

Homily
17th Sunday OT – A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 29-30, 2023

1 Kgs 3: 5, 7-12
Ps 19: 57, 72, 76-77, 127-128, 129-130
Rom 8: 28-30
Mt 13: 44-52

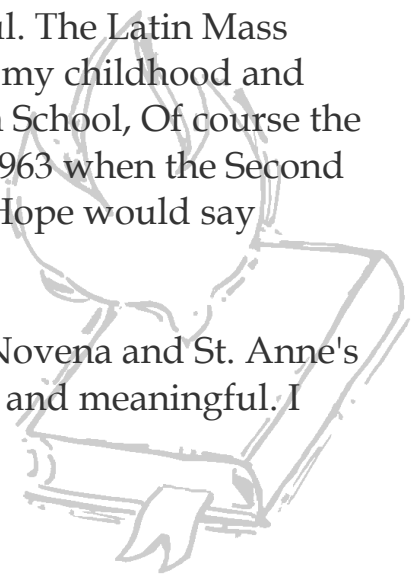
I want to talk to you a little bit about St. Anne's Day, and then I would like to lead it into some of the things that have been happening at both parishes. The inspiration for today's homily came from a note I received after our St. Anne's Day celebrations on July 26th and the three Masses we celebrated in English, Latin and Spanish. Here is the letter...

Father Jankowski;

I just wanted to thank your parish for making the St. Anne Novena and St. Anne's Day so meaningful and special. I watched the Online Masses which were beautiful and your tributes to each of the ten Grandmothers were spectacular.

St. Anne's Day itself was also very meaningful. The Latin Mass brought back so many beautiful memories of my childhood and growing up. I took two years of Latin in High School, Of course the church was going through a change back in 1963 when the Second Vatican Council took place. As the Late Bob Hope would say "THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES"

I have watched your video highlights of the Novena and St. Anne's Day itself. Those highlights are also beautiful and meaningful. I



would like to have a copy of the pictures that was taken in church after the Latin Mass. I have been wanting to attend a Latin Mass for a long time.

Once again, Thank you and the people of St. Anne's for everything you are doing for our Parishes and communities at large. May Almighty God Bless you and your family as well with good health so that you all can continue to serve us for many more years.

The person who wrote this letter helped us finance the roof project at St. Patrick's and may help us with our debt somewhere down the line as well. This person knew what kind of effort by so many individuals was needed for a St. Anne's day celebration to take place. The fact is that every project we undertake at the parish requires a whole slew of people for a parish to function. At the St. Anne's Day celebrations, secretary Ema Elvir was able to invite four different food vendors, an ice cream vendor, the olivewood folks from Bethlehem Gifts and other vendors to join us on July 26th and selling their wares for the benefit of those in attendance (hopefully they will do the same thing at the St. Pat's Community Picnic on September 24th).

Specifically, I want to thank Fr. Jason Nesbit from Maternity of the

BVM Church from Bourbonnais and his preaching skills at our English Mass at 10:00 a.m. on July 26th and Fr. Moises Mesh processing with the relic and celebrating the 2:00 p.m. Spanish Mass on that day as well. I also wish to thank Deacon Arnulfo Cisneros from Immaculate Conception Church in Morris, IL for assisting at the Spanish 2:00 p.m. Mass and processing with the relic on that day as well.

Because of the weather forecast that day, we did not get as many folks as the year before, but when it comes to grace, that gift from God was flowing in abundance during the three Masses on July 26th. This was the 143rd year that this parish celebrated these Masses and these processions. During that time, thousands of souls have joined us at Novena celebrations to ask God to be with them during times of illness or sorrow.

While we were preparing for the Novena, I received a phone call from Brother Alfonsus Brown over at Good Shepherd Manor in Momence. In addition to all the St. Anne celebrations, we did not forget that Brother Charles Pratt was retiring the following week after fifty-six

years of service to the Hospitallers and the Manor itself; at the Sunday Mass last week, we offered a blessing for Brother Charles.



Brother Alphonsus called me because there was a person over at Good Shepherd named Walter who had passed away; the family wanted a funeral service

on Thursday, the day after the St. Anne's Day celebrations. The priest assigned to the manor had left the institution two years prior and, I previously told you, the good brothers could not find a priest to celebrate Mass ever since. Because of this, I have been celebrating Mass for them once a month and I celebrated the funeral Mass on the same day that Brother Charles celebrated his anniversary party. The family wanted the funeral to take place on the day of the retirement party so they could attend both events.

