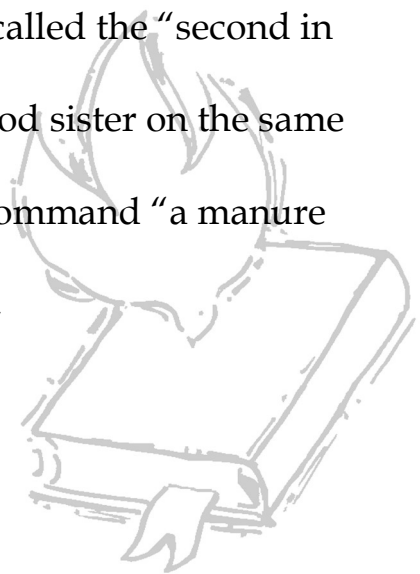


Homily
29th Sunday OT – A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
October 21-22, 2023

Is 45: 1-6
Ps 96: 1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10
1 Thes 1: 1-5
Mt 22: 15-21

I know this is not a kosher thing to present at a homily at a Sunday mass, but I'm going to ask you the question anyway. Have you ever been fed a "manure sandwich?" Now that sounds kind of odd – who would eat a manure sandwich? Let me explain.

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone where someone starts off kind of like they did in today's gospel, someone placates you, patronizes you, they say wonderful things about you... then that person takes their "shot" and then concludes with more placating words? I once was living with a group of religious sisters who lost their mother superior. The head of the office of religious life called the "second in command" (now mother superior) called the good sister on the same day of mother's passing and fed the second in command "a manure sandwich." The head of the religious office said,



So sorry that mother has died.
Let's talk about the future of your religious community.
Please know we are praying for you.

This is the recipe for this type of sandwich – you start with the nice thing. You take whatever shot you are going to take. Then you end with the nice thing. This is the recipe for “a manure sandwich” (or whatever else you want to call it).

With this kind of “technique,” this “manure sandwich” often seems to be the work of Satan. This is the way of our society, when we are not following God's way but man's (Mk 8: 33; Mt 16: 23). It seems to be the work of society where they or act like this – preaching like this is not popular and certainly will not make any friends in the clergy but Mt 10: 37 and Lk 14: 26 teaches us to do just that, if we wish to become God's disciple.

In my experience, I have learned about this technique from the ways of the world (and the ways of the Church) all too often. If you have ever been confronted by a telemarketer, a door-to-door salesperson or even

an evangelist who will not take “no” for an answer, You know, sometimes you get this with telemarketers. The more innocent you are, the more than these type of “snakes in suits” (so to speak) often try to take advantage of you. You get this with salespeople who soften you up, go in for the kill and then say a nice thing as they are walking out the door.

Unfortunately, this is the world of Caesar; this is the world in which we live. The world is very cunning and the world is very deceiving. These deceiving cunning ways sometimes bleed into the lives of our families and even into the lives of our faith at times. We get conditioned to accept these cunning ways when we are inundated by this technique in print, movies, television or certainly in social media. This technique is used by politicians on both sides of the aisle so often, and sometimes, unfortunately, they bleed into the lives of the leaders of the church, thinking that this type of cunning is acceptable and even laudable.

It is this technique that the Pharisees and Sadducees used with Jesus in the first century and in today’s gospel. Sometimes our Church leaders

attempt to use the same technique to alter some of the basic teachings of the Church.

As we learn in life, the way of the world is the way of the world. We are told to give Caesar his due. Our laws require us to pay taxes – whether they are good or not, whether they are just or not, often is a matter of concern for those in the faith who oppose abortion, euthanasia or the mortal sins that some groups of the world consider acceptable and even laudable. We have to give to Caesar to pay our bills; if we do not, our services terminate, whether it be water, gas, electric or even the garbage (when we were administrating Sacred Heart Church in Hopkins Park, someone had the bright idea to break the locks off the utility boxes to re-engage those services that were cut off!!!). In order for local churches to function, we are required to take collections and engage in fundraisers to repair our roofs, renovate our gymnasium, tuckpoint our buildings and engage in those projects that will allow our buildings to function past the current generation.

I am well aware that some people do not like the fact that we focus

on money as much as we do. To be honest, do not like the fact that I have to talk about money. That said, when I inherited a debt at St. Patrick's at over \$330,000, what choice to I have or we have? We pay the bills, we pay off the debt or we lose what we have.

