

Homily

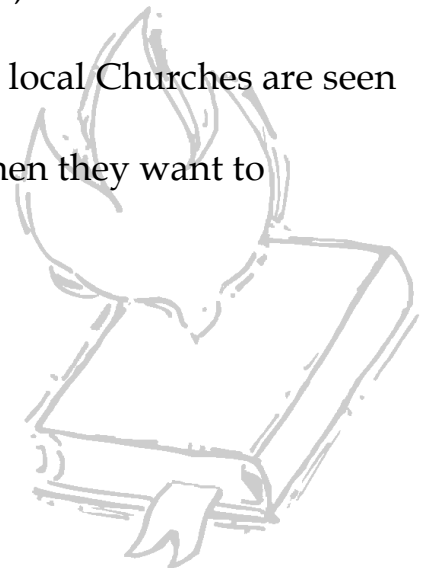
18th Sunday OT - A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
August 01-02, 2026

Is 55: 1-3
Ps 145: 8-9, 15-16, 17-18
Rom 8: 35, 37-39
Mt 14: 13-21

In addition to all the Novena and Feast Day Masses associated with St. Anne at the oldest shrine at the United States, we also had a glut of baptisms, weddings, and quinceañeras over the last two months as well. This summer, we have celebrated at least two extra services each Saturday, in addition to the regularly scheduled 4:00 p.m. Mass at St. Patrick's Church. If it was not for Fr. Uriel Martinez and Fr. Sebastián Ginoni helping me out, it would have been that much crazier for me, and I am not sure I would have had the energy to do everything that we did this summer at the Border Town Parishes.

This is the beauty of *Bienvenidos y Hospitalidad*, of *Welcome* and *Hospitality*, because when people know that this local Churches are seen as their home, that they feel comfortable here, then they want to celebrate their sacraments here as well.





**El Santo Matrimonio de Benjamín y Itzel Caro en la Iglesia de San Patricio (Momence, IL)
P. Sebastián Genoni, MIC – 25 Julio 2026.**



**Wedding Liturgy for Austin Fuhmann & Kandra Rennee Minton
St. Patrick's Church (Momence, IL)
July 25, 2026**

Whenever we celebrate special weddings and quinceañeras, we provide the service of recording their Masses and putting them on YouTube for their benefit and that of our community,

resulting in us uploading over ONE THOUSAND VIDEOS in the last seven years. That said, I just put uploaded the wedding Mass for Benjamin and Itzel Caro that took place with Fr. Genoni and a Mariachi band on July 25th. The same day we had our Vigil Mass in Latin (extraordinary form) at St. Anne's, we celebrated *two* weddings at St. Patrick's – one for the Caro family in the afternoon and the other for Austin & Kandra Fuhrmann at 10:00 a.m. as well.



We have been celebrating a lot of what I call “Modern Family Weddings” for couples whose

path to marriage are not of the conventional sort but certainly are proper, valid and now very sacred. So many people have been coming to me with various needs and requests to get right by God, so to speak. This particular weekend, we celebrated a 4:00 p.m. wedding at our regularly scheduled Mass for our business manager, Debbie Absher, as she, her husband, Russ, her children and family attended Mass at St. Patrick’s to get their marriage convalidated (a “convalidation” is where the Church validates a civil marriage with the blessing of God and the community).

I have a friend over at the Tribunal Office in the diocese and the former vicar general (second ranking priest of the diocese), Fr. Joseph Tapella, who has been helping me with one wedding annulment or

unique situation after another. Fr. Tapella has cleared all kinds of hurdles in the marriage paperwork process for me, allowing good people to receive sacraments where once this was not possible. As his twin brother Richard Tapella assisted us in plotting out both of our cemeteries on an Excel computer spreadsheet without cost (a process that normally would cost thousands of dollars), his brother, the priest, was able to help us resolve everything we needed to do so that Russ and Debby could get their marriage blessed in our church.

In addition to this wedding, I also celebrated a quinceañera yesterday for a fifteen-year-old named Kailey over at St. Anne's Church. At this service, Kailey's family broke one rule we require at a service but also did something during the Mass that serves as the inspiration for today's homily. Concerning the bad thing... for every wedding and quinceañera we celebrate in church, we normally have a set of rules that I have the people follow... and families very rarely listen to anything I say. For instance, you are not supposed to attach anything to the pews – no tape, nor glue, no staple guns and no nails so you do not ruin the finish of the woodwork that we have on the floor.

