

October 1, 2006
Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

If you listen to the gospel, it should make you a little uneasy, or you weren't paying attention. Because, Jesus is talking about how we deal with sin in our life. Now, this is so different than in the world today and a lot of the churches that are on television. You know, we talk about sin as that weakness, and "don't worry, God understands, and you know you keep sinning, and we know, you're trying...its ok." That's not the compassion you hear of Jesus today. Jesus says "if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. Better to go through life with one hand, than to go to hell with two. If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better to be blind in one eye than to go to hell with two. If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better to go to heaven with one leg than to go to hell with two!" That's Jesus Christ! That's the God we follow! The God that tells us that we need to deal with sin in our life more radically than taking off a limb, an eye, or a leg. Take it off – we need to deal with sin. Doesn't that make you feel good? Doesn't that make you feel all warm and fuzzy inside, "Father, keep talking." But the reality is this is Jesus Christ! And this is the guy we follow! And we need to do three things today – we need to deal with our sin and name our sin, we need to repent of our sin, and now we need to change and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to get out of that sin. But the first thing we have to do is name sin. And again, nobody names sin today because we are all good people. You know, my license plate as you all know says "URGOOD" and everybody who knows me sit there and think "boy that's the wrong thing for Fr. Larry to have on the back of his license plate." "URGOOD." But that's the basic definition of who we are – we are created in God's image and likeness. But at the same time we are good, there is stuff in us that is not good – and we call that sin. And again, people don't want to sit there – "Father, I'm not going to come to church to hear that I am a sinner." Then don't waste your time coming to this church! Because if you don't come and you don't know that you are a sinner, you have no need of repentance, you don't know you are a sinner, you don't need a savior, you are the savior of the world. You don't need to be saved, because you don't have any sin. And then you get the people who say, "well, but I'm not perfect, so that makes it ok." None of us are perfect – the pastor isn't perfect, I'm not perfect, but does that make it ok, does that make our sin ok? And I'm talking about my sin too – not just your sin! Does that make it ok? "I'm just not perfect." St. Theresa of Avilla said "never make peace with the sin in your life." We are to never make peace with the sin in our life. But the first thing we have to do is acknowledge that we have that sin. And even James – did you hear that second reading today? Again, if you have some money, you are not going to like that reading. Because, again, what does he say? "Because, if you are one who has a lot of money, you wait. Because, if you have taken that money and only wasted it on yourself, you have fattened yourself up for the slaughter, and the slaughter is coming." So James is yelling at the early community – those who were greedy and selfish. A lot of money doesn't matter – it is what you do with the money. You know, if you just sit there and you are hoarding it and hoarding it and hoarding it so that you can get more and more and more in the bank, and you feel really comfortable – if that is where your comfort is, then that is your false God. And he says you are fattening yourselves up and the slaughter is going to happen. So, we could have selfishness, we could have greed, and so we have to acknowledge that – "oh, maybe I do have some of

