easily do that with their children. Some with their spouse, but not everybody. Kids, how do you do that with your family? For your parents? Do you say “oh, I'll gladly take out the garbage today – I'll take out the garbage!” For your siblings, do you come here to serve your brothers and sisters? Oh, sure Father! How about the people at school? When you are at school, are you a person that goes to school to serve? When you are at work, are you there to serve the people that you work for? Do you give your life for them? How about the people you meet after work – the people that you just run into? Do you and I see Christ in everybody? Are we willing to lay down our life for everybody, every day, as much as God calls us to – to give life to the world? Notice that Jesus wants to give life to everybody. He doesn't pick and choose here – he says “my flesh, I give for the whole world.” Do you and I want to give life to the world, or just our certain part of the world? Somewhere inside of us, there has to be that need to be like Jesus, so much, and be transformed so much, into He that we receive so much that we become Him to the world, that I have inside of me the desire to bring life to the whole world. And I do that by giving my life in service. So, today if we listen to this gospel that we find in John – it is very challenging – John calls to believe in the Eucharist – to be willing to die for the Eucharist. He calls us to not just believe in something from afar – but to believe in it some much that we receive it as often as possible so that we can live forever. And the more we receive Him, and the more we surrender, the more we become Him to the world. And then we become life-givers. And when you and I become life-givers, we give life to the world. And isn't that what is most important? That you and I believe, and we receive and then we become Jesus to the world, so that the world would have life. This world is so filled with darkness and death and sin, that when you and I become life for the world because of Christ living inside of us, because of receiving Him, we give hope to the world. And isn't that one of the most important things you and I can be? And if we are that hope, that light, that life – no matter how dark the darkness can get – if you and I light a match – that little light can never be conquered by the darkness. The light always overcomes the darkness. So you and I when we come into the midst of the darkness and we bring Christ who is within us to the world – we bring life, we bring hope, we bring light – we bring change to the world! You got it? Get it? May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.