

Fr. Larry's Homily – March 2, 2008

Good morning! Today all the readings, especially the first and the second, and the Gospel, have to deal with judgment. And how we judge, and how when we judge we're wrong. And again this past week I was in Milwaukee on Saturday, in Chicago all week, and I was in Nashville, TN, yesterday and especially with the men, you know – I love just to talk to men, and to really kick their butts is exactly what I did. And when we do that, one of my biggest things is I love to hit with them because it's so much like me – and this isn't just for the men; women, trust me this is for you too this morning. That we Catholics are great judges. In fact, I would say for most of us that would be our number one trait. We are judges – for you pastor, easily. Judgment – we love to judge things. We love to think that we know what's right and what's wrong. And in the first reading the prophet thought of all these guys, and he thought, "This is the one. This is the one. This is the one." God said, "Nope. The ruddy one. The runt of the litter. That's the one I chose." Huh? And the prophet judged wrong.

Then you get to the New Testament and you get the Pharisees. "We know that this man is not of God – he broke the Sabbath! And what are you doing? You're a sinner – you've been a sinner since the moment, from your birth." Isn't it amazing that God answered that question from day one, from the very beginning of the Gospel? When the apostles asked, "Who's sin – him or his parents?" and He said, "Neither of them sinned, stop it!" And then the Pharisees, the first thing they said to the man is, "You're a sinner from birth! And you're going to tell us?"

So all of us can become great judges. And you've got to admit it – just do it. You know, don't sit there and say – and again, hearing lots of confessions this past week, lots! And if I sit there and say, you know one of the questions at the end is are you judgmental? And people say, "Oh no, Father." And I always stop and say, "(sigh*) Are you judgmental?" "W-w-well?" "Just say yes." Okay? Because you are! You know people here, if you look at me and say, "I'm not judgmental, Father", well you're judging me now, aren't you? That's the reality – we're all judgmental, and we've got to know it.

And the problem is that we judge from what we think instead of from what God sees. And that's what He's trying to get to us, that the first thing we've got to acknowledge is that we're not called to judge anybody. We're not called to do it. It's

one of our things that we have to at least be there first, because sometimes we who are good Catholics, you know the ones who go to daily Mass, the ones who go to Church every Sunday, the ones who sing and raise their hands and jump up and down – we think we're holy. That's the first problem. Then we think that everybody else that doesn't live up the way we live, they're messed up. That's the second. That's not our job. They could be holier than you, how do you know? You don't know their soul; I don't know their soul, what's going on in their life, what's going on. And we can sit there and make these judgments. And 90% of the time the judgments are wrong. Huh?

Just this, when I was in Milwaukee, WI, it was kind of interesting because it was the second year in a row I've spoken in Milwaukee. It was the first time I got a standing ovation before I ever started talking and I said, "Boy, you don't know me." I sold a thousand c.d.'s – I was on top of the world on Saturday. I was like, "Huh, that's pretty good!" Sold all this stuff, got to do all my stuff - that changed in about two hours because I had to go to another parish. And the pastor could have cared less about me, didn't really reach out, nothing. People sat there and looked at me like, "who are you?" And I was like, oh – so real high, real low within ten hours, that fast. Judgment. My judgment of the people, their judgment of me. And God looked at me and says, "Why do you even look at that?" Why do you sit there and care what people think about you whether good or bad? You, Larry, have got to worry about Me. Period. What I think about you. What I think about your heart. What I think you're doing."

And you know I'm a big one, I don't know about you – me. I love to compare myself. "Well next to this priest, sheesh! I do a holy hour every day! You know that guy, I bet you he doesn't even say a rosary." Can you imagine? None of you are like that. But me, that's the way I am, you know? And I'll sit there and I'll go through all this judgment of others because look at what I'm doing, and how come that person does that. If you look at the, I love at the end after the Resurrection there's Peter walking with Jesus. And Peter looks over and there's John over there, and he says, "Hey, Jesus, what about John?" Because it was thought that John would live, would not die. And Jesus looks at Peter and says, "What does that concern you? Your job is to follow Me. Don't go worrying about John and what he's doing and what he's not doing, and how I will treat him or how I will not treat him. Your job, Peter, is to follow Me."

