

Homily
24th Sunday OT - A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
September 12-13, 2026

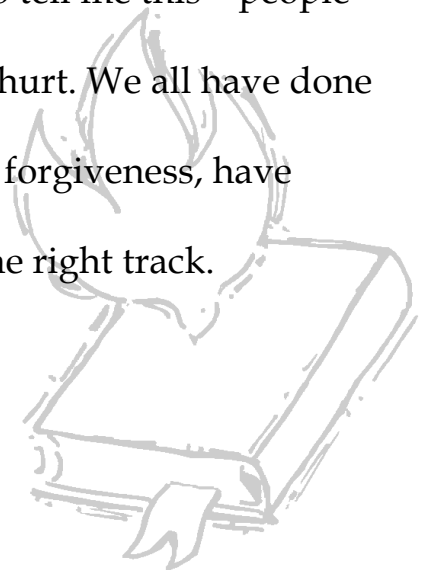
Sir 27: 30 - 28:7
Ps 103: 1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12
Rom 14: 7-9
Mt 18: 21-35

This Homily was Offered during Our Border Town Picnic Mass

There was a gentleman who approached me a very short time ago and was telling me a story about how he wanted to give back for all the terrible things he had done in life. He was trying to make up for his sins by doing good deeds in the present.

The man told me he went to one organization and he wanted to offer his services in payment for his debt and he was refused; they did not want to utilize his services. Instead, the man came to us and he asked us if there were things that he could do for us to help us out.

We get a lot of people in our community who tell me this – people who have been rejected; people who have been hurt. We all have done terrible things, but hopefully we have asked for forgiveness, have received forgiveness and have gotten back on the right track.



Like these sinners who seek redemption (like me!), so many of these individuals from our Border Town parishes have approached me and have said, “Where other people have rejected us, you have all welcomed us. Where people said no, you said yes.” Because I honestly believe that we have offered that forgiveness and offered that love and offered that welcoming and offered that hospitality and offered them the presence of God, look at all the things that have been able to be accomplished by all kinds of wonderful souls at our parish.

When I arrived in this area around 2019, essentially four houses under my care looked like “Sanford and Son” on acid. A gentleman of my acquaintance named Wally who had helped with a great deal of work at these parishes I have served these last twenty years (including the current ones!) said he wanted to give back to God. Specifically, he said to me, “At least you will let me do something to show God that I have changed my ways.” As a result, I asked Wally to renovate four houses. During the Online Masses, I showed the viewers the “before” and “after” pictures of the rectory dining room; each of the four houses suffered the same condition.



Every room in
four houses of
which was under
my care looked
like what you see
as opposed to what
we do now. The
Poor Claires of the
Annunciation
Monastery
(Minooka, IL) gave

me all kinds of pictures to decorate the houses.

In the four houses, we cleaned them, renovated them and set them up with very simple paint jobs (Oak Eggshell Walls) and Pergo or Vinyl Flooring in each room of each house. Out of pocket, I paid for half the renovation costs and purchased throw rugs to place on the Pergo flooring. We wanted to renovate the houses so that any time somebody

walked into the house, they would say, “This house looks boring; it looks religious and dull. A priest must live here.”



Concerning our rectory patio, one of our families named Aguilar had a daughter that wanted to get

married a week before Christmas. Where they felt rejected by others, we welcomed them and we loved them in God’s name. In response, the Aguilar family renovated this entire patio for me, pulling out an oak tree that was way too tall. In the tree’s place, the family planted a dwarf plum tree. The family also installed new fencing and made the patio look nice. Thanks to the Aguilar family, all of this was made possible because when you love people and serve people, this is what you get in return.

Two parishioners named Kyle and Bobbi wanted to get married at St. Patrick’s Church. In this journey, our parish helped them out with the



baptism of their children and the blessing of their marriage. In response, Kyle & Bobbi were able to

work it through to have a beautiful parking lot that have never had since the gravel lot was established in 1917. In addition, Bobbi & Kyle asked their friends to take on this parking lot work that should have cost us over \$100,000 and they reduced the cost to \$57,000... which parishioners and outside help provided for us!

