

Homily

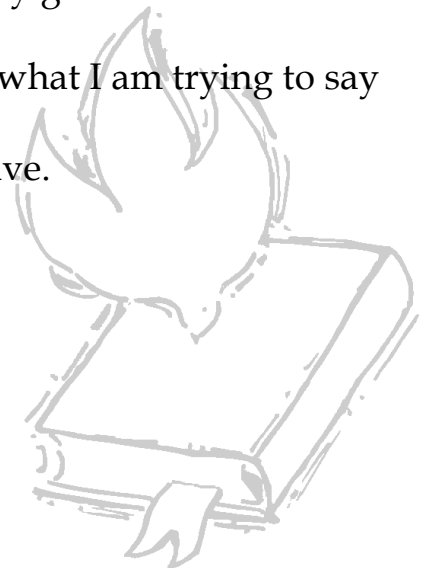
23rd Sunday OT - A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
September 05-06, 2026

Ez 33: 7-9
Ps 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9
Rm 13: 8-10
Mt 18: 15-20

As I was reflecting on these readings today, I usually reflect on an entire month's worth of homilies, since I record all the Masses in any given month together in one bunch. I do this so that I can produce and upload them Online; this also gives me a chance to reflect on the readings further as I think about how I am doing as a Christian and how I wish to present these homilies at the upcoming Sunday Masses.

Recording, producing and uploading these homilies and Masses have been taking me longer and longer because I have been getting more technical in the producing. Less people now watch the Online Masses but the Masses are better for me personally – they give me a chance to rest, reflect on the scripture readings, reflect on what I am trying to say and, more importantly, how I am supposed to live.



On this particular Sunday in this particular case, the gospel reading which I just proclaimed is the same one that I offered at the Morning Liturgy during the week of the 19th Week in Ordinary Time. I know that each cycle of the weekday Liturgical Year, the readings that we offer on the weekday Masses during Ordinary Time start with the readings from Mark's gospel (weeks 1-9), and then go to Matthew (weeks 10-21), and then end with the gospel from Luke (weeks 22-34), with John's gospel interspersed in between.

Concerning this particular gospel I am proclaiming at this Mass, I think I have preached about that gospel reading, say thirty times during the weekdays, and at least ten times on Sundays, since we have a three-year Sunday Liturgical Cycle. This means I have focused on this particular gospel reading at Mass at least FORTY times throughout my priesthood. It also dawned on me as we are focusing on this gospel over and over, and over again... how many times do we actually *take heed of* the warnings that God admonishes us to pay attention and how we are supposed to live? How many times do we pay attention to them, and how many times have you rejected them?

As I am preaching these Online Masses, when I am offering them in-person or Online, sometimes people glaze over the homilies, sometimes people fall asleep, *sometimes I fall asleep*, and we do not really heed the warning that Jesus is imploring us to follow.

In this particular case, I was reflecting on two theologians named Teilhard de Chardin and St. Irenaeus of Lyons, who both had the belief that as a human race, we are evolving, we are growing, we are getting smarter, and we are progressively developing a relationship with God. For these two theologians, they might state that even though our development is slow at times, nevertheless we are becoming more mature as human race as we learn about God more and more.

I actually believe some ways, in the life of faith that I have encountered in my life and certainly in our society, we seem to be caught in what society might call, “the terrible twos.” Individually and as a society, we keep saying no to God when God says “yes.” For that reason, I believe that churches often are empty. I believe that is why people are not attending Mass, because people have turned away from God, because sometimes we turn ourselves into little “gods” instead of

focusing on the only God that counts. Sometimes we leaders are not living the faith well enough, and we are supposed to be the models of the faith. Sometimes we live the faith well and society often rejects us and more often than not, society rejects God. Sometimes people just do not want to go to church, forgetting that this is the one relationship necessary to get into the kingdom of heaven.

I have come to learn that we can be “cyclic” people and we often live in a “cyclic” world. When tragedies take place, many often fill churches and when we take God for granted, sometimes people abandon it.

We are now at the point in history where the pendulum of faith appears to be starting to swing up. People who are more traditional, people are more filled with grace and now seek this love of God in a more disciplined way, are starting to really get invested in the faith once again, and that is a good thing.

That said, I often reflect about “the terrible twos” within the faith, about how we say “no” to our parents in heaven and on earth at times. I think how we say “no” to our parents and “no” to our God, the result being that unless we get out of that rut will *not* get into heaven.

As I have heard over forty times in my priesthood and so much more often in my life, today's gospel is a warning, these scripture readings about us ministers are a warning that we have to be more diligent about how we are preaching Christ crucified. We know how difficult it is to preach this message, because we also know how people are going to treat us; most often, people just do not want to listen.

Today's gospel warns us that people will not listen but we must try to convince them. If convincing does not work, then we must bring them to the Church. If the person does not listen to the Church, then we are told to treat them as a tax collector or a Gentile, professions considered were gravely sinful in the First Century.

If the faith is about service, sacrifice and mercy, if the ministry is about the other, then we live like Christ. As we have learned so often, if we think that we are little gods and that we can follow God's way instead of our own, we are doomed. Religion is about saying that *you* are more important than me, just like Christ was willing to empty himself for you and for me, emptying himself so much that he revealed himself as God.

Alas, many in this world just do not want to hear that. People do not want to hear about emptying themselves out for others, but that is exactly what we are called to do. If we do that, if we empty ourselves for the sake of the other in God's name, then God will embrace us. The more we live like Christ, the more God will enter our hearts so that we can empty it out again over and over again.

This type of faith life is hard; people constantly reject this view over and over again, as the people of the First Century did with Christ. This rejection of faith is what so many kings and judges did to the prophets of the Old Testament. For this reason, we honor the memory of so many martyrs in the faith. In each century, people with bad faith mistreat and harass the Christian martyrs and that was what some leaders in the faith certainly did to Christ in the First Century, by nailing them on a cross. At times, this is what the world does to you and me.

Regardless, we are still called to preach Christ crucified, because in the Gospel of Matthew, we build ourselves up to realizing that even at the last hour, if someone changes their ways, then God will accept them,

and our job is to continue preaching the message with the hope that people will change, that they and us will become more like Christ.

The more I listen to these readings, the more I focus on them, the more I have to say to myself, I have to be more like Christ, even more than previously. I have to sacrifice more, knowing I will get rejected more, and I will be shut down more, and I will be beaten down more. I keep thinking about St. Paul. He goes to Gentile territory, to the unchurched, and the way he was treated was absolutely horrible... but he kept doing it. The martyrs kept doing it. because they knew that the more we sacrifice, the more we act like Christ, the more we will suffer, but the more the church would grow and we would become closer to God.

So, for the tenth time in my priesthood on Sundays and Lord knows how many times in my life, I have preached this message over and over and over again, to be rejected over and over and over again. Just like parents with kids, just like God with us, we just need to keep doing what God asks us to do, to be strong in the faith, to have hope that people eventually will evolve, and will embrace, and accept that

message, so they, too, can get older, live the faith and also be rejected by the people that we meet. This is our prayer.