

Homily
15th Sunday OT – A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 11-12, 2026

Is 55: 10-11
Ps 65: 10, 11, 12-13, 14
Rom 8: 18-23
Mt 13: 1-23



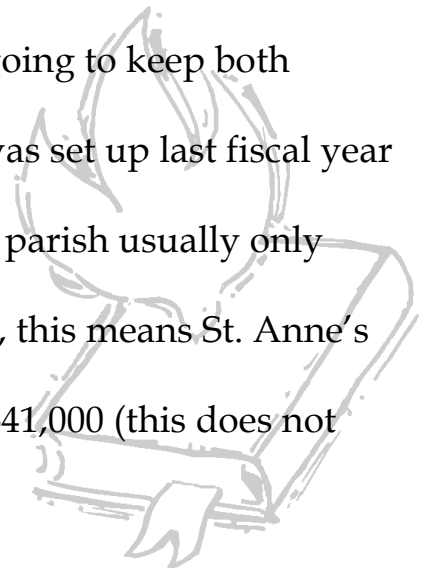
**Please Help Us Upgrade
Our Parish Campuses!**

<u>St. Patrick's Church</u> 119 N. Market St. Mokenca, IL 60954 ☎ (815) 472-2864	<u>St. Anne's Church</u> 230 N. 6 th Avenue St. Anne, IL 60964 ☎ (815) 472-2864
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Upcoming Church Projects

- St. Anne Foundation - \$2,000,000**
- St. Patrick's Foundation - \$3,000,000**
- St. Anne's Building Generators – \$50,000**
- Paving of St. Pat's Gym Parking Lot – \$100,000**
- Paving of St. Anne's Parking Lot – \$60,000**

As we were planning for our budgets this upcoming year (the diocesan fiscal year runs from July 1-June 30), our parish business manager was trying to reconcile how we were going to keep both parishes afloat. Over at St. Anne's, the budget was set up last fiscal year that required us to make \$2,000 a week, and the parish usually only takes in about \$1,200 a week; by this calculation, this means St. Anne's budget would fall short last fiscal year around \$41,000 (this does not



include the finance committee reducing my salary to \$7,000 a year to make budget, which the diocese would never allow them to do). In order to make up for the deficit, we made the hard decision to have all fundraising money directed towards paying off the shortfall – as many have said in the past, you cannot eat dessert without first eating your vegetables!

Over at St. Patrick's, upon my arrival, the parish was bringing in weekly collections around \$1,200 a week (with a \$3,000 weekly budget needed to stay afloat). Today, the parish brings in over \$3,000 a week, (and that is GOOD!), because now we are able to pay our bills. We also eradicated our \$330,000 debt, which became an albatross at the parish for years.

One day, business manager Absher pulled me into her office. In that discussion, Debby was kind of warning me about my generosity; she said, "Father, we thank you for your generosity but cannot keep depending on your donations to staff these parishes, or else when you leave, the parishes are gonna go under."

As I reflected about what Debby was telling me, in a way, what she said kind of hurt me. As “Envelope #1” at both parishes and as the spiritual leader who tries to set the example for everyone in the community, I am *trying* to be overly generous to live the gospel message to the best of my ability (I fail in living by Mt 19: 21 on a daily basis) but I try to do what God asks me to do to the best of my ability by “spreading that seed” liberally, by giving what I have. Towards this end (and the business manager can document this), literally I have donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to the parishes I serve.

I have learned that many priests do not live that way but they are fine – I am not them. Each of us at the end of life will be judged for their actions – they are not me and I am not them and each of us will have to answer concerning how we live, good or bad. If you want to buy the cars, houses, and vacations and all that with the money you have, that is fine for them and I have spent money in this way as well, to some degree. The attitude (beatitude?) that I try to live is this – if I want to get to heaven, I have to follow what the gospel says; I have to give what I have liberally. I have to sacrifice of myself. When Mt 19: 21 tells me to

give up all I have and follow God, if I truly believe that, then I have to live it. This means that, over the last three years alone, I have donated over \$200,000 in monies I could have pocketed and have given them back to you – I know the history of both parishes fairly well and I have tried to show you that I am your advocate and cheerleader... I want you to succeed!