that.” It could be something like God isn’t worth my time, as we have talked about 1,000 times here in this church. Everything else is worth my time, television is worth my time, golfing is worth my time, watching basketball and football is worth my time, going and doing all of this stuff – but to go to Mass every Sunday – Ahhhhhhhh, it’s just not worth my time! Well, we call that sin! God isn’t worth your time, when everything else is worth your time - making money is worth your time. When we are sitting there we are people of gossip, or people of judgment, or we are people who do things our way. What is the theme song of everyone in hell? “I Did It My Way.” Exactly! That no matter what this is – that every one of us here has sin in our life – so we have to acknowledge that sin. We have to stop making excuses for that sin. We have to call it what it is – sin. And then, after we acknowledge the sin in our life, whatever it is, and some of us have more than others, but we all have it. We have to do – the second thing is – the first thing ever out of Jesus’ mouth when He preached – repent. And repentance is that – and again is not an easy thing. Repentance means that I am going to stop doing that sin, huh? I was doing Catholic blogs yesterday – you know what a blog is? People write – and it was this Catholic blog and they write about Catholic things – and it was interesting, this guy put on – that this church - and again, I’m guessing this is a joke – but, they were sitting there and at a strip joint, the priest of the parish decided he was going to put a confessional there, right where you go in. So, and they would give 25% off to anyone who stopped and went to confession before they went into the strip joint. Now I’m guessing, I’m hoping that this is not true. And so, of course, as they are doing this, the Catholic bloggers start! And one person responds “you can’t do that!” And why can’t you do that? Because they could lust and be cleaned both at the same time, one person said. Lust, be clean, Lust, be clean. Because to be forgiven, what do you have to do? Repent. So, if you went to confession before you went in, you wouldn’t be able to go into that strip club, would you? Because you repent, and to repent means that you change your life. Again, I told you before, a good friend of mine, a Lutheran pastor up in Cleveland – he told me years ago “Larry, you people are always confessing, but never repenting.” And I would say to him again and again, “You don’t get it Doug, you must repent to be forgiven.” Repentance means, by definition, after I acknowledge my sin, I tell God I will never do this sin again. That’s repentance! And none of us are ever forgiven until we come to repentance. We need to sit there and say “Lord I will never do this sin again.” What sin? Whatever that sin happens to be in your life. You go to confession and say “I missed Mass on Sunday.” What does that mean? “I will never miss Mass on Sunday again.” “I yelled at my wife.” What does that mean? “I will never yell at my wife again.” “I sat there and did whatever.” “I will never do that sin again.” That is what it means to be forgiven by God – that repentance is necessary! That means cut it off! Cut it out! Pluck it out! That is how radical Jesus is calling us! Now, if you are feeling really bad about yourself right now – like I am – because I sit there and I know...you know, last night I gave an all together different homily than today – all together! Because the Lord convicted me of “listen Richards, you have to stop trying to make peace with your sin. You have to cut it out.” And I don’t like to hear it any more than you like to hear it. But if the Lord God of the Universe loves us as He does, then He is only telling us for our own reality so that we can be with Him forever. And just like, if you are going to be a great football player, or if you are going to be a great soccer player, or if you are going to be great at work – it is going to cost you something – it is going to take you time, it’s going

to take your energy, it's going to take discipline – so to enter into heaven. It's going to take your time, discipline, you are going to have to deny yourself things. Just like anything else on this earth, the greatest goal in life is to go to heaven. But see, the difference is we can't do it ourselves. This is the difference – the difference is what we need comes from the first reading, when Moses sits there and says “oh, if only everybody was prophets, if only God sent the Holy Spirit upon everyone ...” And see, the joy for us is God has given us the Holy Spirit. And what needs to happen is that you and I take the Spirit that God has given us at Baptism and Confirmation, and let the Spirit set us free from our sin. That we have to make the acknowledgment that I know my sin and the intention that I will repent of my sin but we don't have the ability and the strength in ourselves to do it! So, we go to the Spirit of God and say “I can't do it Spirit, but you can, I give you permission. I acknowledge my sin, I repent of my sin, and I beg you Spirit live in me and through me and grant me the grace to never commit this sin again.” And if we keep surrendering, then what happens is we get better and better and better, slowly, usually you know, it's one step forward, two steps back, but if we keep surrendering to the Spirit it is going to be ok. The purpose of all this is to remind us that everyone of us here has sin, we need to acknowledge that, but we can't sit there and get crazy over it – we can't get depressed, but if we all acknowledge this together, what that means more than anything else, is you need a savior – I need a savior. I need someone to save me from those things which keep me away from God. And God says “I know you do – that is why I gave you my only Son – and that is why He died, to save you from that sin.” But to be saved from that sin, we must acknowledge it, we must repent of it and we must ask the Spirit of God to take over our lives. Got it? Get it? Gonna do it? You better! May each of you know His love today and forever, Amen.