St. Anne's Church is in a much better place, financially. *That* parish has money in the bank but slowly it is getting whittled away by our painting the church, carpeting the church, tuckpointing the church and repairing the roof of the church. St. Anne's needs to be weary of whatever the diocese might do to the parish in the future, so the warnings described by the prophets of the Old and New Testament are very relevant today – stay alert and be obedient to God because a lax attitude towards the faith has resulted in death and destruction in the history of our faith.

As I often preach to the faithful at St. Anne's about the story of Joseph and the Pharaoh (Genesis 37-50), we slowly are losing what we have stored to all the projects we have undertaken; we need to make sure that have hold back enough in reserve to sustain ourselves. In a

way, St. Patrick's Church is suffering from the result of not being prepared for the metaphorical years of drought and we are doing the best we can to get back on track. At both parishes, we need to have a nest egg so that when the time comes for famine (about which Joseph warns the Pharaoh concerning the upcoming famine), they and we need to hold onto whatever resources we have so that when the famine arrives, as they were ready in Genesis so we need to be ready today.

The first reading is a text from Isaiah after the people had already been exiled to Babylon (modern day Baghdad, Iraq). For over fifty years, these so-called "Chosen People" suffered because of their being disobedient to God, and, as a result, being lured into that way by the devil feeding them manure sandwiches. These poor souls were lured into bad habits and conditions by false gods of the world, the same kind of false gods that exist in today's age. As was and is the technique of leading good people towards bad ways, those who are cunning in this world soften them and us up, go in for the blow, and then they put a kind word in as if that's going to lessen that damage that they have

caused. This reminded me of one time I was with a salesperson who knocked on my door at St. Anne's and really was pushy with me concerning what they wanted to sell. I ended up putting a sign on the rectory door that reads, "NO SOLICITORS." (Maybe we should put that sign on our church doors concerning those who propagate sin). When it comes to the devil, no devil is out to do good; by the nature of their lives, the devils of this world are content to do and serve evil.

We realize that, in today's age, there are so many needs and so many organizations and individuals asking us for help. For this reason, we work with those organizations that provide us with food and resources to help those in need and Catholic Charities is the service arm of the diocese, helping those with needs we cannot provide on our own.

So are called to stay holy and upright. St. Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonians, told his followers to live every day as if it were their last. Our Lord says the same in today's gospel – put everything in its proper order. Take care of the things of the world but never forget about the ways of God because God can approach us like a thief in the night and

call us home at any moment.

In the end of life, there will be no sandwiches awaiting us. There will be no taxes, no bills and certainly no telemarketers. On the last day, we will stand before our Lord, answering two simple questions posed to us: “Do you love your God? Do you love your neighbor?” God will ask if we love the church that Christ established for us on the cross.

The answer to these questions is in the form of the only currency that matters to a person of faith, that of Christian charity, the currency of love. Love your God, love your neighbor. Do what is necessary to support those who cannot help themselves. This is why our Border Town Parishes support Alcoholics Anonymous. This is why our parishes support English as a second language. This is why our parishes support our food pantries. This is why our parishes support Harbor House. This is why our parishes support our Veterans’ homes to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves. This is why our parishes support Good Shepherd Manor and the hundred or so residents with special needs, to tell them they are not alone – God is

with them through us.

Christian Charity is the currency that will get us in heaven, the spiritual currency that is found overflowing in our hearts to be freely given away. This currency is not something we accumulate or guarantees us of anything. If we want to live like Christ, then we understand that this overflowing gift lives within us to be given away totally when we love our neighbor and love our God. Faith, hope, Christian charity, the Gifts to the Holy Spirit, the Spiritual Works of Mercy, the Corporal Works of Mercy. That is our currency that is not to be hoarded but to be freely given away, if we want to live like Christ and get to heaven.

If we want to find success in our lives and a relationship with God, I must keep doing what I am doing and loving you in God's name. The currency that I need is to share is God loves that passes through me to give to you. The currency I have is God's grace that passes through me to give to you. Let us realize that I am not trying to feed you a manure sandwich; I am trying to get you to heaven, allowing God to work

through me so that God can offer grace to you. We have that kind of currency and we understand how to use it to live like Christ. Please know that I will continue to pray for you. Please do the same for the people that you meet. This is our prayer.