By living this way, there are many people who know what I am doing who say to me, “Father, what about *your* future? Father, put some money away in the bank, Father, invest your money in an IRA, or in a 401k, or whatever government program is available to invest your money.” Some people chide me in what I do... and I get what they are telling me. What people tell me is the way of the world.

I also realize that I am a sinner; I am supposed to be a person of God. If I want to get to heaven, I too have to turn away from sin and believe in the gospel. When some people say to me, “Father, your money is not good here. We do not want your money; we want our money,” then I remind myself that my envelope is marked “Envelope #01” at both parishes.

If I am not living the gospel message by giving what I have to you, how can I expect you or anyone else to do the same thing? I honestly believe that by taking these hundreds of thousands of dollars that I am getting and giving them back to the parishes I serve, that I am learning what Jesus tell me about the man with the grain bins in Luke 12: 13-21. I learn that I cannot hoard money so I can take it with me in this life. I do not get to keep all those hundreds of thousands of dollars when I leave this world.

You are here and I am here on earth because God wants to see what I am able to do the gifts that I have been given. Do I hoard them? Do I keep them to myself, or do I invest them in the communities which I serve? At this particular moment, it is necessary for me to make this sacrifice so that the parishes I serve can survive – maybe these parishes are not on the radar of those who let the churches go to pot. As I have told you, I also have no control over the parishes I have left; once I leave, it is not my responsibility to take care of those parishes... those are passed on to the next shepherd. Whatever the next shepherd does with the parishes they serve is up to them.

I also have to tell you how much it hurts me to see what happens after I leave a parish. At my last parish, the people I serve chided me because they wanted an adoration chapel and wanted me to build one when the former parish was saddled with a \$650,000 deficit. I did what I could to build one – a family provided me with a \$40,000 gift, which I used to find old church statues and such from Pittsburgh, PA and Grand Rapids, MI and Mobile, AL. I travelled to Italy to purchase a tabernacle that doubled as a monstrance so that the faithful could open the doors of the tabernacle and expose the Blessed Sacrament outside the presence of an ordained minister.



Figure 1 The St. Brigid Chapel at the Former St. Patrick's Church - Joliet IL

I responded to the faithful by building this chapel in 2011 and, fifteen years later, the successor at the parish “buried” it and spent \$250,000 to build his own chapel to leave his legacy at the parish. I realized that the sacrifices I made to build this chapel was turned to dust... but such is life. I did what I could to help the people I served, but I also had to let go and realize that what we do on earth is fleeting – eventually every human structure will crumble and fall. I did what I could to serve the people in front of me at that time, just as I do for you at this time.

When I give what I have and then the faithful chide me for my generosity, I feel as if I am giving someone a Christmas gift and getting a slap in the face. I get it; I understand what people are saying. I also realize that Jesus gave a gift infinitely more important to us – he died on a cross for us – and he received infinitely worse than a slap on the face. I think to myself, how can I preach this message of giving to others when I do not practice what I preach?

The message in all of this, the beauty of what happens when I live this way, is that so many people took to heart what I am doing and they have responded accordingly – so many good souls have come forward

to be overly generous as I have tried to do. Take the St. Patrick's parking lot as an example. For six years, I had preached about the importance of paying off our parish debt, upgrading our facilities, establishing a foundation for both parishes and creating parking lots for both parishes. At the time I started talking about all of this, I knew what I was asking was a pipe dream. I also knew that asking someone to dedicate a building for a million dollars was also a "pipe dream," but necessary to preach for the well-being of both churches. I also know that most people



do not have a million dollars that they readily could give away (or even if they did, would they even donate it to their Church)? Even if you do invest this money in a parish, how do you know that it is not gonna be

taken away by the higher powers? In the New York Post earlier this year, an article was written that to pay off their \$800 million deficit for child endangerment lawsuits, monies directed towards parishes might very well be directed towards sex abuse payments instead to thwart off bankruptcy in the archdiocese (<https://nypost.com/2026/04/25/us-news/archdiocese-of-ny-to-pastors-raise-hundreds-of-millions-for-sexual-abuse-victims-or-we-go-bankrupt/>).

