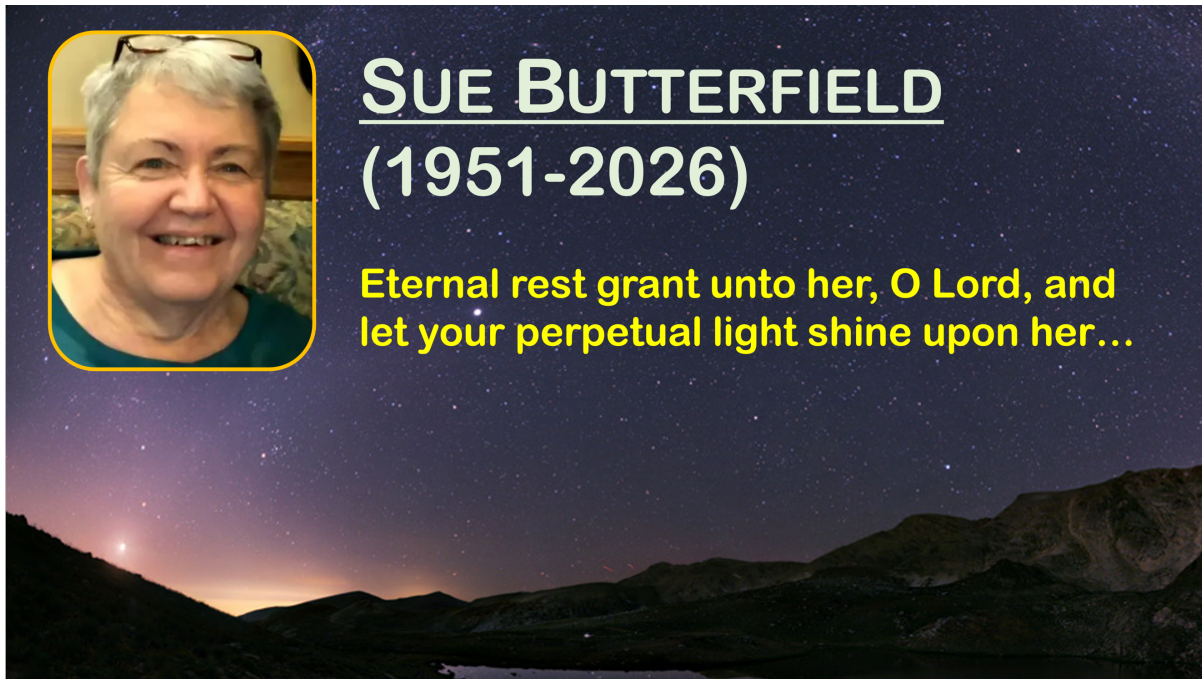
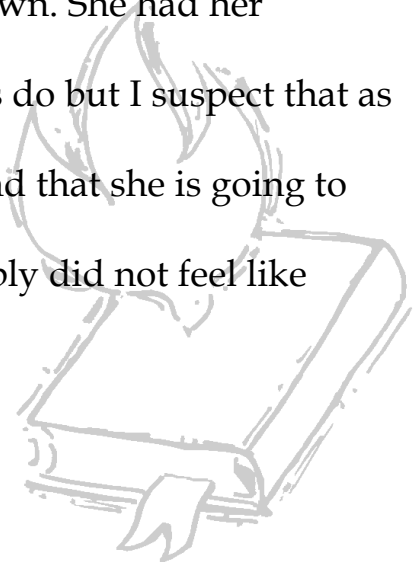


Homily
12th Sunday OT - A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
June 20-21, 2026

Jer 20: 10-13
Ps 69: 8-10, 14, 17, 33-35
Rom 5: 12-15
Mt 10: 26-33



Sometime back, one of our parishioners in this area had referenced a woman named Susie Butterfield, who died in May. Susie was 74 years old, not married and pretty much lived on her own. She had her routines in life, like many people do, many of us do but I suspect that as her obituary was published in the newspaper and that she is going to have a private burial, I suspect that Susie probably did not feel like



anyone cared about her, which is the furthest thing from the truth.

Today I would like to honor her with this homily.

The person who told me about Susie's life and death shared with me that Susie was a student of St. Patrick's Academy, that she graduated from the school and subsequently worked with her parents in their local business. Eventually, Susie became secretary and receptionist at Good Shepherd Manor for almost twenty years and, after retirement, then volunteered at the Manor for all kinds of different activities, because she wanted to support the institution, where she served.

