

September 24, 2006
Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning. Today, if you listen to the first reading, just listen to see if it reminds you of anyone besides Jesus. “The wicked say let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us. He sets himself against our doings. He reproaches us for the transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training. Let us see whether his words be true – let us find out what will happen to him. For the just one be the Son of God. God will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. Let us condemn him to a shameful death.” Sound like anybody? Benedict the XVI. As he goes and he says some words – it has been quite crazy the last couple of weeks, because he says the truth – simple – in love. That it is not right to kill people in the name of God. And so, then people go and say “let’s kill him.” And they call him – and they call us – I wonder if you got it if you listen to the news – “worshippers of the cross.” “Worshippers of the cross” is what we have been condemned as. And so, my regular thing when I hear about this – like when I was on the Mission – is to get up and get mad, you know? It’s like “ok, put me on the radio for five minutes – I’m tired of this garbage” – and to get up there and defend the pope, you know, “that’s enough of this – he can say what he wants to say! He’s the pope!” But, he’s the servant and he can say – and he MUST say – that we cannot kill others in the name of religion. And so, someone gets up in England and says “we need to execute him – we need to kill him.” And I’m thinking ohhhhhhhhh... But he’s allowed to say that, of course and that’s ok. But the reality is if you listen to the gospel today, Jesus starts off by saying, “I’m going to have to die. I am going to have to give up my life – they are going to kill me. And I am going to do that gladly – to give up my life for others” is what it is. And so, we begin today, with Jesus - Jesus on the cross – Jesus giving His life for us. And then he says – you know, when they call us worshippers of the cross – it’s true. On Good Friday, we come up and we kiss the cross and we genuflect in front of the cross. Because on the cross is where we were saved. On the cross is where the God of the Universe humbled Himself and took last place for you and for me, and you have to say “you betcha we are.” But if we just talk that, it doesn’t matter. And see, here Jesus is and He is trying to teach the apostles stuff. And what are the apostles doing, those perfect people? They were arguing – they were debating. And what were they debating? “Who of us is the greatest?” Oh, you don’t know anybody like that, do you? Nobody in this church would sit there and be like that or anybody here in the world. Like “I pray more than you, or I do this, and I tithe and you don’t tithe, I do this, so I am greater than you!” We all sit there and jockey for first place! And this is something that the world infiltrates in us. Now, in the world, it’s appropriate. You have to sit there and say, “ok, I’m going to get this job, I’m going to be president of the company, I’m going to make more money...” we are all jockeying to see who has the most power – how you can get ahead of everybody else, is that correct? And you know you do it! You need to, and that is part of what it is! But what happens is – the problem is when we take that world’s mentality and we bring it into the Church - because the Church is the exact opposite, huh? The world’s mentality I’ve said 1,000 times before, those of you who should remember – is what I call the “Burger King theology.” The “have it your way, go for the gusto, live for number one, me, me, me, me.” And that is where you see, James

