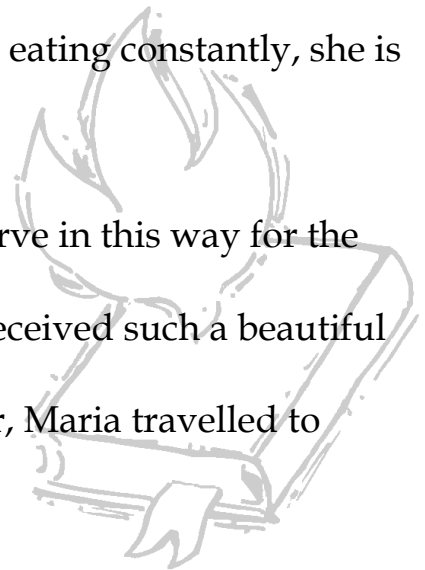


Homily
28th Sunday OT – A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
October 14-15, 2023

Is 25: 6-10
Ps 23: 1-3, 3-4, 5, 6
Phil 4: 12-14, 19-20
Mt 22: 1-14

I was told recently that Maria Jankowski received a beautiful letter from the people of St. Anne's Church, thanking her for the huge meal that she offered for the priests and the deacons and the servers and the visitors at St. Anne's Church for their feast day on July 26. Maria Jankowski, who always says she wants to cook something simple and then prepares baked mostaccioli, filet mignon sandwiches, salads and pastas, and all kinds of desserts, kolackies, brownie squares, cheesecake squares and foods that she considers easy to do but the rest of us would consider a great deal of work. For Maria, it is never good enough to have firsts or seconds of her food. If you are not eating constantly, she is not happy.

Maria has been feeding the communities I serve in this way for the last few years but this is the first year that she received such a beautiful letter from the St. Anne community. Last winter, Maria travelled to



Momence for our staff Christmas party and she decided to bring all the food with her and serve it and present it to everyone herself. The folks that attended this event were exceedingly grateful for Maria's generosity.

The wonderful part about Maria's cooking and generosity is that she buys all this food herself at the Caputo's grocery store in Naperville or at Sam's Club in Joliet and pays for all the food herself. Maria waits until the stores offer sales on meats and cheeses, freezes what she buys and then uses those purchases for whatever she is doing. Since Maria refuses to take any money for anything that she does, the CCWs at Pat's figured out a way to thank Maria for her kindness by offering masses for her family and my father, her husband.

In addition, I have been offering special Masses for my family when there are no other intentions scheduled as well. When someone in the community dies (especially someone who is not well known at the parishes I serve), I offer special Masses for them; I do the same for your families, for those who might not be well-known in the community and

for people who are very important in my life, because so many others are just like Maria – they serve in ways that are not recognized publicly but are just as important in building the body of Christ.

The theme of our scripture readings today focuses on how we are blessed so often in life but we do not pay attention to the blessings we have; we take those blessings for granted. In the case of this meal that we are about to share, we are taught that this meal is considered “the source and summit of our Christian life.” Even then, many times the so-called faithful in our community do not want to partake in this meal because they consider this “the same boring meal w get every single week.” Instead of looking at this Last Supper as the most sacred gift we can receive to prepare ourselves for what is yet to come on the other side of life, many are often shortsighted and blind to its importance. We do not see the importance of what we have.

Even when we do understand what this meal can do for us, we do not come prepared adequately for what we are to receive. So many people say to me, “God will accept you for the who you are and the way

you act or dress.” In many ways that is true, but God also has expectations, just like a parent does in a household. In the scriptures, we just read that when we do not meet those expectations, God responds accordingly.

Some time back, a photographer arrived at St. Anne’s Church for a wedding, adorned with a baseball cap inside of church. Photographers usually are the worst thing I experience at our liturgies – sometimes they can act as if they are gods unto themselves. In this particular case, I asked the photographer very kindly to take his baseball cap off. He refused to do so. He told me that, God will accept him however he dresses. In response, I referenced the gospel we just read and he retorted that he *still* would not take off his baseball cap. So, as a last resort, I had to do that “parent thing.” I said, “my house, my rules, my way, or the highway. You want to take pictures in this church, you do as I tell you or you can leave.”

We need to remember that all are welcome to this meal and God wants to take care of all of us. Some choose not to attend this meal and

will need to answer for that on the last day. Some choose to attend this meal but according to their terms, not God's. Some people want to justify the way they live and the way they dress without consideration of God's will or God's way. God provides direction on how to celebrate this Mass and how to show respect in church. Many the times we want to do what we want to do, knowing full well that God does not accept everything that we do. God has established what is right conduct and improper conduct and, if we want to enter God's house, we must follow God's rules.

Most importantly, what we learn by gathering is that what we are receiving is the best meal that we have or will ever have. In many restaurants, a dress code is enforced, the one most seen is "no shoes, no shirt, no service."

What we are trying to say at this meal is if we have a sincere appreciation of what has been given to us, we should not have a disposition that does not care or begrudges this meal as if it is some kind of vegetable we are forced to eat. Instead, we have called to have a

disposition that this meal is more important than anything else we do; this is the best meal in our life... and we should treat it as such. This is the one gift I can offer you as a priest; I allow God to work through me to share this meal with you. Even with the online Masses, I share this meal with our homebound and far-reaching community each week because this is what God has asked me to do.

Even though our weekly online Mass attendance is declining (which I think is *good*, in some ways – I am hoping this means that more people are coming to the Mass in person), many still tell me that they cannot attend Mass in person and at least get to celebrate this Mass online to keep the spirit of the liturgy in their hearts, especially in the local churches that they have supported. We will do what we can to keep serving you and feeding you, whether it be online or in person.

Maria Jankowski serves a wonderful meal at the dinner table of the home; this Mass is our Lord's gift to all of us and one that we should be making as a weekly time to separate ourselves from the "profane," mundane lives we lead on earth to enter God's life in heaven. Maria

Jankowski's food will get us through a day. God's sacrifice on this altar will get us to heaven. Let us realize the importance of what God gives us. Let us not take it for granted. Let us embrace what he has offered and share it well with the people that we meet.

This is our prayer.