

Fr. Larry's Homily, Feb. 17, 2008

Good morning! You know I was in Vancouver this past week, and then came back Friday and drove up to Lansing, Michigan, yesterday for a men's conference and came back late last night. And, I'm tired so I'll apologize ahead of time, before, you know just, to let you know. But when I was in Vancouver, Washington, you know the first time I always do my stuff, and you know what are the five things you love the most, you know? And you know, get rid of one, get rid of one, get rid of one – okay you only have one left. If it's anything other than God, you've just chosen hell forever, da da da da da da, laugh, laugh. And if you have God in your hand and you're going, "Nah nah nah nah nah nah, I got God," well you're proud, you're going to hell forever too – you know which I always do. Every mission that's the way I start it, and everybody laughs and I come ahead of time – it's not like you where I don't have to explain myself every week but when they deal with me the first time I have to explain myself. And I'll say, "Listen, before we get started, I will say some things for affect. If I say you're going to hell, I'm kidding (for most of you)." So but the reality is I do that.

So here I am, I just get done, I'm standing behind, it was a big, big church, a full church, and people standing there. And as I'm standing there I see this little old lady about eighty-some years old walking down the aisle, and I thought that she was going to try to find a seat because you couldn't sit many places. But she didn't, she kept walking down the aisle and then she came to the sanctuary, and then she came to the front of the altar, and I'm on this side of the altar and she pounded the altar. And she said, "I'm a lot older than you, son, and I became Catholic so I wouldn't go to hell. And who are you to tell me...!" I didn't know what to do! Anyway, I said, "Just because you're Catholic doesn't mean you're going to heaven." "Well that ain't what I was told!" And so this was how we started the mission, right? And I thought, oh dear!

Well then of course things went on and when I came back at the end of the two hours she was there, and she came up and hugged me and she cried and she said, "I'm so sorry. Why I did that." I said, "No, I will talk about you for a long time." But then yesterday here I am in Lansing, and the first, you know, it's a regular men's conference and it was their first one, and there was about 1200 people, 1500 men there. And the first guy, you know I'm always listening to all the things and the first guy that spoke we were all just completely flabbergasted, we didn't know what to do. It was kind of a

thing, you know if you listen to the readings today, Jesus tells us (well St. Paul tells us), “Beloved, bear you share of hardship for the Gospel, with the strength that comes from God.” Then He talks to Abraham in Genesis, God says, “I want you to leave everything and I want you to come follow me.” And he does!

And sometimes we don't let this reality, what God is saying to us sink in, you know? And so this man yesterday, he was a young guy and, you know maybe about 37 I would imagine, 38; and you know he used to be a piano player and he showed pictures of him with his mullet when he was young, and he was a server, an alter server and everything; and he fell in love with this girl from Boston even though he was from Cincinnati, and the two of them got married, and how much they love the Lord. You know they tithed from the beginning of their marriage – can you imagine? Tithing from the beginning of your marriage – it wasn't even a question to not give to God what belonged to God.

They had a little baby girl, and the girl was this little blonde headed girl, and then about a year and a half later the wife was pregnant again; but then one day he was meandering before he went to work, and as he was meandering he sat there and she wasn't feeling good, his wife. And then all of a sudden she fell, and then he took her in and she had a myopic pregnancy and the baby or whatever burst the thing, so if it had been ten minutes later and he hadn't been there she'd have been dead. A couple months later they go and she gets pregnant again – this time they have a beautiful little child, and the child has Down Syndrome. Beautiful little blonde baby, glasses, great little child, you know, and he had a bunch of other problems besides that and he just praised God – you know this was the gift that God gave them. And then, a couple of months later, they had another baby, another boy and you know this boy was just perfect, just like his daughter, but they couldn't have any more kids. And they were still quite young and they wanted more so they decided they were going to adopt a baby girl from China, because this little girl in China had a heart problem and nobody wanted her. And she was about three years old and she was unadoptable. So they flew to China and adopted this little, beautiful Chinese baby girl. Four little children, great family, pray every day together, devotions – love, love, love, love of God.

