

**Homily**  
**15<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT – C**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
July 12-13, 2025

Dt 30: 10-14  
Ps 69: 14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37  
Col 1: 15-20  
Lk 10: 25-37

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There are many versions of the following story that I am going to tell. You can find this story in many textbooks for grade schools. Preachers have used this story in many sermons preached. In the case of today's Mass, I would like to use it today... I am entitling this story, "The Truck is Stuck!" An inspirational story about a truck, a dad and his son.

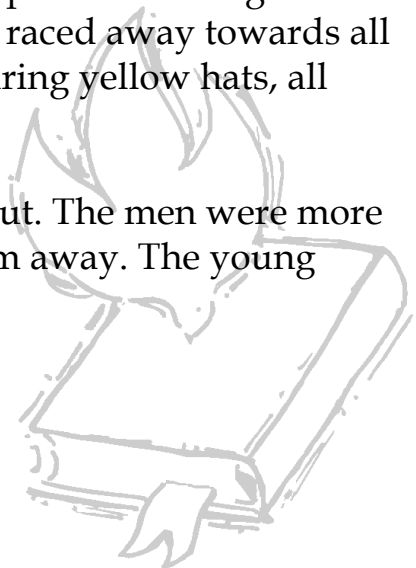
Once upon a time John and his young son Philip were driving through town when they came upon a traffic jam. Up ahead they could see that a large semi-trailer with a high load had become wedged under a railway overpass.

The father experienced only the frustration of being held up while his son experienced a world of unbelievable wonder.

There were police everywhere and fire trucks, a big crane and even a train that was forced to stop at the approach to the bridge.

While John sat in the car fuming, his son Philip could no longer contain himself. He sprang out of the car and raced away towards all the important people in their fancy suits, wearing yellow hats, all trying to figure out what to do.

*"I know how to get the truck out!"* he cried out. The men were more concerned for the boy's safety and shooed him away. The young



fellow persisted until he found someone who would listen – all the time dragging an exhausted dad behind him.

*“What do you think we should do?”* asked the man.

*“If you want to get the truck out,”* said the boy, *“all you have to do is let the air out of the tires!”*

From the mouths of babes come the great wisdom of the world. Yet, this problem exists in today’s age, in every age preceding us and most likely every age that exists after, from Adam and Eve all the way to the present day and beyond. When our society tends to dismiss or marginalize, when we discriminate or we shut off others for a variety of reasons (just and unjust), we do so because whomever does not fit our idea of the way we think or live, then we lose out on letting every member of the body of Christ participate in helping us become a more enriched people.

A child sometimes has an answer that an adult will never figure out. I have learned this lesson in many experienced in my life in all kinds of different venues. I remember how, one time when I was in the world of cooking that I was watching a recipe on how to grill corn on the cob.

Some of the great chefs around the country had praised grilling corn over boiling or steaming it; after watching what they did, I had practiced grilling corn and reached a level of satisfaction before I shared this technique publicly.

One day, while having a cookout with my friends from the seminary, I decided to unveil the newest skill that I had learned from the Food Network. My friends were not happy with the corn – they did not want to eat something outside of their way of thinking. As a result, my friends chided me – they said that the only way to cook corn is to boil it or to steam it and drench it in butter (I have no idea how they would react to *elotes* – a grilled corn slathered in spicy and creamy, garlic and Cotija cheese spiced sauce or the traditional *elotes* with mayonnaise and chili powder)... but there you go.

When the Food Network used to be about Sara Moulton, Julia Child and chefs teaching you wonderful techniques in cooking, many people would not like the example set forth by the chefs – the same applies to so many facets in life. Thinking out of the box, doing things unusually,

investing in doing things outside of one's comfort zone is a problem that has existed in one age after another. In my version of "thinking out of the box," we have been able to pay off a \$330,000 debt at St. Patrick's, created bathrooms for a fraction of the \$75,000 price once projected by those who visited St. Patrick's gym six years ago or replacing twenty windows in a rectory that would not have been possible had we gone the traditional route.

