

Homily
14th Sunday of Easter - C

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 05-06, 2025

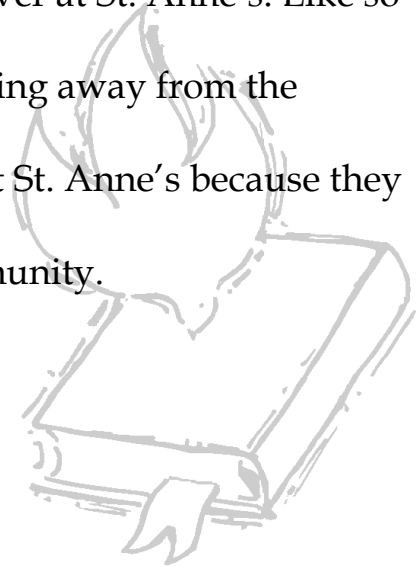
Is 66: 10-14
Ps 66: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16-20
Gal 6: 14-18
Lk 10: 1-12



THOMAS J. FRAHER OBITUARY

Chebanse, IL - Thomas J. Fraher, age 70, of Chebanse passed away Saturday, May 3, 2025 at his home. He was born April 6, 1955 in Kankakee, the son of James L. & Rosella (Highland) Fraher. Thomas married Denise Bishop (Elliott) on November 7, 2015 at the Kankakee Country Club.

A few months back, I received a phone call from a family in Chebanse, IL who had been attending Masses over at St. Anne's. Like so many families around the world, even when living away from the parish, this particular family attended Masses at St. Anne's because they had become attached to God through this community.



The family told me that their patriarch, Thomas Fraher, had taken ill and he needed the Sacrament of the Sick (formerly called “Extreme Unction” or “Last Rites”). That said, the problem I have is that with all the work that is piled on for me (I had to drive from the Border Town to Joliet four days in a row this week for the sake of ministry) to drive to Chebanse at that time would be a bit much. By the time I got to the home and came back to the parishes under my care would take a great deal of time; as I move past middle age and approach my senior years, I do not have much daylight hours available for what I need to do and my energy gets depleted with all the driving. I also know that many priests will not take care of these kind of requests and that if I did the same to any family in my parishes that approach me (by saying, “Sorry, today is my day off” or “I am too busy to help”) I would not appreciate it if a family member got that treatment from an ordained cleric and I will not say “no” to the sacraments. So, I replied to the family that I would visit Thomas in Chebanse, IL to offer the Anointing of the Sick.

As a courtesy, I contacted the pastor of that area (and dean of the southern end of the diocese), Fr. Doug. Like most of the priests down south, Fr. Doug is overworked as well and, considering that our diocese only ordained two priests in May and lost four priests who have taken a leave of absence from the priesthood in the same month, there are not many of us priests left to take care of the spiritual needs of the souls in our respective parishes; there are so many needs and so few priests!

Also on that particular Saturday, I also had to get up early in the morning because I received a call from the Poor Clares in Minooka, IL, telling me that they needed a priest to celebrate the Mass in Latin for them at 7:00 a.m. The Poor Clares have been exceedingly generous to these communities that I serve, providing truckloads of food to the respective Food Pantries, furniture and books for those who desired them and resources that have helped us repair St. Patrick's Church Roof at a ridiculous cost and create bathrooms for the gymnasium that should have cost the parish \$75,000 but ended up costing the parish less than \$10,000 (allowing us to eliminate our \$330,000 debt in four years, as the

extra monies in the parish were used to eradicate this albatross that haunted St. Patrick's for about a decade.

Because of the Poor Clares and the help of the good souls of the University of St. Francis where I teach, they have given me resources to help our Food Pantries in the area as well. The day before I visited this family in Chebanse, the Poor Clares and the University staff directed me to Alsip, IL where I rented a twenty-foot truck to pick up seven pallets of food for the needy in the area. I was foolish enough to pick up all this food alone because my resources were not available to help me; normally Bev Witvoit and Betty Wielgus from St. Anne's ask a member of their family to drive their trailer to pick up the food. That day, they were not available – NO ONE was available – so I did the work myself.

So the day before my visit to Chebanse, I drove up alone to Alsip, IL with a twenty-foot truck to load up seven pallets of Fried Pickles Doritos and bring them back to the Border Town Parishes to take care of those in need (the food may not be healthy... but it is still food and would be destroyed otherwise). That trip took me an entire afternoon of driving,

loading and unloading; I ended up taking a metaphorical bucket of Icy Hot on the knees, which my doctor tells me have to be replaced in the very near future.