And that's the same Jesus that's saying to each of us today. Your job, my job is to follow Jesus the way He calls us to follow Jesus. And not judge everybody else – who isn't good enough, who doesn't do this, who doesn't do that, who doesn't fit up to our expectations. And one of the first places we do that more than anywhere else is our families, huh? Our husbands, our wives, our children – they're not the way we want them to be. Boy they need a good kick in the butt. I get people all the time that say, "Father, you've got to come talk to my son. He needs a good kick in the butt." Really? Might be you that needs a kick in the butt to tell you the truth. But the reality is we judge our families. We judge our husbands, our wives, our children, our parents. You know and that ain't what God's calling us to do. You know as Catholics we are forbidden, *forbidden* to judge; and we are commanded to love.

Forbidden. That doesn't mean we don't judge actions – we must judge an action. You know, that's something that's right, that's something that's wrong. But we can't judge the person or their soul. And again I'm preaching this to me as much as I'm preaching this to you. So don't sit there and judge me and say, "Oh, Father, you judge." Yes, we know. Okay now you just judged Father again, you did it again, see? You see how we do these things? And we sit there and we all do it.

And so what do we have to do? You know like last time I had to go and anoint somebody so I had to end the homily very fast last time. But we're not going to do that with you, because we've got to get a remedy to judgment. How do I get beyond this? First what you and I have got to do is repent of it. That means that we acknowledge that we do it, we tell God we're sorry, and we ask God to set us from this which we do. The second thing we've got to do is ask for God's heart, and ask for God's eyes. And where does that come from? From the Holy Spirit of God. So as Paul would say, he would hold all thoughts captive to the Holy Spirit. So what you and I have got to do is after we repent of our judgments is say, "Spirit of God, help me to see this person or persons the way You do. Give me Your heart, give me Your eyes that I can see this person or persons as You do." That we start looking at people from the eyes of God instead of the eyes of man. Right? Isn't that what it says in the first reading today? You look at the exterior – God looks at the heart.

And again, I have found that in my own life – again just this week I was judging this particular person and you know for three days I was ready to kill somebody. And then the fourth day the Lord opened my heart to see the person's

heart. And I felt like such a fool because I completely, completely misjudged this person. Completely. And I would have sat there and staked my life on I was true about this person, my judgment was true. But it was totally wrong and I felt like a fool. And I had to go before the Lord and I had to repent and say, "Lord, you know, why do I keep doing this?"

The third thing we've got to do – well first we've got to acknowledge and repent. Second thing we've got to do is ask for God's Holy Spirit; and see people's heart and ask for God's Spirit so we can see people's heart and God's eyes so that we can see what's really going on and see the way God sees other people. But the third, something practical that you can do. You see sometimes it's just impossible – we're human beings and we're going to fall. And what you've got to do is when you fall in judging somebody, if you do it in your heart immediately say a prayer for that person. Immediately. So turn the evil judgment into good. Lord, help them to know you, help them to love you. Lord, bless them abundantly. So if you judge a person a thousand times, then a thousand times that day you'll bless the person.

And then with that, ask God to reveal to you something good about that person that you just judged, huh? So you pray for that person, you say – and let me tell you, not everybody's bad. Can you imagine? We usually make bad people bad because they did something wrong so they're all bad, they're just bad. Ask God to show you what's good about them. Because because of their very existence there's something good; we have focused on the bad when we judge somebody, now we've got to look at what's good. So we can get off just the judgment and negativity and we can start looking at the God that dwells within them – because God by definition dwells within every person. Maybe not the same way, but they wouldn't be alive if God wasn't there somewhere. So to see the good.

So today the God of the universe call us to be people who do not judge but people that love. And if we're ever going to do that first we've got to acknowledge we're judgmental, we've got to repent of that, we've got to ask for God's Spirit that we see people with God's eyes and God's heart. When we do fall we've got to pray for that person and we've got to ask the Lord to focus on what's good about that person, not just what is bad. You got it? Get it? Gonna do it? You'd better. May each of you know His love today and forever, Amen.