Well in the midst of this, this guys name is Robert Rogers – you can look up about him on the internet, this Robert Rogers. And so they were in Kentucky for his or her family, someone got married and they were all having a fine time, they get in the

car and the mother is driving, and as their driving along the thing it starts to rain, and off the highway a big flood comes from the thing and drives them in. And so they called 911 because they're now in the midst of this raging river and they call 911, and they're trying to get there. And then she's close to her church and so she calls her prayer line, and as she's calling the prayer line she says, "We're stuck, we can't get out of the car, the water's coming up," and she's crying out, "come on" and they're all praying, and she said, "Jesus, help us. Jesus, help up." The husband kicks the window out – three of them get thrown out of the car immediately, the other three are stuck in the car. Well he's found after he tries to save his kids and everything else, he's taken to the hospital. Next morning the priest comes in and the cop, head in hand, saying, "You have to identify your three children who we found." Not only did he lose all his children, all four drowned, but he lost his wife. He lost everything that fast, just coming home from a thing. And you know what he did? He praised God. And we're all sitting there like, "Are you kidding me?" That you lost everything, and then he had such peace, even when he was going under in the water he thought, "If this is what the Lord wants, He can have us all. I only want what the Lord wants."

And so when he had to go and identify his children, and his wife, he threw himself of their bodies and he wept, but then he sat there and he quoted Job, that says, "Though He slay me, still I will praise Him." And I'm thinking, oh I don't know. And all the guys are like, oh I don't know. But that's faith, that's beginning to see. You know all of us, we have things, every one of us has tragedies in our life – nobody here has the corner on tragedy, in case you're wondering. Just think of that man. We all have tragedies in our life. And if this is it then it's going to be a hard thing, and when these tragedies do happen, they're going to take us down. How many people do you know, when a tragedies happened, and they turn themselves off to God forever, and they hate God, and how could God let this happen to me. Well here's a modern day Job, and right after, even as he's burying his children, he said he had such peace in his heart because he knows that this world isn't home; that these children and his wife are in heaven. And that's all that matters, and he will be with them one day.

And as he spoke with this faith, every man there – and I'm just like, oh dear, I almost didn't want to hear it, you know? It's like, okay don't tell me this stuff, I don't want to hear this stuff. Here's a person, faithful to God, prays to God, while they're drowning they're saying, "Jesus, help us. Jesus, help us." And Jesus helped them and took

them home. And what a different way to look at life. Now, you know, by God's grace he's remarried and he just had a little boy named Ezekiel, cutest little boy, and I'm sitting there talking with him and his wife and I just thought whoa. The faith of a man who God took everything away from, and yet he gave him the greatest gift of faith.

How about you? How about me? Where would we be if the Lord who we follow, we praise and we worship, and we jump up and down and we go all crazy, "I love the Lord, I trust the Lord!" What if He took everything from you, the way He took from that man? How would you be feeling? Would you still be praising God? Would you still be saying, "my faith, He'll take care of me." Would you have peace? If not, what has to happen is the same thing that happened with Jesus. You know today in the transfiguration, it explains why this happens. God the Father was preparing Him for the cross. And as He was being prepared for the cross, God the Father sent Moses and sent Elijah to show, to give Him comfort and to give Him strength for what was about to happen. And then Jesus could endure it. And so He got to see that this isn't all there is.

What has to happen in our own lives is that we're so intimate with Jesus Christ that no matter what life brings us – and it always brings something, there's always stuff that we've got to deal with. That once we're so intimate with Jesus that no matter what happens, it's okay. We mightn't like it, it's still going to hurt us. He's still going through grief counseling throughout the years, but it still sits there – when you lose your children and your wife, it's going to hurt you. If not you're a nutcase. But, the faith of this man was unbelievable. His preaching, his joy made me feel like crap, you know, because I'm just tired today or whatever and I get ahhh. And here's this man and I never met a more joyful man in my life. The Lord wants to give that to us. He wants us to look at Him and only see Him and focus on Him, and know that no matter what life sends us, it will always be okay. Because we have a Savior that can save us for anything, and this savior we will live with forever. And in the end, that's all that will matter.

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