was talking in the second reading about all of the quarreling amongst them – again, in the community - it wasn't amongst the pagans! It was in the community they were arguing because they weren't getting their own way! And if they weren't getting their own way, James says “where is this quarreling coming from? You pray for something you don't get it because the only thing you want is for your passion.” And this is the exact opposite of what is supposed to happen in the Church. Now, I have given a homily here, oh many times, it's in my Truth tape for those who have listened to the Truth tape – it's been in all of the Parish Missions that I have given – all of you who have been with me here for four years, some of you ten years. Now, if I was to say to you today, right after Mass, I want to come to your house – “my house, Father?” “Yea.-why don't you make me some lunch. We'll come over and have lunch at your house.” “Oh, we don't have lunch, we go out to dinner.” “Ok, I'll go out to dinner with you. But then I want to go to your house.” “Ok.” And after I come to your house for dinner, the main reason I want to come to your house for dinner is because I want to see your bathroom. I want to see it today – right after. And you know why I want to see your bathroom – and I know for some of you it is going to be a mess, there are going to be clothes all over the place – toothpaste in the sink that hasn't been cleaned yet – all that gross stuff! And the reason I want to come into your bathroom is I want to look in your mirror. Because, many times – I want to see if people actually do what I say – because many times I have told you to go home and put on your mirror on a piece of paper, somewhere on the bottom of your mirror, so you look at it every day – three words. What are those three words? I am third. Boy you all pay close attention when I talk, I feel great about this, huh? I am third! That is the call of the gospel today! That is what our Holy Father talks about! That is what it is to be a Christian! That what we are called to be is not assert our power and show we are great. We are supposed to humbly take last place. Remember the gospel? “Those who wish to be first need to become last of all and the servant of all.” And that is what Pope Benedict the XVI is – the servant of us all. But a servant is not someone who is just walked on. A servant is one who serves truth – speaks truth in love – says this is what needs to happen, but I exist to serve you. And even if you kill me, that's ok, I will speak the truth. That is what Jesus did – that is what our Pope did and that is what we must do too. And when we do that – when we say “I am third” – I am third means – Jesus is first, others are second and we are last – the exact opposite of the world. So when we talk about God being first, that means of course, that we have that daily prayer time, which I talk about almost every week – always, if God is first in my life, there is nothing more important than God – and I prove that with committed time with Him. I prove it – if God is not first – stop playing that game. I don't care if you are in college, I don't care if you are going to work – you work 48 hours a week – you're very busy – it doesn't matter. You can watch TV, you can do other things – you can have committed time with God. Its priority – He MUST be the first person in your life and mine. The next thing is for others to be second. For others to be second, that means I become a servant of all – to be a servant of all – to truly be a servant of your family, of your community, a servant to your church. And we talked about that a couple of weeks ago, and I am not going to expand on that again. So, the second thing I have to ask – first is God first in my life, can I prove that. Second, am I really in this world to serve, or even in my spiritual life, am I always trying to get one up on somebody else? Am I truly here to come before God to serve Him? That means I serve Him whether I get acknowledgement or not. You know, if you ever sit there and you

don't get acknowledgment because you did something for the Church and you get mad and decide I'm not going to do it anymore – then you always did it for the wrong reason – you only did it for yourself. Because God always sees what you do and He acknowledges that quietly. Do you do what you do for acknowledgement of others, or do you do what you do because you are here to serve God? And you do that quietly, unassumingly, as a true servant. Finally, I am last – I am third. To be third, means that we put ourselves last. And that goes against every grain in our being – mine too. And then, when we put ourselves third, God puts us first. Someone like Padre Pio, whose feast day was yesterday, and I have been reading one of his books, what a man. I just couldn't ever imagine being anything like this man. Why? Because he was silenced by the church for eleven years. He was forbidden to hear confessions, say Mass, to write to anybody or let anybody write to him He wasn't even allowed to go to the window, for fear people might see him. And he was condemned four times by the Church as nothing he did was of God. And his superiors were afraid to tell him, and so one day they – it was published in a book all around the world, and so they didn't tell him, and he walked into this community room where everybody was and they tried to hide the paper from him, but he picked up the paper and he started reading how he was condemned by Rome. And then he put it down and didn't say anything and he walked to his room, and his superior followed him and said "Padre Pio" and Padre Pio turned around and sobbed like a baby – just sobbed, but he wouldn't say anything against the Church. And so when someone came up to him and said, "oh, Padre they are treating you so bad..." he would get up and walk away. Because his humility was so great that he said, "I must be last." But see what happens when he did that? See what happens when Jesus did that? See what happens when we do that? God will take that humility when we put ourselves last, and He Himself raises us up – He made Padre Pio one of the most powerful saints of our time. He makes Benedict the XVI one of the most challenging speakers of our time. And He will make you and I great in the kingdom if we become least in the world – to become third. So again, to remind you of the challenge, write it on a piece of paper, you don't have to take the whole bottom of you mirror – type it on your computers – but stick it on your bathroom mirror so when I come over to your house, and I say "can I use your bathroom," you'll know why. Is it on there? It is there to remind you – will you gladly become third like Jesus did? Those who want to be first, must become last and the servant of all. Let it be true in our lives. May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.