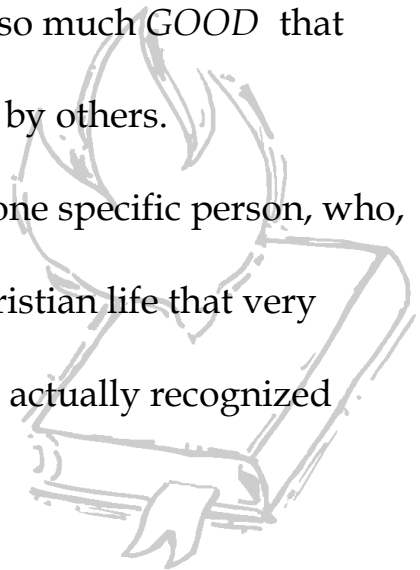


Homily
19th Sunday OT – A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
August 12-13, 2023

1 Kgs 19: 9a, 11-13a
Ps 85: 9, 10, 11-12, 13-14
Rm 9: 1-5
Mt 14: 22-33

Since I am celebrating the Online Mass inside St. Patrick's Church, of all the many wonderful examples of faith who I could reference at these Masses (and I just referenced ten grandmothers last month for our St. Anne Novena and Feast Day), I thought I would add one more for the sake of this homily. When I make this references, obviously the individuals about whom I am preaching are not the *only* good souls that exist in the parishes I serve. What I do is offer examples and models of so many others in our parishes who live this kind of life and are often unrecognized. The consolation I have is that God knows what exists in each of our hearts even if you nor I do. There is so much *GOOD* that exists in our parishes and is often unrecognized by others.

In this particular case, I wanted to reference one specific person, who, like so many others, lives the kind of simple Christian life that very much will pave her way to heaven – if any of us actually recognized



what this woman and so many others do on a daily and weekly basis, we would be well on our way to heaven as well. The name of this person is Marcy Siwicki.

I thought about preaching about Marcy when I noticed online that the family included one of those black and white reels of Marcy and her family when the kids were growing up. When I saw this video, I was reflecting about what little I know about this mother and grandmother. Marcy, during my first few years here at the parish, was and is a very quiet presence in the pews of our church; I have come to learn about her good heart.

One of her daughters prominently sits with Marcy over at St. Patrick's. Another one of her daughters prominently serves the faithful at St. Anne's. Her sons run a greenhouse business in the area and just donated some greenery as part of our parish picnic auction on September 24th. As I have come to learn, Marcy has many kids in the area who do all kinds of wonderful things for the people sitting around us.

When we had to deal with the COVID fiasco for two years, Marcy was adamant about watching the online liturgies we produced and she kept telling me how she appreciated that. As you know, COVID wreaked havoc on our country and many felt that the leaders of the Church abandoned the faithful by locking God out of the lives of the people we were called to serve. As a response, we on the east side of Kankakee did what we could to extend ourselves on behalf of those who could not come to Mass but wanted to receive the sacraments, who wanted to receive communion.

Marcy was one of these individuals who really wanted to receive communion and the sacraments – she did not want to block God out of her life as the leaders of the Church tried to block God out of hers. So Marcy kept calling us and kept talking to us. Because of faithful like her, we tried to show her that we cared and, as an extension of what we did for her, we tried to do the same for all of you.

Even after the two years of this COVID fiasco, there were still individuals that wanted to watch these online Masses and she was one

of them. Marcy would tell me faithfully that every week, she would turn on her television or computer and watch this Mass and, in some small way, she felt like she received the Lord's grace, even if she could not receive communion. By offering these online Masses, we were able to bring Church to her when the Church leaders tried to do otherwise.

I look at Marcy as kind of a metaphor to the kind of life that a good Christian needs to lead if we are going to get to heaven. The problem in our world is we are so busy and the secular world wants to keep us busy with all the things they do, that they do not want us to stop and focus on God.

The secular world constantly wants to push God out of our lives; the secular world does not want us to focus on God because God does not fill the government's pocketbooks. God does not push radical agendas from the right or the left. God does not play dirty like those running for office do. Government leaders are trying to push whatever agenda they must redirect society in the ways of the world; God is trying to get us to heaven, which is on the other side of our temporary lives on earth that

our civil leaders think is the be all and end all of what we do.

We often realize, as I have often referenced, that we are a people who like noise. We like to be busy. We do not like those quiet times when God can speak to us because when there is violence, when there is drugs, when there is sex, when there are all these kind of things that in some cases can be very fruitful, this noise can be very destructive. When our society allows this noise to get out of control, we have no time for God until our lives are over and all that is left *is* God, asking us two simple questions – did we love our God and did we love our neighbor?

When we let the noise take control of our lives, then we have no time for God because our society becomes an addiction to us and the addiction takes control of whatever we do. When we sit quietly in our pews and let God talk to us as Marcy does, we block out the noise and then God can speak.

Last week, I was talking at a “Theology on Tap” event for a bunch of young adults at the Embers Pub in Lockport. I was talking to them about our true purpose in life and brought up this subject about letting

God speak in the silence. One of the teenagers asked me a question about this very subject. He said to me that he tries to let God speak in the silence but he gets distracted too much by the noise in the world. He asked me what he could do to get rid of the noise. At first, I told him to seek out a spiritual director to help guide him on the journey. After reflection, I then said to him, "Maybe you should spend some time sitting next to Marcy Siwicki." Sometimes the simplest of answers is right in front of us, if we choose to pay attention.

I suspect that if I really thought about this subject, I could point out so many folks in our communities who live like this – I just preached about the charism of Ruth Sparenberg at our St. Anne's Day Mass on July 26, who is the Marcy Siwicki of St. Anne, IL. Good souls like Ruth or Marcy revel in that silence, want to spend their time in adoring God, gaze upon God, know that God is the source and summit of their life and ours, and they want to sit and be fed by the word of God and the sacrament. During COVID, I often remember having to figure out a way to bring Marcy communion during the time when the Church blocked

the faithful away from the sacraments. In our neck of the woods, we often had to figure out a way to bring the sacraments to the homes of the faithful, to anoint and hear confessions curbside, to get people to visit or call those who were alone at home, to make sure that those living alone were loved by our community. We would make phone calls to our home bound parishioners, especially to people like Marcy, to tell them that we loved them in God's name and a lot of the times Marcy would respond in kind and tell us how these calls, how these Masses, how this grace very much affected her life and his response.

It affected my life as well because I looked at a person like her seeing how God worked through her, and I realized that God needs to do the same thing for me, that I need to become a vessel to let God speak. If you don't think that you make a difference, a lot of these calls, a lot of these letters, a lot of these good sentiments that are sent to me because you have shown this grace to me, really do affect me and they require me to be quiet, to allow God to speak and to see God working through you. When I see God working through you in this specific way, then I

understand how Marcy's influence had her kids going to church, at least some of them, and I do know there are a lot of good parents that have a lot of good sentiments and good thoughts in God's name for their children and children's children.

The problem in today's age is the world has a hold of us with all the noise that surrounds us. Social media, as positive as it can be, is also exceedingly destructive because it is feeding people with the kind of noise that will not get us to heaven. What is presented by government leaders, celebrities or people who notoriety can often divide us, separate us, destroy us if these words or actions are not filtered through God's love. As St. Paul often tells us, if God is the filter through everything which passes us, then we have a chance for salvation.

I need to see people like Marcy Siwicki and our community. I need to see people like you. Keep doing what you're doing. Please know that we very much love you for your example of faith. Please know I will do my part. Please do yours to inspire me to keep on keeping on and to share this message with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.