When we endured a few major storms in March of 2026, one of our



windowpanes that was protecting our stained-glass window lost its seal and began to flap off. During

this storm, one of our parishioners named Robert, who very much wanted to help the parish and very much wanted to be loved, climbed up his rickety ladder and affixed duct tape on the panel to keep it in place until another parishioner was able to bring a hydraulic lift seal the panel with a silicone caulk around the window and panel to keep it in place because Robert and his family love the parish so much that they are willing to extend themselves to make this all possible.



The Dean of
Students from
Christendom
College (Front
Royal, VA) a called
me a few years

back because they could not find a place to sponsor a Spring Mission Trip, so they came to us. Each year the mission was held, we took them to different churches each day of the week to teach them about country ministry. We gave the students projects that we needed done and we would not do because of our lack of funds. As a result, the students

helped renovate classrooms at Bishop McNamara High School, they painted rooms in Hopkins Park and Momence and they ended up painting this entire church hall floor for us at St. Patrick's.

When I promised the staff at Good Shepard Manor in Momence that I would remain their chaplain when the Brothers from the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God left, somebody in the area responded by giving us \$10,000 to purchase all these tables and chairs to make this a whole new hallway and meeting space, a social area for the people of St. Patrick's Church.



One of our parishioners named Joe went through all kinds of traumas in his life. Joe wanted to

help us out to give back to a parish that very much loved him. So, when these church balcony walls were crumbling from water damage due to neglect on our roof, I got my "potato chip guy" named Nick Skokna to

have a company named “Richards Building Supplies” donate shingles and all the materials necessary to take a \$60,000 roof and fix it for \$25,000 (which we collected!).



Joe worked with another gentleman named Robert, both of whom wanted to give back to the church.

The loved our church that not only did they tear down and repair two walls for the cost of paint and materials only, but then Joe went to the balcony of our church that was crumbling from water damage and he rebuilt the entire wall and he put stucco up in the same style that we have had.

When our grotto needed a desperate tuck-pointing, the Cryer brothers from Momence Pallet (both are alumni from our academy days), have been so kind and generous to us that they paid for the complete renovation of our grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes.



When a few of our pilgrims traveled on a 2023 Pilgrimage to Lourdes, Medjugorje and

Fatima, we got another rock from Lourdes that we planted inside this grotto to remind ourselves of the sacrifices people in the past have made that good souls in the past have made for St. Patrick's, so that we could preserve what they have done and offer that preservation for the next generation.

The alumni and the good people of Momence, IL had implored me to do something with our gymnasium to renovate it, to make it accessible for the people of the town. The gym had been in disrepair for years and was in desperate need of renovations. As a result, we ended up getting a generator to power the gymnasium in case of storms. The good brothers from Van Drunen Farms removed all the wooden planks on the

windows which were damaged from baseball and bb guns and they replaced all the windows with tempered glass.



In addition, we received funds to renovate the entire gym floor. We ended up getting another wonderful

donation to purchase chairs and tables for the gym. Now we have a facility that could help the people of Momence (because so many people who were suffering), we have decided to invest in this community and in this parish to make this all possible for people like you and me.

There was a gentleman named Joseph who was having struggles in his life and we helped him out with his trials of life. As his response to our Christian charity, Joseph teamed up with Van Drunen Farms to renovate a section of our gym into first-floor bathrooms for those with special needs. In this project, we were able to remove the concrete floor of that section of the gym and Joseph did all the plumbing work at no



cost and paid for the furnishings in these bathrooms. Ted Peterson and Van Drunen Farms poured the

concrete for us and laid the new bathroom floor after the plumbing work was completed. Rick Simpson (husband of parishioner and alumni of Lorri Simpson) was nice enough to lay a new floor in the bathroom area for us. Then Joe Krauss, our 80-year-old contractor, responded to his faith by creating structures for these bathrooms so those who have handicap situations, wheelchairs, walkers would be able to use



something that was a little bit more accommodating.

Our former parish secretary, Ema Elvir, was

married over forty years to husband Antonio. Ema was an angel of a secretary (one of the best who every served with me); Antonio helped with so many projects at the churches I serve. In this particular case, Antonio took what was once used as a shower room at our academy, removed all of the bricks in the shower room and converted the space into a meeting room for our parish.