We also do not permit anything in the church that *flies*. Believe it or not, I have families that ask me is it okay to bring a *drone* inside the church to videotape the wedding? Just so you know, we do not allow drones inside of church – if a family wants to celebrate the Mass at our grotto, then they are free to fly away but inside church. We also do not permit helium balloons in church. Why? Because in our experience, when helium balloons escape their constraints and hit the ceiling, sometimes the balloons do not come down for six months; God forbid if they get caught in our ceiling fans, then perpetually you will hear a “thump, thump, thump” from the ceiling fan with a balloon that could not escape.

We also tell families that they are not allowed to use glitter in church. This may sound odd – why not glitter in church? The answer is simple – nowadays our dressmakers create clothing that looks really nice and shiny because they attach glitter to the dresses. Do you know what happens when people wear glitter on dresses? The dresses flap around as they are coming down the aisle, the glitter leaves the dress and forms a nice cloud above the congregation, and then the descends and falls

into every molecule of the church carpet, something that nearly is impossible to clean. When this happens, the Gayle Hesses and the Cookie Schroeders of the world say to me, “we cannot get the glitter out of the carpet! Tell people not to use glitter at services!” Unfortunately, Kailey’s family had glitter on that dress and now we have a mess in church!

That said, one thing happened at that quinceañera which really, affected me in a positive way. What happened served as the inspiration for this homily, my life, and hopefully your lives, too, because it was a really great moment. During Kailey’s Mass, a couple who have been married for over 20 years approached me and asked if they could sing and lead the music at the quinceañera. I told them, “Absolutely! You do not want to hear me sing.” So the couple lead the music and served as the readers of Mass.

During the first reading and psalm, the husband dutifully read the scripture readings and chanted the psalm. When he began to read, the husband put his glasses on and did an admiral job in his role as lector. When he finished his part of the Mass, then he climbed down the stairs.

As his wife was approaching the sanctuary to proclaim the reading, the husband took his glasses off and he handed them to his wife. To wear somebody else's glasses, to walk through somebody else's lens of life is a SPECTACULAR IMAGE for faith and family. While two people may be very different with idiosyncrasies and faults and this and that, when the two of them chose to see out of the same lens, literally and metaphorically, when it comes to getting married, when it comes to raising children, when it comes to living life, when you can find that person that is so in sync with you, then that image makes all the sense in the world.

I made this mention of a similar image of every wedding I celebrate, the image of Christ dying on the cross for the sake of his bride, namely us, so that we can be united as one. If we really love God, then we come here and spend time with God, especially at Sunday Mass, so we can look through God's lens – this is how marriages are supposed to work and how our faith lives are supposed to work.

For me, symbols of faith are important, to which I now include the image of shared glasses. To adorn a crucifix in rooms of a house, to ave

some type of symbol of faith in every room of a house is to remind ourselves that we are supposed to be like Christ; we are supposed to look through things through the lens of Christ. When we live like this, when I celebrate these Masses and services to witness the image of the shared lens with all these wonderful couples and all these examples of faith, it is then I encounter the best part of the priesthood.

The best part of the priesthood is when you get to celebrate sacraments and you can see people receiving God's grace... especially when the faithful *get* what the sacrament actually means, namely, to be like God. You cannot see grace passing from man to wife but we use symbols of faith to represent that grace whether it be wedding rings, holy oils, water, or even a unity candle. Those are symbols and signs of grace that passes from one person to another, from God to us.

So when we celebrated that quinceañera yesterday, when we celebrated the wedding yesterday, when we so many baptisms this summer, I find hope and joy in my priesthood. We are blessed to celebrate yet another baptism on August 23rd for the youngest couple at St. Anne's Church (Adelaide Anderson), and this weekend we just

offered a blessing for the oldest member of St. Anne's Church, Ruth Sparenberg (who turned 100 years old this weekend). The Anderson and Sparenberg families model these examples of faith, and when I see the examples through lived experience then I say to myself if I can embrace that same kind of grace, if I can see through that same lens, if I can live a life like Christ, then maybe God will carry me to the other side with them and anyone else who lives that life.

That is why it is important to attend these Sunday Masses and these special services, to see grace in motion, to see how God works through all kinds of wonderful people, with different ways of living, and to take that grace, that God has given to us freely, that we cannot earn or deserve, and give it away to every single person that we meet. This is our prayer.