

August 20, 2006  
Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Fr. Larry Richards

Good morning! You notice every time you come into church, we have something different, huh? And if you notice, we put the podium back in a place of prominence. You know, when I first got here, I thought that looks really stupid, that thing! It's because they had it all up in the choir loft, so we moved it. And next week, when you come back the angels that are in the back on the blocks are going to be moved back up on the altar. Anyway, we need to sit there today and focus on the gospel, and the gospel talks about the bread of life, and we talked about that a lot last week, if you remember, huh? And again, Jesus says that this is His real flesh, His real blood and the core belief in our religion, as we said, is that God becomes present in the Eucharist. And if we listen to this gospel today – the reason that He does this is – he says – is so “that I may remain in them.” That what Jesus wants more than anything else is for Him to live in and through us. Today when we baptize Elijah – Elijah, what a nice name – what happens is he becomes the temple of the living God – that God takes up residence inside of him. But every time we receive the Eucharist it is a “re-pouring” if you will, of what happened at our baptism. God comes into us – and we don't get “more God” – we get the fullness of God - every time we go to communion we get the fullness of God – we don't get more of God, we surrender ourselves and open ourselves so that we may receive more of Him. And again, the analogy that I have is that if God wants to give us all of Lake Erie – He wants to give us ALL of Lake Erie – but if you come to Him with a thimble, He will only give you a thimble full of water. We have the fullness coming towards us, but we are only going to be able to take a thimble. If we have a cup, we get a cupful, if we have a barrel, we have a barrelful, if we have a truck, we will have a truck-full, if we have a lake, we will have a lake-full. It doesn't depend on what is there – what is there is the fullness in the divinity of God. What it all depends on is how open we are in receiving all that God wants to give us. How do we surrender ourselves so that we receive everything that God wants to give? Because He wants to live in and through us. So the first thing we have to do is sit there and make sure that is what we want. Now again, not in this church, but in some places, people just go to church on Sunday and say this makes me a good catholic. “I would never miss Mass on Sunday”. Whoa...so? You could be a pagan and go to Mass every Sunday. “Well I try to live the faith.” So...you can be a pagan and try to live the faith! What is it to be a Christian? It means that you and I surrender our hearts and our lives so much to Jesus that we no longer live, but that Jesus lives His life through us. And so the first thing we have to say “is that my desire?” Today, as we baptize Elijah, is that going to be his desire all the days of his life? That he desires that Jesus lives inside of him - and if people allow Jesus to live inside of us so much that they no longer see us, but they see Jesus? But how do we make that real? Well the first way we make that real is by receiving Jesus in the Eucharist. It is very important that – as we talked about last week – is that we are what we eat. So the first way we make Jesus alive inside of us is we receive. We become one with the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Jesus Christ. First thing. But then the second thing that you and I have to do is surrender ourselves to Him and we have to do that so that we open ourselves to Him and the more we open ourselves, the more He can rush in and fill that inside of us.

And the way that I do that - the way that Mother Theresa did that and the way that St. John Neumann did that – is that they would have prayers that they would say and I could tell you a prayer that someone else did, but I would think that it would be better if you did one yourselves. And that every day you would surrender yourselves to the Lord. My prayer is “Lord, I want people to see you today and not me – so I surrender Lord, my hands to you, that these hands may be your hands. Lord, work through my hands for your glory. Let them do nothing which is apart from your will. Lord, I surrender my mouth to you – that it be your words I speak and not my words – that I only speak what you command me to speak. That you Lord Jesus may speak through me. Lord, I give you my eyes – let them be your eyes – that I may see your presence in all people and that I may only see truly what you want me to see. Lord I give you my ears that I may listen and that your ears may become my ears. Lord, I give you my heart – that your heart might beat inside of me. Lord, I give you my breath, that it may be your breath that breaths inside of me by the power of your spirit. Lord, I give you my life, that you might live in and through me.” You see, when we go through this and we give every part of our body and our senses to the Lord – then we are making a conscious decision that I want Jesus Christ to be fully in control of every single part of my life – and I am surrendering every part of me to Him who loves me – so that He may increase and I may decrease as St. John the Baptist said. So, that is the goal, so that when people look at you and I, they no longer see us, but they see Jesus Christ inside of us. But we have to open ourselves – we have to surrender ourselves more and we have to be explicit. So, I just want to give you that – that that is something that you decide to do every day – that you go through your body and you surrender every part of your being to God – holding nothing back. If you just say “Lord, I give you my life...” that is an easy thing to do, but sometimes we don’t mean it. When you go through every part of your being, and then surrender it and say “Lord, I want these hands to be your hands today...” then we become conscious that it is Jesus inside of us looking through our eyes, it is Jesus’ heart beating inside of us, it is Jesus’ breath breathing through my breath. Then we become more aware of the presence of God within me. And when we do that every day, we have the promise today, do we not? “You will live forever.” Why? Because Jesus Christ lives forever. And when you and I surrender our hearts and our lives and every part of our being – because He lives forever – so shall we live forever. It is how much you and I surrender before we die, so that fully, He may take control of every part of our life. Got it? Get it? Good. May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.