

Homily

21st Sunday OT - A

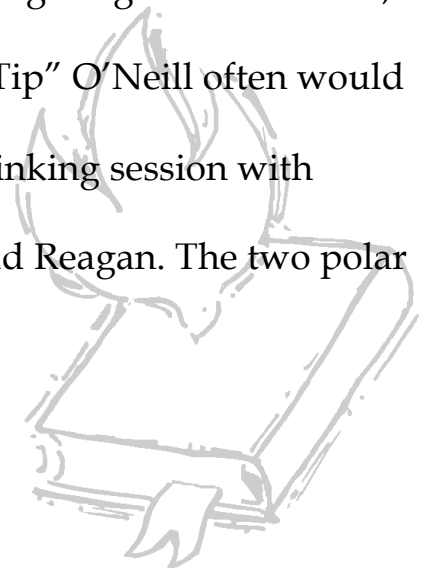
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
August 22-23, 2026

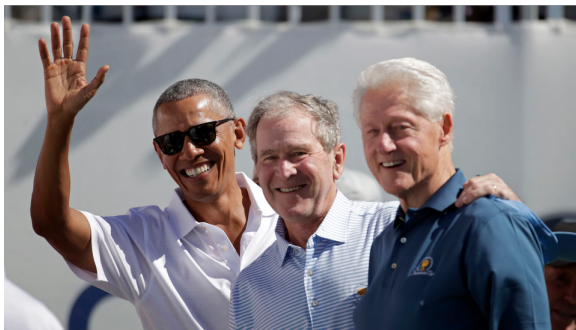
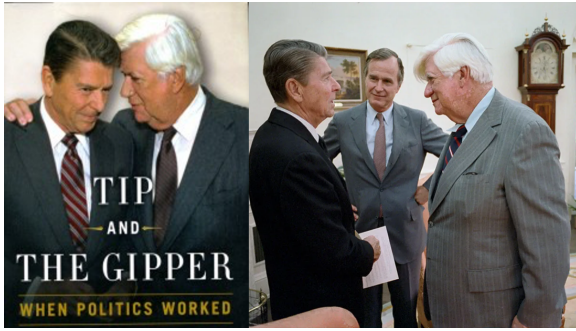
Is 22: 15, 19-23
Ps 138: 1-2, 2-3, 6, 8
Rm 11: 33-36
Mt 16: 13-20

In order for this homily to work, I ask you to leave your political affiliations outside the Church and look into each other's hearts as friends and Christians, not political foes. That said...



I once read in the news the story about after a hard day of Supreme Court Ministry, Judges Anton Scalia and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, two justices on polar sides of interpretation of US law, often went out fishing together as friends in life. I had read in the news that after a long day of Congress being in session with the Republicans fighting the Democrats, The democratic Speaker of the House Eugene "Tip" O'Neill often would head over to the White House to have a little drinking session with Republican President of the United States Ronald Reagan. The two polar





ends of the political spectrum were very much friends who learned at the end of the day, life was not just about politics, but it was about friendship.

I have read, and you have seen this in the news, that after Democratic candidate Bill Clinton defeated the first George Bush in the 1992 presidential election that the two of them became great

friends and often toured the country together. Before the second George Bersch left office, he invited all the former presidents into the White House to have a luncheon, to talk about the importance of this fraternity among the presidents, men who had an awesome responsibility that no one else could understand what they did.

It is said that after he left office, the second George Bush had a great friendship with his successor, Barack Obama, despite the polar ends of



the political spectrum they represented. George and Laura Bush would invite the Obamas to their house in Texas not for political debate but to allow the Obamas a respite from the political headaches of the world and to just relax. It is said that Barack and Michelle Obama's children used to call Bush's wife "Aunt Laura," the way these families were able to get along as friends.

It is said that when presidents would gather for official gatherings that the second George Bush had a playful relationship with Michelle Obama, who sat next to him at these events. Bush often would pass Altoids to Michelle Obama, who playfully accepted the gesture. When the Obama Library was dedicated in Chicago, Bush gave Laura an entire box of Altoids as a playful gift.



No matter what side of the political divide you happen to be, these examples of friendship among political leaders from opposite ends of the political spectrum show us that, essentially, we are brothers and sisters, one nation under God.