I usually ask the family to tell me stories about their loved one who died so I can connect that person's life to the gospel message. What I really liked about Walter's story was that he moved into Good Shepherd

Manor in 1972, the year after the institution was came to be in 1971.

Walter lived at Good Shepherd for over 50 years; I found out that his way of passing the time at the manor each day was with a smile and those five-hundred-piece puzzles that you must put together. Each day, Walter would sit in the community room, smiling and assembling five-hundred-piece puzzles. I asked the family if Walter was the kind of person that liked to start with the edges of a puzzle or start wherever he could. The family responded that Walter had no organized way of assembling these puzzles – he just started wherever they started and just loved to spend the day working on this project. (As for me, I am an outside edge person).

I preached to the family that if someone's consisted of smiling, being nice to people and doing puzzles, would that not be a pretty good life if you're living a life of contentment that way? The family agreed that Walter enjoyed living life in this way, and that is what I got to learn about him and so many other residents of Good Shepherd Manor.

At the same time I was recovering from St. Anne's Day and

celebrating Walter's funeral, I also worked with the local police chief of Momence, Chief Patrick Siemsen. Chief Siemsen was asked to work in Momence because his predecessor moved to another area with his family. As Momence needed a police chief, Mr. Siemsen moved his family (with his crazy dog) over to the Border Town.

In his role as police chief, Chief Siemsen and I talked about what we could do together to help the good people of Momence. We talked about the security cameras on the property. We talked about the police bringing a nice Humvee to our parish picnic for the kids to play in (as well as the fire department bringing one of its trucks for the kids to visit as well). I talked to the chief about making sure we protect our property. The chief even brought his homesick dog to the parish on Friday to get blessed, since the dog was having a difficult time adjusting to her new environment.

Over the last few weeks, Chief Siemsen and I had been working on a project in concert with Mr. Don Lambert, who owned a 1995 Ford van with 30,000 miles on it. The van had one of those chair lists that assisted

those with special needs who needed wheelchair assistance. Don wanted to find it a good home because his family no longer needed the vehicle and he wanted to find someone who could use it.

So Chief Seamon came to me some time ago and he asked me if I knew a family that could use this van. I knew that during the Fr. Dan Hessling era, his relative Nicole Gossett and her husband Kurt were raising a thirteen year old daughter Katie who has undergone almost ten operations to straighten out her ankles, legs and back. Kurt and Nicole live in Chebanse, IL; all these operations have taken their toll on a sweet daughter whose costly surgeries they cannot afford on their own.

Life has not been an easy go for Katie. On a daily basis, Katie's family has to lift the wheelchair in and out of their car every time they travel in their van. Katie can walk short distances without the chair, but for the most part, she probably will be confined to that chair for the rest of her life. The family previously told me they had no resources for this kind of purchase, so I talked to Chief Siemsen and I suggested that maybe Mr. Lambert could donate the van to Katie's family. After talking to Don

Lambert, the good chief brought Mr. Lambert and the Gossett family together to look at the van, which seemed to be a perfect fit. I ended up contacting Mayor Terry D'Arcy from D'Arcy Motors, who helped us procure a new title for the van in exchange for two cases of Ghost Pepper Cheetos that I had sitting in my garage. When Nicole saw that van she was about to receive, Nicole was exceedingly grateful for those in Momence, IL that took care of her, including the police department, Chief Siemsen and good souls like you.

Around the time I was in the process of doing all of this, I was told that on Friday night, we had a severe rainstorm that knocked out all the power in the city. As a result, St. Patrick's Church was supposed to host a wedding that day but had no electricity, no lights nor any air conditioning. A couple named Manuel and Giselle were supposed to be married at St. Pat's during a noon liturgy; because of the power outage, there was no way this wedding could take place.

If this was any of you, if this was your special day and you wanted to get married and your place of marriage had no power, what would *you*

do? As a response, I gave the couples various options for celebrating their wedding – we could celebrate it in the dark, we could celebrate Mass outside at the grotto or (as they chose to do), we could celebrate the Mass at St. Anne’s Church, which was not affected by the power outage.