I have mentioned on numerous occasions how a secretary, an usher or even a greeter can make or break a parish or an institution. If you have a person that is warm and welcoming, someone that allows people to feel that they are to feel as if they are at and they are a treasured guest, or if they have what we call "daggers of the eyes" and appear as if they are judging you as soon as you walk through the door and making comments about people before or after mass, or makes comments behind somebody's back, all of this can make a difference. I referenced this some months ago about St. Andre Bessette.

From what I was told, Susie was very welcoming over at Good Shepherd Manor. She was, as I call it, the first line of defense for those walking through the door over at the old seminary. If you walk through a door and you see a person of welcome, then you *want* to come into their house. If not, what does Jesus say? “Shake the dust off your feet and go somewhere else” (Mt 10: 14). This theory applies to those who welcome and those who are welcomed; if someone do not get a warm reception, most likely they will not return.

I have served at the Manor now for eight years. I honestly believe, after spending a quality amount of time there, that the residents of Good Shepherd Manor are first in line in the Kingdom of Heaven, innocent, loving people who cannot make it on their own, who need help of other people, and who are the most in need of God’s mercy... and they will get it on the other side!

I referenced this at the Easter Vigil and Sunday Mass about one of the residents at the Manor who was in hospice care. Here was a person at the end of his life that always had a smile, who always asked for me and who always wanted a blessing from God through me. Here was a

person who insisted I get a chocolate peanut-butter cup Easter egg after my visit which inspired me to such a degree that I bought out whatever chocolate-covered peanut butter Easter eggs I could find at the local Dollar Generals and distribute them all to parishioners at the weekend Easter Masses.

When you find good people who do good things, those little things makes all the difference in the world. I would like to think that Susie, because of her sacrifice and dedication to the Manor, is well on her way to the Kingdom of Heaven. We, in a way, do not know who is in heaven, because that is up to God. We have canonized saints that we declare as heaven bound. For people like Susie, who did not go to church necessarily all the time, how would God look at her heart?

I would like to think that when God says to us in the Book of Wisdom (Chapter 3), "Chastised a little, they will be greatly blessed because God tried them and found them worthy of himself," that is what I would like to believe in my heart about all the people I serve (whether God thinks that or not is up to God). If you really believe that this Mass truly is the source and summit of our Christian life, then Jesus

commissions us to go out to the world and pray for those in need, which I believe includes Susie Butterfield. As we are commissioned to serve at the end of Mass, in my heart I believe Jesus tells us to be strong in preaching the message, to bring the light to others. I would like to believe that when some people prefer to live in the darkness, we need to be strong, because there will be many people that will persecute you and drag you down with them into the darkness as well.

Instead, whether you or I stand at a front door, at a reception desk or at the doors of the church, there are many people who need God's love and will love you if you love them. St. Paul lived his life being rejected by the Gentile community. He was stoned, he was beaten, he was taken out of towns forcibly and ultimately he was beheaded because of his faith. Do we have the Constitution to live in this life of love?

From what I was told, Susie had this love in her heart. Maybe she did not realize how much we loved her and we are praying for her just like we are for everyone else. Susie, in her way, made sure that people knew that they were loved. Because she did not ask for a funeral Mass and maybe very quietly, she will be buried at St. Patrick's Cemetery, she

may think that no one cares and life moves on. Maybe she thinks she is forgotten.

As far as I am concerned, she will *not* be forgotten at this Online Mass, not in this online evangelization. Here, right now, we remember her for her diligence in the faith. Maybe if we pray together, hopefully we can allow God to guide Susie in the right direction, because many years of her life, she did the same for the residents at the Manor and those who came through the front doors.

Hospitality, welcome, love are so important in the lives of the faithful. I implore you – stay strong to the gospel message where others may not. Do not let other people bring you down. Live the life. That is what Jesus is teaching us in today's gospel reading, a theme that weaves itself through all our readings today. Keep preaching the message and offering that welcome, come what may and God will be with you; you will be showing people the face of God in your welcome. Regardless of our shortcomings, God will walk with us on this journey.

So, if we want to get to heaven, we need to have love when people come into our houses when people come through the door, not the stare

of indignation or indifference, but a welcoming heart that tells people we care.

Let us learn that from people like Susie and our secretaries and hopefully our ushers who do the same thing, to learn that sense of welcoming, so people do not feel shut out, but welcomed in. When we do that, we are well on our way to the kingdom of heaven, because that is what God teaches us to do. Let us be a welcoming presence for the people around us and for all people that we need. This is our prayer.