

Fr. Larry's Homily – Feb. 3, 2008

Good morning! Today we want to look on the first reading; the first line of the first reading. Now I did this to someone last night at the TEC mass and embarrassed them so I won't do this to anybody here, but the temptation is strong. What was the first line of the first reading? Seek the Lord. Seek the Lord is what it says. And as we get ready now to enter into Lent this is how God wants us to get into Lent. So I want to preach briefly today – and it will be briefly today, believe it or not – on seeking the Lord for Lent, and what you need to do.

So as you're preparing for Lent the first thing that I want you to do is NOT do everything you've done every other year. Scratch it. Get rid of it. And come before the Lord empty-handed this year, instead of coming before God and saying, "Okay, God, this is what I'm going to do for You, aren't You excited?" and then tell Him what you're going to do. That is no way to seek the Lord. Because again when we just sit there and we do that type of stuff – you know when I give up my chocolate or I give up my beer or I give up Pepsi or in between meals – what do I do? Then I'm always concerned about me! And then I can't wait until Lent gets over and it's like, "Oh, I can't wait until I can have chocolate again." And so I sit there and I focus on myself and *all* that I give up for Lent. And so the whole Lenten time becomes a reflection on self.

When God is looking at you and me this day He's saying, "Seek Me first! Seek the Lord!" And so what I'd encourage you to do; there are three days before today and Ash Wednesday. So for three days you seek the Lord. And you say, "Okay, Lord, this is what I've done in the years before and everything else; and Fr. Larry always makes fun of those that give up chocolate and I don't like him when he does that." And whatever it is, and say, "Forget all that. Lord, this is Your Lent and it's about You. You tell me what You want me to do."

Now, I'm going to give you a little hint what He's going to tell you. I know, you know - In persona Christi. So, I'm going to give you a little hint to what He's going to say to you. He's going to say I want you to spend more time with Me. That's what He's going to tell you, I'm just giving you a hint. I want you to get to know Me more. And so the first thing that you've got to do this Lent is how are you going to get to know Jesus Christ more intimately? What's He going to ask you to do? Now He'll call each of us to

something different. And let me give you a hint, it'll be more than what you're doing now.

You know now you might be sitting there thinking, "Boy, I do a lot now." You know I could sit there and say as a priest, "Well I spend an hour a day every day, and I do my rosary every day, and I do my Divine Mercy every day, and I do all my Office and the readings, so what could the Lord ask me to do?" He could tell me to shut up more. Pretty simple. It's an easy thing. Shut up and sit there longer. You know and so that's what the Lord could be telling me, and that might be part of it. But what's He telling you that's going to help you get to know Him more?

So the first thing that you've got to focus on is thinking about or asking the Lord what He wants you to do. It could be going to daily Mass. It could be stopping in the chapel every day. It could be doing a rosary if you're not doing a rosary every day. It could be all kinds of things. But, let me go back to that a second. If God is calling you to say the rosary, make sure you say the rosary right. Don't just say a bunch of words to or from work. "You know I got my rosary in, I'm doing pretty good this Lent." Meditate on the life of Christ while you're saying that rosary. The reason that you meditate is so that you can become more like Him. The more you watch His life or reflect on His life the more you become like Him, and that's what Lent's about.

There's three traditional practices the Church asks us to do for every Lent. What are they? Prayer, fasting, and alms giving. So and again we've already talked about prayer, but that's what I want you to focus on – most important. Put everything else aside but focus on that. Again I want you to focus on that which is going to make you forget about yourself and focus on God. That's the most important thing Lent is about.

The second thing is that will entice you to fast. But what I'm encouraging you to fast from is time. Instead of spending your time doing things for you, spend your time spending time with God. So that is a fasting when you go out to pray more. You're giving up something else so that you can be with God. And again if you do that, then this Lent instead of focusing on all that stuff I did and I can't wait until Lent's over, you're going to be saying, "Boy, I wish Lent was longer, because I love this time I've spent with Jesus throughout this Lent."

And see then it becomes more of something that you have done with Jesus Christ. The way you've grown in intimacy with Jesus. And then Lent becomes a joy instead of a burden. It's a joy like again you who sit there, you who are parents and you have to give up something for your children so they can do more. Usually you don't sit there any say, "Oh another thing I've got to deny myself for, for my children." You wouldn't think that, I don't think. You would sit there and think, "Boy I love to do this for my children that they can have more. That they can be joyful." That there's a joy there when you give up something for someone you love. And so that's the same thing that's got to happen. So if what you're giving up isn't causing any kind of joy for you I would say then you're doing it for yourself instead of the Lord. You're not doing it as an act of love for Jesus Christ. You're doing it just as an act of self denial so that you can grow stronger, or so that you can be prideful about yourself or the things you've done. So you've got to ask the Lord.

So first it's prayer and then it's fasting. What I encourage you is to fast from things that will give you more time to be with the Lord, and not focused on self, okay? The last thing that the Church is calling us to do is what? Alms giving. And alms giving is taking care of the poor. So I encourage you – this might be the year that the Lord is calling you to reach out to someone; to sit there and work at the food bank, or to help with our food pantry, or to go down to the Mission. Or to sit there and adopt a child – I put in the bulletin this week again the CFCA the Catholic Foundation or the Christian Foundation for the elderly and the children. That you could decide that this could be the year that you're going to give \$30 a month to take care of someone who's poor. There's lots of things.

But as you're preparing this Lent please, everything aside what you've done before. Start with a blank slate. Come before the Lord. "Lord, I'll do anything you want, and I know it's intimacy with You first." And that intimacy with you will make sure you spend more time with Him in prayer, you will deny yourself that'll help you grow with Him, and you'll take care of the poor. Because when you take care of the poor you're taking care of Jesus Christ. So again you're doing it to grow in intimacy with the God, the Savior of the Universe who wants to know you more than anything. He would rather die than live without you.

He would sit there and He's gladly given everything just to be in a relationship with you. So this Lent do everything to be in a relationship with Him.

May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.