The whole idea of all of this is that

when you see political leaders come together, even religious leaders, when Pope Benedict and Pope Francis came together, who are very different in the way that they ministered, their differences in their respective Sitz im Lebens (situations in life), and their different ways of approaching things, we are still members of the same fraternity, the same family and, in the Christian context, brothers and sisters in the one body of Christ.

In the world of the papacy in recent times, we know how St. Pope John Paul II had to deal with communism and that Pope Benedict was more of an intellectual scholar. We know that Pope Francis dealt a great

deal with global warming. The current Pope Leo is concerned about artificial intelligence. Each of the popes has a direction and a vision that they were moving and they were directed depending on their specific focus in ministry.

Sometimes, you agree with what people and popes are doing; sometimes you disagree with what people and popes are doing. Regardless, you realize that the pope is just like any other pastor trying to do the best they can, and we might perceive what they are doing as good or bad. Sometimes in life, leaders are called to serve as advocates, and sometimes, they might serve as detractors.

At the end of the day, together we are One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. We are a very interesting family, with brothers and sisters that are very dysfunctional at times, as were the twelve apostles, as were Peter and Paul, as were all kinds of people in the history of faith. In the history of the Church, 267 popes have represented Christ on earth – history often judges some of them as good and some as bad, just like history does to each of us.

Even in the scriptures, and this is what bothers me, right after our Lord gave St. Peter the “keys to the kingdom” as referenced in today’s gospel from Matthew, in the next immediate pericope (story), St. Peter remonstrates Jesus, and then Jesus responds back to the first pope of the Church, “Get behind me, Satan. You are not judging by God’s laws, but by man’s.”

Popes are human, just like the rest of us. All of us make mistakes. All of us are sinners, from popes to priests, to peons, to whoever we are, because all of us are sinners. All of us are just useless servants, doing what God has asked us to do (Lk 17: 10), and we try to do it as well as we can, knowing that we have our limitations.

Despite those limitations, even with the apostles, Christ was patient with them, even when one betrayed him. Christ still did what he had to do, knowing that the apostles were going to abandon him. If we look at the bigger picture of this story, Christ realized that after His resurrection, when the apostles got their second wind and got their strength, they were able to go out to the “corners of the world” (Acts 1: 8) and fulfill God’s will, come what may. *That* is what we’re called to do.

We may not agree with each other; we may not even *like* each other. That said, we are obligated by the gospel to *love* each other. “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 13: 34-35). “There is no greater love than this than to lay down your life for one’s friends” (John 15: 13). If we do not love, you and I are nothing more than a noisy gong or a clanging symbol (1 Corinthians 13: 1). St. Paul remonstrated St. Peter for not ministering to the Gentiles in Galatians 2: 11.

Are we a people who are noisy gongs and clanging cymbals or are we people of love? It is very obvious in our society who is who at times, but at the end of the day, we have to put those things aside, and we have to be brothers and sisters if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven or if we wish this country to stay together. We must learn how to work in the name of the Lord (Col 3: 17).

If we do that, and if we follow God’s will, then great things happen. If we do not, we have seen the destruction that infidelity will cause to the covenant. “Infidelity to the covenant, as given through Moses will lead to disaster and destruction” – Fr. Lawrence Boadt. We have seen this destruction when we have infidelity in our societies, a government,

a Church, or whatever it might be. In the context of our faith, when we do not follow God's way, we will go down.

Even if we *do* follow God's way, one day or another, all these buildings are going to crumble (because this is the way of society), but we are still the body of Christ; we are still the Church, because the Church is about people, united together as one by our Lord on the Cross. The Church is about you and me. The Body of Christ is all of us united together by the Spirit, with Christ as the head, represented through the priests, and the bishops, and whoever else are called to lead. This is the way that God established the Church.

Like it or not, this is how we are called to live. Then, at the end of the day, we must come together and make peace. If we do not, there is going to be a reckoning that is also referenced in the scriptures.

Let us learn how to love; let us learn how to follow God's way. Let us realize that God has established this Church for a specific reason, a perfect institution run by imperfect people, to do God's work in a perfect society of heaven. Let us learn what God wants us to do, but us humbly do it, knowing we are going to fail, time in and time out, by

living out and preaching this message, this love to this family and to every single person that we meet. This is our prayer.