This dilemma plagued the Chosen People in today's first reading, which is probably why all but two of the six hundred thousand men that left Egypt were worthy enough to enter the Promised Land. Moses references this in our first reading today – if you wish to reach the Promised Land, think out of the box, let God lead you and the answer to our salvation lies ahead – God is right in front of them and us. All they and us have to do is love your God, love your neighbor, obey what God tells us and to follow the commandments.

As we learn in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses laments at the end of his life his forecast of what lay ahead for the Chosen People – because

they will be disobedient to God, because they do not follow the divine presence that shows them how to reach the Promised Land outside of their comfort zone, that they would lose what they have.

As we learn in the story of the Old Testament, the priest Ezra most likely assembled this story for the Chosen People as they returned to the Promised Land from their exile due to their disobedience. As some scripture scholars has theorized, Ezra re-established the parameters that God wished the Chosen People to live in order to retain the land they have, only to have the Chosen People go their own way and abandon God a second time, causing them to lose their Promised Land once again some four hundred fifty years later.

In our gospel reading today, who does Jesus reference as the person who is in the know? The answer is in the form of the person outside the box, the person foreign to those who believed that their way was the only way. Jesus references salvation coming through the person least likely among the faithful of that time to be accepted by anyone in the first century, namely the person of the *Samaritan*

During the time of the exile, while all the Jews were carted off to the Babylon, to that place of slavery, now modern-day Baghdad, Iraq, the ones that stayed behind were the Samaritans who became “frenemies” of the Babylonians and then the Persians. It was the Samaritans who intermingled with the other and who intermarried with the other, which was considered very bad to the Jewish people of the day – you might reference this as a type of “mixed marriage” that did not set well with the “purebloods” of the faith (which probably was why a Peruvian Dominican named St. Martin de Porres (1579-1539) dedicated his life to caring for those in mixed marriages, since he was an offspring of a Spaniard nobleman and a freed African slave (St. Martin is the patron saint of mixed-race people and those seeking racial harmony, among others)).

So when the Jewish people returned to their Promised Land and Ezra (the priest) and Nehemiah (the governor) re-established the laws that the Jewish people needed to follow in order to be faithful to God, the Samaritans were cast out. From that point of history until the time of

Jesus incarnate, the Chosen People looked at Samaritans as outsiders who would not be given respect or dignity by anyone else in their culture because the Samaritans decided to think “out of the box.”

In today’s age, this view would be akin to some folks’ view on interracial or even interfaith marriages. Like two thousand years ago, many in our society encounter those make life-choices differently than the dominant culture and, as a result, others might treat these life-choices with disdain or horrible discrimination. Then all of a sudden, because a person outside our comfort zone is different because of whatever makes them unique, many in society often try to cast them out instead of learning and embracing and understanding and loving the contributions in life the “other” can offer. If we actually allow the people in front of us, whomever they are, to teach us and to guide us, we have all kinds of opportunities where we can become more enriched by the way of faith.

At last year's parish picnic over at St. Patrick's Church, we decided to have a procession with the Blessed Sacrament with a bunch of horses, a

type of “cabalgada” that we will offer at 2:00 p.m. on St. Anne’s Day. At the picnic, we offered a horsedrawn procession of the Blessed Sacrament where those of the faith travelled four or five blocks, led by the Blessed Sacrament. Because this type of custom was not comfortable with some, they expressed their concerns – horses leave their gift on the roads which can be dangerous. This custom is not part of a certain group of people’s way of praying, even though this custom often is found in so many cultures around the world that might be foreign to the culture to whom I am preaching.

When we offered this cabalgada, a whole lineup of people follow us in procession with the Blessed Sacrament to church, a wonderful testimony of faith that allowed everyone in the area to learn from a culture that might live and pray in a way foreign to the dominant culture in the Bordertown area. Of course, at the end of the procession, I decided in the middle of the September day to get a bucket and a shovel to clean up after the horses and a Hispanic family ended up robbing me



of my bucket and shovel, cleaning up the horses themselves because they felt no priest should be doing something of that nature.