In reflecting on this work and this homily over the last week, I was reflecting on those priests who normally offer the kinds of ministries I did for them and the Food Pantry folks who go and pick up the food for us. I thought about those businesses that gave us ridiculous discounts on projects we have done (including the Village of St. Anne that donated last month the generator behind our hall and Wally Martin / Bill Powers who installed the windows at St. Patrick's for a ridiculous price). So much of this work is unheralded and often taken for granted – I was thinking about a quote attributed to St. John Crystostom that not only applies to those who have passed from this world but also applies to those in the pews... “If you knew how quickly people would forget you after your death, you would not seek in your life to please anyone but God.” We certainly take so many people for granted who are alive and very much do the same for those who are not.

I have realized in my thirty years of ministry that regardless of who appreciates or does not appreciate what each of us ordained clergy do, if we did it for them... or for you... then we are doing ministry for the wrong reason. Most people do not care what we are doing and many disparage the ministry. We do the ministry for God, who *does* remember and will never forget. If we start with that premise, then regardless who the persons we serve are, each of us have an obligation out of love to offer that grace overflowing to others as God has done for us.

In the process, we learn that some people have a strong bond with a particular clergy member, which is why some individuals seek me out rather than others; the same applies to other priests or good souls from other places or walks of life. If we accept God's ministry out of the same love that God offers us, then we live like Christ by making sure that we care for those around us according to the vocation that our Lord offers us and guide those under our care to the kingdom of heaven.

I realize my time is short on earth and that I am limited in my time and my ability – the same applies to each of you as well. That said,

when people are asking for the Lord's grace through the ministries we offer in God's name, that grace takes precedence over everything else we do.

When I was serving in Aurora, IL I began the custom there on the first Friday of every month to offer the Anointing of the Sick to anyone who wanted it. We are taught that the Sacrament of the Sick is a repeatable one, unlike the view of Extreme Unction prior to Vatican II which was offered to those only prior to their respective deaths. In the seminary, I was taught to err on the side of grace, to err on the side of the sacrament. With that disposition, I would rather offer a sacrament too much than not at all (which is why during the time of COVID we figured a way to offer that grace to people who were dearly in need of God's presence and, as a result, many drove for miles to receive the sacraments from us that were denied in other places far and near.

As a result, I enabled the custom of Anointing the Sick on the First Friday of each month like I just did for those who attended Masses on July 2 and we will do for the Feast of St. Anne on July 26. We offer that

sacrament overflowingly to the faithful both at St. Patrick's and over at St. Anne's as well. Normally, this means I offer the sacrament about a hundred times each First Friday in the parishes I serve (there are plenary indulgences for those who follow a certain criteria for a certain number of First Fridays in a row as well. As a result, those First Friday Masses *triple* in size at the places I serve.

As a result, we have lots of holy people that come forward to stay in our parishes and introduce many prayers and devotions that have been lost over the years, including the Consecration to the Sacred Heart last weekend, Novenas directed towards all kinds of devotions and a greater participation in Eucharistic Adoration. These are the doorways into heaven when we offer the sacraments, invest in the devotions and *make God first* in our lives.

Our gospel reading today mandates that we go out into the streets and meet people in their homes and on their streets. If people accept this love, then you stay to serve them; if they do not, then you shake their dust off your feet, pick yourself up, dust yourself off start all over again

with the next village or group of people. St. Paul learned that – he travelled to unchurched areas like Lystra, Derbe and Iconium (commonly called “Galatia”) as well as Corinth and Thessalonica where he, too, was rejected and beaten for his troubles (and eventually killed). Not much changes in two thousand years in some ways... but we keep soldiering on.

In this world of ministry, we learn that many will do the same to us today as was done in the past... but we are not offering that ministry for them; even if the ministry is accepted, people will forget us as St. John Chrysostom referenced seventeen hundred years ago. If we live this life, then Jesus says to us that he did in the scriptures, “Do not rejoice because Spirits are subject to you; rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10: 20). *That* is why we choose this vocation and live this life, because if we want to get to heaven, we have to act like Christ and be like Christ, regardless of how we are treated.

Please feel free to join us when we confer the Anointing of the Sick on the First Friday of every month and certainly on St. Anne’s Day. For

those who understand, no explanation for what we do is necessary; for those who do not, most often no explanation will suffice. We just do what we do to offer our grace in God's name. I will offer these sacraments to you, regardless of who you are and regardless of your disposition; please do the same with whatever talents you have been given for the sake of the people that you and I meet. This is our prayer.