

April 22, 2007  
Third Sunday of Easter

Good morning. Eighteen years ago at the Carmelite Monastery and Our Lady of Peace I had my first Mass. And when I had my first Mass I wore this vestment, of course, because it's the vestment that my mother bought me and it says "feed my sheep." And this was the gospel I chose for my first Mass and Ordination and the thing that has always haunted me from the time that I got to know Christ were the words from today's gospel "do you love me?" And I told you a couple of weeks ago, I think – at this Mass anyway – last summer, when I was at my retreat with Fr. Gene Fulton, he talked about how he made it all the way through Seminary and nobody asked him "do you know Jesus Christ?" I made it through Seminary – thrown out of Seminary – came back to the Seminary and that was never one of the questions that was asked of me – ever. "Do you love Jesus Christ?" So, theoretically you could be ordained without ever loving Jesus Christ. Now, no one else might ask you, but Jesus Christ, let me give you a hint, will never let you get too far without asking you and me that same question. The church might not ask you, others might not ask you – but Jesus is going to ask you. "Do you love me?" And the way we answer that is we have to answer that with our life. When He asks "do you love me?" We say "yes, Lord, you know that I love you." And then He said "ok, then this is what I want you to do. I want you to spend all of your time kneeling in front of me. I want you to go out and feed my sheep – that is what I want you to do." And the apostles are doing that today in the first reading. They are saying "keep your mouth shut, don't say a word..." and they go and they proclaim it even louder. They get persecuted and they go and praise God – the only way that you would want to be persecuted is if you are doing it because of love. So the question for all of us today is "do you love me? And if you love me, are you willing to proclaim me?" Do you proclaim who you love – is that what we are about? You know, this past week was a hard week, correct? When we saw the 33 students and faculty who were killed at Virginia Tech. That was a sad, horrible thing – young people who had their whole life ahead of them – that fast – taken away. Well, the next day, I don't know how many of you watched the convocation, but I was home with my mother, in Pittsburgh on Tuesday because it was her birthday – I won't tell you how old, because she will kill me because she is coming up this afternoon! But anyway, while we were sitting there watching it, I'm getting mad. Can you imagine, me getting mad, because I'm being judgmental? Because there, of course, it was a secular convocation – not a Mass – it wasn't anything to do with a funeral - it was a secular convocation. So, if the President got up – didn't say anything about God – I would expect it. The woman that got up – she was the emcee, didn't say anything about God – I would expect it. So, the President got up – he talked about God – I wouldn't expect it. The Governor got up – he talked about God – he quoted scripture – I wouldn't expect it. Then they had the four representatives from the four different religions. And the first one that got up was a Muslim, and he was a teacher there and he did a phenomenal job – he talked about Allah – the merciful one. And he quoted the Koran, and he preached to them the mercy of God and he said to everybody "we are all sons and daughters of Adam and Eve..." Great! The next person that got up was this Buddhist woman. I think that she was a student there or part of a group because you could tell that this was not her thing. And she got up and talked about let's practice non-violence, and then she says "the Dali Lama

says...” and she proclaimed what the Dali Lama says who is a good Buddhist. Then you had the Jewish people get up – the two women. The woman sat there and started proclaiming the Hebrew scriptures from the book of Ecclesiastes – “there is a time to be born, and there is a time to die...” and then, the girl next to her, after she read it in English, the girl read it in Hebrew – BEAUTIFUL! So, we had the Muslims represented, we had the Buddhists represented, and we had the Jewish people represented. Then this man gets up who is a Lutheran pastor – says he will represent the Christian faith. Oh, dear. Not once did he say the word God – not once did he say the word Jesus Christ. Now I am sure, because I have worked at college campuses that are secular for eight years – that they would sit there and say to you “now, please we don’t want to offend anybody, so try to make it general.” But you can make it general, and still give hope where you are coming from – I would think. Because here he talked about the light piercing the darkness, but he never talked about Jesus – he never talked about God, and I’m MAD! And I’m sitting there saying “of all the times...” most of those kids that died were Christian. One of the girls on her MySpace Book said “the love of my life is Jesus Christ...” And so when it came up to everybody proclaiming there – everybody got to talk about something, but Jesus’ name was never brought up. Never brought up. How much better it could have been if he had sat there and said “for those who believe in Jesus Christ, Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life.” He said “even if you die, you shall live.” Easy proclamation, we’re not condemning anybody. We are representing what we believe about the Christian faith. But it wasn’t, and that becomes more and more today. You and I do the same thing, when we are at work, when we are with our families. We don’t want to proclaim and make anything politically un-correct. We don’t want to offend anybody. We’re not talking about offending anybody. You don’t offend anybody when you talk about your husband, or your wife, or your kids, do you? “Well, no, why?” Because they are people you love! Do you love Jesus Christ? And if you love him, why would you not talk about him? No way in condemnation – no way in judgment, just because you are in love with someone. They can’t condemn you – they can’t arrest you for talking about somebody you love. So that is the question today – “do you love me?” And if you do, what are you doing about it? And He tells us what He wants us to do, when He looked at Peter and said “do you love me more than these...” “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” “Feed my sheep. Give my people hope. Give my people life. Give my people truth. Feed them.” You know, we are in the midst next door of a TEC retreat and I am losing my voice because I have been talking almost non-stop since Thursday night. These poor people do not have to go to hell or purgatory later in life – they have already felt it so far from me. Thursday from 6 PM; Friday from 9 AM to 11:30 at night, all day yesterday, had the two Masses today, we have two baptisms after Mass, then I will go over there and they have to listen to me until 6:00 tonight. And so, the main thing that I keep telling them is “listen, my main purpose of being here with you this weekend, the main reason God brought you here is to give you eternal life, is to preach to you the one we love. Is to preach to you that God loves you so much, that He died for you, and if you would just receive Him, you are going to have a life of peace. And last night, you should have seen – if you weren’t here – at this very place we had adoration for an hour, and these kids knelt on these stairs for one hour. And they looked up at Christ who was present here and they worshiped Him and they glorified Him. The place shook with these 40 people – high school kids, college kids, adults – praising God so loud you could feel

the vibration in the floor. Msgr. Carter happened to stop by. Msgr. Carter sat right there and at the end of it – he was there for the whole hour. He said “Larry, come here. That was one of the most powerful experiences of my life!” Msgr. Carter has been ordained 57 years! That is saying something! Because these people came to know that they were loved, and they came to proclaim “Jesus, we love you.” You should have heard them say it again and again. “Jesus, we love you.” How about you? Do you love Jesus Christ? Then prove it – feed His sheep. May each of you know His love, today and forever, Amen.