As St. Anne’s had just celebrated their feast day, the church was not exactly in the best condition. I asked Jim Sparenberg from St. Anne’s to do the best he could to clean the church on a Saturday morning, as he was preparing for his mother’s 97th birthday party the next day over at St. Anne’s Civic Center. In response, Jim cleaned all the carpets for me and found two kneelers that were functional (because the rest of them were being reupholstered). We used the flowers from St. Anne’s Day and I even recorded the wedding with our newly installed video camera.

As a result, Manuel and Giselle were able to celebrate a wonderful service over at the neighboring parish because of so many individuals that helped them overcome a bad situation to give them the wedding of

their life.

Later in the day, I drove over to the *Camino y Esperanza Retreat House* for a young lady celebrating her quinceañera. I was looking at this sweet lady, someone who probably would not have been treated very well otherwise, and we pulled out all the stops for her as well. We gave her the quinceañera of a lifetime over at the retreat house so that she knew that she was loved. Eileen and mother Ana Rivas (who are travelling with us to Lores, Fatima, and Medjugorje later this summer), have brought so many people into our community and they wanted to provide a nice service for this young lady.

Everything that took place this last week at our parishes aligns very nicely with our first reading today. In the first book of Kings, we read a story about King Solomon, who was given a choice to receive anything he wanted from God. Instead of choosing fame, fortune or riches, Solomon decided he wanted the gift of wisdom to determine right from wrong.

For a very short time in Kings, what Solomon received and what

Solomon did was absolutely spectacular for the people of the united tribes of Israel... and then he forgot about that wisdom when he married all these pagan wives who started worshipping pagan gods.

Solomon forgot about why he had this relationship with God and because of that, as soon as he died, the kingdom split in two as God had foretold. Outside of the three kings Asa, Hezekiah and Josiah, every other king that ruled the northern and southern kingdoms were more corrupt than the other. All these kings put their false gods ahead of the only one that counted.

As a result, these kings caused the loss of the northern kingdom in 722 BC and the southern kingdom in 586 BC. Even after a fifty year pause before returning to their kingdom to reestablish it in 536 BC, the Chosen People lost their land in 70 AD for a second time because they forgot about their faith and they forgot about God.

Because of this loss of faith, we subsequently endured Dark Ages, Schisms, Reformations and times of so-called Enlightenment. Because we forgot about wisdom, the prophesy about which St. Pope Pius X

warned us concerning Modernism has come to fruition in today's age.

Because of a sex abuse crisis, a lack of faith and a lack of trust in today's clergy, the largest demographic in this country consist of those who do not believe in anything.

What Solomon embraced in today's first reading we need to embrace today – we need to reaffirm the wisdom of God and the teachings of God that we have lost over and over again. When we embrace that wisdom we keep abandoning, when we learn to love one another (or as Patrick Seamon would call it, “networking” with one another), when we remember why we were created in the first place and dedicate our lives to become faithful to the God who created us and the God who wishes to bring us back home, then we have a chance to get to heaven.

When we forget about that wisdom or that relationship, if we forget about love, we are lost. If we are lost, then on the last day we cannot enter heaven because the so-called gods of this world consume us and become blind to the faith. This is the message of the gospel as well.

When even Catholics tell me that “We want to take a vacation from

God this summer” of that “Church is not important,” when we forget that one day we knock on that door of heaven saying, “Lord, Lord, open the door for us,” depending on how we live that faith and how we allow God to guide us in life, depending on whether we really stay with God’s love determines whether we get to heaven or not.

God knows what is in the hearts of every one of us. There are people in this parish that have left their fingerprints all over these places of worship and this community of faith and few will recognize the wisdom they possessed to build these communities and what they do, but God knows. God knows what kind of wisdom each of us possess. If we continue to keep doing what we are doing, if we keep praying for the sick and the dead, if we support the causes of this parish, including that parish picnic on September 24th, good things will happen. If we understand of what true wisdom consists, then we understand the true treasures in this world - the treasure is you and the presence of God that exists in your hearts. For this reason, we serve the Walters and the Katies and Manuels and Giselles of this world.

Let us understand and realize what God has given us, a type of wisdom that is revealed by the way we share God with others and give thanks to God for the love we possess. Let us choose wisely the gifts that God has presented to us so that we can adequately and lovingly share those gifts with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.