In my experience as a priest, I find out that when we expand our horizons and learn about different customs from different places of the world (and sometimes re-engage in customs and rituals that have been lost by the present age, then we can become more enriched in our faith lives in the process. A document from the Second Vatican Council entitled *Nostra Aetate* encourages us to do just that, by extended beyond even our faith tradition's comfort zones to learn how other religions pray and believe. May studying these methodologies and ways of praying and living, we may not agree or understand the specific tenants of other religious traditions but those methodologies are very important because sometimes we can learn something that can enrich our own faith life.

If we break out of the box and learn from others, whether it be from other cultures, religions or even the spouses and children in our own homes, we truly become a Body of Christ, united by the Spirit with

Christ as the head. Unfortunately, we do not live this way; we justify not spending time with God and community at Mass because the dominant culture outside of the walls of this Church teach the Masses to live their way, a way often that is short and empty of God's love. Sometimes the worst sin, the worst obstacle we have in our life is when we say to somebody else, "This is the way we've always done it," without taking the other's view into consideration. Sometimes the phrase "we have always done it this way" refers to the ways of a current generation or possibly through a finite period of time.

So this year for St. Anne's Day, we once again think out of the box to draw the people of faith in. Fr. Jim Heyd will celebrate the 10:00 Mass, a priest I parallel to Fr. Achilles Bergeron. Fr. Bergeron was raised in Bourbonnais over a hundred twenty-five years ago and learned of the importance and power of that relic. He taught the parishioners he served in Chicago about the power of this relic and, as a result, accompanied hundreds of them by train to St. Anne and the Feast Day, from which many believers in his group were cured of their illnesses,

represented by the wheelchair and crutches found in the back of church. Fr. Jim will bring his Haitian community to the Feast Day as he has done for years and teach us about the rich French history associated with this devotion.

At 12:00 noon, Fr. John Rickert will be celebrating the Traditional Mass in Latin, in the extraordinary form. His community of faith is about as large as the parish of St. Anne, a community that takes in over \$10,000 a week in their collection, they are so devoted to the Latin Mass. We will be inviting the faithful who attend the Latin Mass, from Ss. Peter & Paul in Naperville, St. Mary's in West Chicago, St. Joseph's Church in Rockdale and St. John Paul II Church in Kanakee to join us. Servers from the Latin Mass community will be joining us for a minimum fifteen minute procession with the relic after the 10:00 and 12:00 noon Masses (for those who lament about a long procession, I think about those from the last century who processed through the village in full dresses and suits – if they can do it, so can we!).

At 2:00 p.m., we will start with a Spanish prayer service in our pavilion, followed by a three mile cabalgada to the Camino y Esperanza Retreat House, where Fr. Jhobany Orduz, CSV will celebrate the last Mass of the day, followed by a fiesta. At all three Masses, we reinvest in confessions after the Masses, as well as veneration of the relic and food / religious articles for sale. Kim Emerson has been kind enough to lead children activities at 11:00 a.m. as well.

As Christ taught us in today's gospel, perhaps by "thinking outside the box" may help us to break out of our cultural comfort zones and learn about other ways to pray and appreciate how others have invested in this specific tradition that has been with St. Anne's for 145 years; you are all invited to join us.

Perhaps by doing so, we can learn how to appreciate others and embrace others' ways of praying and learning, that every person is created by God and can teach us about a way of praying that may be foreign to us but essential for us if we wish to get to heaven. By living and investing this way, we may be required to break out of our own

comfort zones and realize the answer for our salvation can be right in front of us and that answer can be so *good*.

For those that understand the message of the scriptures today, I thank you for “thinking out of the box” for the sake of the salvation of others and certainly ourselves. During the 7:00 p.m. Novena Masses that start on July 17 and run every night at 7:00 p.m. through July 25 (with the exception of Sunday, July 20) we pray for the intentions presented to us through the Sodality cards, to pray for the poor, the marginalized, the discriminated, the widowed, the orphaned, the lonely, the people at home who cannot join us in prayer. Please pray for me, as I pray for you. If we understand the faith, then we learn that the answer for our salvation is right in front of us, if we chose to learn from others who might offer us something in a way foreign to us. For we are the body of Christ – each of us are members of this body and each member is sacred and has something to contribute towards our salvation. Let us treat as such as well as well as every single person that we meet. This is our prayer.