I cannot control how monies are spent outside of the parishes I serve. I cannot control what other people do. All I can do is serve you and sacrifice for you. So... I break the admonition in Matthew 5 by telling you what I do with my own personal finances. I hope and pray that by doing so, those I serve understand that I am being sincere. As a result, the next thing you know, the St. Pat's debt was eradicated last year. A young family at St. Patrick's decided to work with me to get a really decent price over at the St. Patrick's parking lot, something that was supposed to cost \$100,000 that Kyle Volek and his family whittled down to \$57,000. Other families saw what Kyle did and gave us the resources to create a paved lot that *never* existed since the parish's dedication in

1917. One family gave us family give me \$30,000. Another family gave us an additional \$15,000. A third family gave us \$10,000, and then an outside donor gave us \$15,000. We came to find out that, with faith and good humility, the impossible became possible.



The following month, Kyle told me that one of his cousins was tearing up Second Ave. parallel to our church and the cousin was willing to donate the ground stone from the street towards our second parking lot. A second cousin charged us \$25,000 to remove land behind our gymnasium to form the foundation for a *second* parking lot whose price tag was supposed to run \$330,000. Three separate donations made this project a reality; we raised the \$25,000. Kyle tells us that we need to

let the ground settle before even thinking about doing anything with asphalt but, to be honest, I never thought we would be talking about a gym parking lot, let alone a parish parking lot! Two impossible projects became possible because of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, suffering, sacrifice and mercy – and a family in their thirties who knew the importance of what a church means to our community! (and, to boot, Kyle donated two hundred pounds of pulled pork that he cooked, as well as cooking another 200 pounds of fire-roasted corn donated by Van Drunen Farms... and this is from a young family!).

I believe, I believe, that when you live that way, when you pour your life out, some people will take advantage of you; some people will beat you down. This is what some people do; this is what some people in our society do. I have experienced this type of harassment in practically every parish I have served. So many priests that I know who have served in so many parishes have experienced this as well; many in society take for granted the GOOD that exists in the world; some people take their shepherds for granted, until we have none. On this path, then, when we are without, we end up feeling “cast off” as were the “Chosen

People” in the Old Testament who were exiled because of their disobedience to the covenant.

The beauty of what we do is that for those of faith, for those who understand, the impossible becomes possible; those who live the faith build the faith and miracles take place! For those who understand, they know that a life of faith draws them to the Messiah who restores all things in God and carries the faithful to the Promised Land, the “new” Jerusalem called the kingdom of heaven.

I often reflect on that old story of the suffering servant who laments to God about the problems in the world that God has “neglected.” The suffering servant asks God, “What are *you* going to do to solve these problems. As the story is told, God’s response is this... “I did do something about the problems of the world. I created *you*.” When we put our faith in God, and the faithful of the Church reflect that love in God... look what miracles happen! I have to do my part; I have to spread the seed on rocky ground, on the fertile ground, on the walking path, knowing most of the seed will be trounced, knowing that with lack

of roots, people are not going to accept it. I keep preaching these same themes of hope Mass, hoping these seeds take root.

I also know that most of what I preach dies from lack of roots. Some people show up to church to hear the message but most people do not. That is not my concern. My concern, what God told me to do, is preach the word, to allow that seed to be spread liberally and to live the life I am preaching. For those who do understand what we are trying to do, our parishes have grown thirty, sixty and a hundredfold. For those who do not, at least I can say to God that I tried to live and preach the gospel message and that far greater prophets have lived and preached the same and were rejected as well.

This same theme applies to every age; this is the same these that God challenges us to do and live today. God is very aware and knows full well that very few people will take advantage of what we do and preach, but we cannot stop trying to live the message even though we are rejected constantly. We have to keep following the admonition of St. Bonaventure, to provide what he calls that overflowing “fountain fullness” of God’s love for all of you.

As a result, I continue to offer these Online Masses for you. I keep doing what I am doing, because I am telling you that I want God's grace to be afforded to you. On your part, do whatever you can, however you can. Make God know that you care. Your charity, sacrifice and suffering does not always have to be with money; infinitely more importantly, we need to praise God through prayers. In fact, prayers are even more important, because the prayers are the catalyst for everything else.

Keep praying, keep supporting, keep loving. Please know I will keep doing what I do for you in God's name. I ask you, do not give for my sake or anyone else's. Do it for God; do it for the community. Show God you care, so when that time comes, God can see that your eyes are opened, your ears are opened, your heart is opened, all of our hearts are open to receive this word, so you and I can take this word and message of hope and share it with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.