

Fr. Larry Richards  
September 3, 2006  
Twenty-Second Week in Ordinary Time

Good morning. Now, we are going to start a little different today, I want you all to close your eyes...just listen to the priest. Now, I want you to listen with your heart...listen to God enter into you as you listen to His word. He says to us this morning through James “humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not just hearers only deluding yourselves. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this – to care for orphans and widows and their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” Ok, now look. Do you hear what God says to you and me today? Do you hear Him? He is sitting there and telling us how we need to welcome the word of God! And you know, I told you two weeks ago that I was on that retreat, which was life-changing for me – that is why we are all gray here – that is why I have this scruffy beard that I have heard a thousand things about since I was in the paper yesterday. But if you notice, here all the saints have beards. So, I’m just saying! Just a thought! So, the reality is that we need to...Fr. Rich was with us on the way up and the way back, and Fr. Rich was being Fr. Rich – you all remember Fr. Rich – he was driving me NUTS because while we were driving up, he pulled out this bible trivia game. And this bible trivia game – you know, I have been reading the word of God for 25, 26, 27 years, I mean come on! Well, it was one of those trivia games that was absolutely impossible! “Who am I...” it starts off. “I married Delilah or I was with Delilah...” well, I know that! “Where am I...” or “what city am I? I am where Paul was killed.” Or “what number am I?” And we are sitting there going “I don’t know!!” And when we couldn’t get it right, Fr. Rich would go “inkkkkk!” And all the way up – eight hours in the car we had to listen to Fr. Rich go “inkkkk, inkkk, inkkk” and every once in awhile if we got one right he would go “ding, ding, ding, ding...” But usually it was “inkkk, ink...” And so I said, “Rich, I’m going to kill you! That’s it!!!” But what it did do was let us know how much we didn’t know the bible! And I was like “oh, I’m stupid!” I mean, I read the bible every day, and yet I don’t welcome it humbly into my heart. Boy! And you know that is the whole thing about what God is saying to us today. It’s only been about two months that I preached on reading the word of God – maybe two months. But you know, it would break my heart if I actually asked here – would ask you to be honest with me here and ask you to raise your hands – with how many people read the word of God every day. I won’t do it, because I don’t need my heart broken today. But if I asked you, after all the time I have preached on no bible no breakfast, no bible, no bed... You know, even the priests have said, “O h, Larry I’ve heard you give that homily at least a thousand times” – but do you do it? No. How many of you have heard me give that homily a thousand times? But if I asked how many of you do it, I’ll bet – even at this Mass – we would only get 25% of you that do it. I’ll bet you. Why is it that we can’t spend time with the word of God? The second reading tells us what God wants! He says “welcome humbly the word that is planted within you with its power to...save you!” Why is it we can listen to the world, we can listen to TV, we can listen to the radio, but we can’t listen to God? What is it that keeps you from reading the word of God every day? It has the power to save you! And you know, again as I talk about this again, you know, who am I? I know that most of you will dismiss me once again. “What’s the big

deal, Fr. Larry went off again on his thing.” And you won’t let it change you. You know, two weeks ago when we were with this priest, he kept changing us and hitting us and saying “you have to change.” And when you have been a priest for 18 years and been in seminary 27 years, to hear someone say you have to change – its kind of an “oomph” in your face! Like “whoa, I have to change!” But it is the same with you – you and I have to change our habits! And one of the things we really need to do is to spend time with God’s word every day! It doesn’t have to be long, but spending time with God’s word that has the power to save you. And again, if you have already decided “no, I’m not doing that…” well you know, right here in this tabernacle is God, correct? Christine will receive Him for the first time in the Eucharist. God, Jesus Christ is right here. So, if you have already decided that Fr. Larry is full of it, don’t worry about me…worry about Jesus. Before you leave here today I want you to look at Him – He is here – He is as real today as He was when He walked the earth and He is as real as He will be when you and I stand in judgment before Him – and you tell Jesus why He is not worth your daily time. Tell Him – tell Him why you have time to read the paper – tell Him why you have time to watch TV – tell Him why you have time to listen to the radio – tell Him why you have time to listen to gossip – but you don’t have time to read His word. Tell Him why, and give Him a good reason. Just say it and be honest – “Lord, you are not worth my time – you are not my priority!” Because this is the most important thing we can do – to spend time with the word of God! It has the power to change you! You know most people are afraid – they live in fear of tomorrow, of today, of death, of what’s going to happen with my money, or if I’m going to get a job, or what am I going to do…and they live in fear! Constantly! How many of us live in fear? They say to me “Father, what am I going to do?” And I say? Spend time with the word! Because it has the power to save you!! Not only salvation for eternal life – but to save you from fear – to save you from anxiety, to save you from worrying about what will happen tomorrow – to save you from sin – it has power! But what has to happen is when you and I read the word of God, we have to do more than read it – we have to humbly welcome it! Do you know what it means to humbly welcome God’s word? It means you go before the word of God and you say “Lord, I don’t know how to live – you tell me. Lord I don’t know how to deal with this – you tell me.” It goes against our pride to say “I’m not in charge – I don’t know everything – but you do, Lord, and so I humbly come before you and I ask you how to live, because that is what I am about. I want to do what you want.” And then it is just not enough to humbly listen to the word of God… it also says “Be doers of the word, and not just hearers only, deluding yourselves.” For God’s work to take root in us and to save us, what must happen is it must change us. And I think that that is the crux – that so often we don’t read God’s word, because He is going to challenge me to change – and sometimes we are afraid of change. Sometimes we are afraid to let God’s word take so control of us that now I am living my life in such a way that He is going to tell me now that I have to change the way I am living sometimes. But when you and I do that, then we can be saved and we can have peace and we can have joy and then we can change the world, because God lives inside, and we are welcoming His word. So, today it is very simple – very simple, but I guess it is very complicated. What God wants you and I to do is read His word every day – to read His word – to listen to His word. You know, you can buy it now on CD – how ever you want to do it. And then, humbly receive His word – come before Him and say, “Lord, I don’t know it – you know it.” Humbly receive that word and plant it in your

heart. And last, act on that word. And please, let's not let this be a joke, and let's not let this be another one of Fr. Larry's homilies that go in one ear and out the other, and then you go and do what you want. Let this be between you and Jesus now – it is out of my hands. This is between you and Jesus – He is right there. You will receive Him today – Christine will receive Him today for the first time, as we said. You tell Him why you won't read the word of God every day for the rest of your life. Or, you promise Him, "ok, Lord, from this day on I promise by your grace, from this day on, I will read your word every day – I will welcome it humbly and I will let it change my life!" Do what you want – it is between you and Him. May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.