

October 22, 2006
Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! I hope you listened to the gospel and the first reading and the second reading and you really listened to it. Because it should give you very great comfort. What was the last line of the first reading? “Through His sufferings my servant shall justify many!” You pagans – I’ll tell ya! It says “through His suffering my servant shall justify many and their guilt He shall bear!” Now, that should give you and me great comfort – if you know you are a sinner – that should give you and I great comfort. You know, and again, sin is something we have to deal with in our lives, and we know that it is something Jesus paid the penalty for – not us. And again, we don’t get it. You know, this past week I was doing a Parish Mission in North Huntingdon, Pennsylvania and Tuesday night was the Passion Talk and after the Passion Talk I heard confessions. So, its 11:30 PM and I am exhausted and as soon as I come walking out of the church, and car comes whipping up around me they keep the engine running and this older woman comes out and says “Father...” and I’m just thinking “oh.....” “Yes?” “I haven’t been to confession yet and I don’t know if I am going, because I don’t know if I like you!” I said “you’re going to have to stand in line for that one!” And she says....(laughter) hey! Those of you who clap are going to purgatory! So, she says “you give me different emotions. I don’t like how you talked about tonight how Jesus had to suffer and you talk about hell and all that reality...” And I said “Ma’am, I assure you, I would rather never do it, to tell you the truth, but this is God’s will.” And you and I have to realize what it cost Jesus to save us. But see, most Catholics are Pelagianist. Pelagianists think – and again, this church is right now filled with Pelagianists! Most people in the Catholic Church think that at the end of their lives, if they have done more good than bad, then God is going to say “come on in.” Or, if they are a good person – especially compared to Hitler – God is going to say “come on in – you went to Mass every week – you even went to that Charismatic longer Mass – boy that was really good! So, come on in – you deserve it!” And see, that is where a lot of people are at! They don’t get it! It says “through His suffering...” what Jesus did – through that cross - that we are justified. And then it says “by what He did, He took the guilt of us all.” And so that is very important – that what we have to do – the first thing we have to do is believe that Christ paid for my sins. Not you – not me – Christ died to pay for our sins. That means it is grace - that none of us deserve it – none of us could ever do anything thing to deserve it. You know Augustine had the great quote – he says “we don’t get grace by being virtuous – grace is not a gift that is given to us for being good – we get virtuous because of grace.” And so everything we have is because of Jesus – that Jesus died for me – that Jesus paid the penalty – not you – not me. That is the first place of faith that God goes to. That this is what happens. And again, I’ve said this before – if we could earn heaven, that was a waste of God’s time! You will never earn heaven! Never! And so what has to happen is that you and I have to believe that somebody else paid the price for me. Jesus Christ paid the price for every one of those sins that I gladly do. He died for it – that is grace. But the second thing that has to happen is – it isn’t enough to believe it. God died for everybody on the cross, and just because you believe it doesn’t mean squat! You have to receive it. And the way you and I receive what He did on the cross is very simple. The first words ever out of Jesus’ mouth were what? Repent.

Repent and believe. And so what happens is after we believe that – then what we have to do is repent, surrender our lives to Him and ask Him to take the penalty for my sin. We have to receive what Jesus did at Calvary – we have to receive it in our life every day. That “Lord, I can’t do it – you’ve already done it for me, but now I surrender and I receive that – I repent of my sins, I receive your forgiveness...” And again, to stay with the second one, it is very hard, the second one, because, if you are – especially like me – and we know no one in the church is like me. But, the reality is, I am very independent. I like to sit there and think “ok, I’m going to do it and God is going to reward me in the end.” But the reality is – it takes an act of humility to know that someone else paid the penalty, and we have to receive it. Isn’t it hard to receive? You know, it easy to buy gifts for people – to give things – but it is much harder to receive, especially if what you received cost somebody else their life. It cost Him His life, and then He says “see, this is what I will do for you – will you receive this free gift?” “Oh, Lord...” It takes great humility to receive the grace of salvation – that He paid the penalty so that you and I don’t have to. But again, most Catholics don’t buy it – they sit there and say, “oh, I have to do it, and I have to be better...” We repent and we receive the grace from God – His salvation and what He did. What He did for us, ok? Then, the third part has to come, and we now live it. And this is where the second reading comes in. I love this second reading here – and there is this one line in there that says “so let us confidently approach the throne of grace – to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.” That what we do after we believe that God did that for me – after we repent and receive that in our life, then we have to live that. And to live that means that any virtue – if I do any virtue, it is because of His grace. It is because of Jesus Christ living His life through me. And so, more and more every day I have to say “ok, Lord, I’m not going to do this today, I can’t do this today, but you can inside of me today Lord Jesus. So, I give you my life, I surrender my life, I ask you to take control of every single part of me! Jesus, I think I’m smart at work when I ‘m doing everything at work. Lord, I know I’m not! You need to do it for me. You need to give me the grace to live a life that you want me to live.” Because, again the number one sin in all of our lives is what? Pride! “I’m going to do it myself. I can do this!” That is a heresy! Heresy! Burn them! But, Pelagianism is very big in the Church today! It is in our hearts – we think that whatever happens, it is because of what I did or do. And that is not grace, and that is not salvation, and that is NOT Christianity! To be Muslim is to be judged on what you do. To be Christian means that we are judged by what Christ did for us. And we have to live it and we have to receive it because we believe that we are saved by faith and works. So, that shows that we can’t just sit there and say “oh, ok, Jesus died for me...” But we know we have grace because we can see the fruit of our life. It is He that causes us to do anything that is good. That’s the works that proves the faith. You need both – but it is all based on grace. Tomorrow’s daily reading – Paul is going to say that again – if you go to daily Mass – he is going to say “It is by grace that you are saved.” And again, that sounds Protestant, doesn’t it? You know some people are sitting there thinking, “oh, we think Father went Protestant on us.” That is the teaching of the Catholic Church. We all believe this and we all have to surrender to it. We all have to make sure that this is about a relationship. Its not about what I do – it’s about what He did. And we do this by believing it – by repenting and receiving it and by living it. Got it? Get it? Good! May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.