Some years ago, an electrician named Rick led Alcoholics Anonymous groups in the area. At the time, one of their groups lost their facility when the church that sponsored them closed. Another AA group from Beecher lost their meeting space when the roof of the church where they met blew off through last March's horrible storm.



I made a deal with Rick and the AA groups. I said to them, if they take care and protect the

buildings they use, and if they took care of the electrical needs of the



parish, they could use the facilities for free because we wanted to take care of them like they take care of us...

and everyone wins. The AA group decided to install air conditioning in the former shower room to make it really nice for the people who use it for meetings and our friend Wally came in and, as his way of saying thanks to God, he replaced all the windows on the various floors of the gym and really cleaned the place up.

In addition, we said to the Alcoholics Anonymous group that the third floor of the gym (which used to be a shuffleboard court but was in horrible disrepair) needed renovation. Once again, we made a deal with the AA group. We asked them to clean the place up and take care of the electrical. Our friend Wally redid the floors and windows; Van Drunen Farms created a drop-ceiling for the room. Now, that room is used for meetings more than any room on our campus.



So, one of the other things we tried to do for the community is provide some type of gym kitchenette

with a warming oven, a sink and refrigeration, so that if there were small events, groups would have a place that they could use for that purpose. Thanks to Alcoholics Anonymous, thanks to Cousins Plumbing, thanks to parishioner Todd Clark and all the nice people in the area, we were able to provide something small that allows people to utilize these facilities for these small parties and things because once again, people asked for a kitchenette, people asked for first floor bathrooms, people asked for a renovated gymnasium and people asked for a parking lot. In response, we did the best we could with the people who wanted to help us out. What you see is the result of all of our labor.

Going back to our friends Kyle & Bobbi... when Kyle and Bobbi wanted to get their marriage blessed in the church, they helped us



renovate one
parking lot and
helped create a
second lot behind
our gym. Toward
this second project,

Kyle asked two of his cousins to help us with this project. Members of Momence's city council commissioned the first cousin to rip up all of roadway of Second Avenue parallel to our church building and then repave it. The cousin picked up all the grindings from the first lot and we laid those grindings into this parking lot area. Kyle then asked a second cousin (another contractor) to remove two semis of dirt from that back lot, create a "berm" from whatever dirt was remaining and then pack down the grindings behind the gymnasium so that the foundations of a second lot could be established.

The police chief from the city asked us to create this lot to alleviate vehicle congestion on the streets nearby because the roads in that area are not wide enough to accommodate all the cars. We were able to

do this second lot project for \$25,000 (and we got the funds for that as well!), in addition to creating a \$5,500 entry way into that lot. If we can bring in another \$65,000 for the necessary asphalt to complete this lot, we will have taken a project that my “parking lot guy” projected would cost over \$300,000 in 2020 and create it for around \$100,000. What a deal!

The best fundraisers, in my experience, are not necessarily achieved by capital campaigns in poor communities like the ones I serve. In my experience, the best fundraisers start with the phrases “love thy neighbor” and “do unto others.” As a result, our projects are the result of us helping save souls and helping out our city and parish. The best campaign starts when we are helping out the needs of the community by living out the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. All of this is due to people like you and me who have asked God for help in their lives and then responding in thanksgiving to what God has given us.

“Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13: 34-35). “There is no greater love than this than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15: 13). “Lord, if my brother asks me forgiveness, should I forgive him seven times?” “No, SEVENTY-SEVEN times” (Matthew 18: 21-22). Love,

forgiveness, mercy and sacrifice are the key ingredients to saving souls and even saving parishes. When we forgive unconditionally and living the golden rule, look what happens! Look what happens to a campus that had a \$330,000 debt, that had buildings in disrepair, that had things that we never should have been able to accomplish and we get them done!

Look at what has happened around us because of your prayers, petitions and forgiveness. You have asked for love and we have done everything possible to give it to you because you are that important.

If you can join us on this picnic day to celebrate with all these wonderful souls who have come to this parish and have asked for this love, you are most welcome to do so. If you cannot come, then please pray for us at home. Pray for us in the quiet and the comfort of your own domiciles and know that we are praying for you and that we love you and we will do whatever we can to take care of you in God's name. This is our prayer.