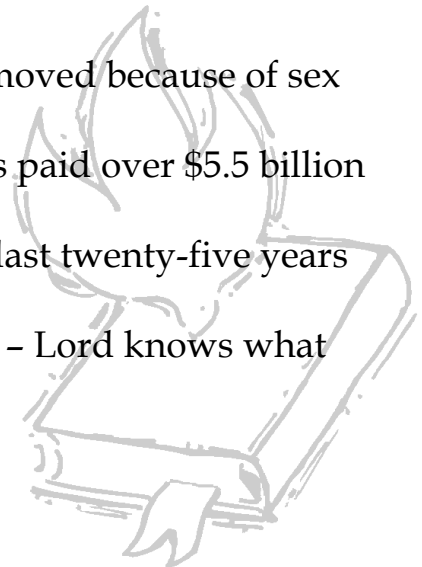


Homily
29th Sunday OT - C
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
October 18-19, 2025

Ex 17: 8-13
Ps 121: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
2 Tm 3: 14 - 14: 2
Lk 18: 1

This has been kind of a rough week for your local diocesan priest, struggles that happen with any form of ministry that exists in the world. In an e-mail correspondence, we were told by the bishop's office that one of our priests in the diocese has been removed from active ministry because of sexual allegations. The priest in question served parishes in the southern end of the diocese. We priests in ministry, especially us clergy who also serve in the southern end of the diocese, find this news difficult because not only has another priest left the ministry because of abuse but now the rest of us need to pick up the last for that priest who has left.

As you know, too many priests have been removed because of sex abuse – at last count, the US Catholic Church has paid over \$5.5 billion of your money for sex abuse payments over the last twenty-five years (and those are from lawsuits just from sex abuse – Lord knows what other lawsuits have been paid off).



So many priests struggle, both in the bad arenas and even the good ones. There are so many pastors who, like St. John Vianney, find parish ministry too difficult to handle and end up doing things you should not do.

About a week ago, about fifteen minutes prior from me celebrating the 7:00 p.m. Spanish Mass at St. Patrick's, I received a phone call from yet another priest who was going through personal issues that led him to think grave thoughts. Not only did I suffer because another priest had come to me with this type of problem but also knowing I only had fifteen minutes to resolve it before the Friday night Mass began.

Ironically enough, the one who saved me from a headache happened to be a Cleric of St. Viator. As I frantically called around trying to find someone to help me with this grave situation, a Cleric of St. Viator helped me find someone who could assist this priest, someone who could provide a glimmer of hope in a time of hopelessness.

Down here in the parishes south of I-80, a good number of these priests are very far apart from each other. There is NOT a very good support system down here. We priests in the southern end of the

diocese are pretty much on our own, like fish flopping on a waterless street. So when you have to deal with these type of crises with which you have to deal, there are not a lot of good options to whom you can turn.

This is not the first time I received a call from a priest in crisis. When I deal with these situations and I reflect on my own situation and the struggles I have encountered fighting the bishop on protecting kids, I know I am in a perilous situation because I have turned into a “pariah” in my own diocese since I have fought the bishop’s office on their manner of protecting kids. I am one of those priests in the diocese who is alone and has been called “dead to the diocese” by many priests who serve, so I know what it feels like when other priests approach me in the diocese,.

Like it or not, I happen to be the poster child on what happens when you blow a whistle on the sins of the world, especially when those sins have been committed by your superiors. The diocese says that they are not going to harm whistleblowers and they are going to support their cause. I was a whistleblower and since January 17, 2017

(<https://www.chicagotribune.com/2017/01/17/joliet-priest-says-diocese-failed-to-follow-protocol-to-protect-children/>). Because of what I have done, I have paid a steep price in trying to protect kids, a price that I pay to this day and probably for the rest of my days on earth. That sacrifice is part of the deal that Christ instructs us to suffer in Mt 5: 12.

There are days where I struggle with what I have done and how the bishops and priests have responded to me – because I did not “get along” with the bishop in this case (as referenced by former Vicar of Priests in the Diocese under Bishops Conlon & Hicks, Very Rev. John Balluff), I probably will never be made a pastor in the Joliet Diocese because of my actions.

The way I try to resolve the way the bishop’s office has abused me for doing nothing more than living the gospel message is by me getting up every morning at 4:00 am to pray for strength to God to get through each subsequent day. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the time at 4:00 a.m., no one calls me, and no one bothers me. At 4:00 a.m., I can take care of my prayers, I can take care of my conversations and my yelling with God, knowing very well that God is going to get the last word on

every one of my conversations with him, no matter what. Nevertheless, I continue to have these conversations with God every morning at 4:00 a.m. and I try to get through the day with God's help.

I liken my life of prayer to what we just read in Genesis today in our first reading. We read how as long as Moses kept his arms up in prayer that God would allow the Chosen People to prevail, which is how the Amalek army was defeated. If they, if I, if you keep our arms up in prayer, then God never abandons us when society (and yes, even the priests of the Joliet Diocese) do. We also know that if we are NOT persistent in our prayer, we lose our focus on God and all hell breaks loose (literally and otherwise).

Unfortunately in society, we do not keep our arms up in prayer, literally or otherwise. As a result, we set our guard down and then Satan gets in and all the things of the world end up plaguing us when Satan gets in. As we know through human history, Satan does a really good job in bringing people down, in causing destruction instead of building things up so he can tear things down. When Satan is at work, we priests and so many others start wondering if the suffering in our own

respective vocations is it really worth the aggravation that goes with it. So often, like John Vianney, many of us wonder if running away from the vocation is the effort.

In my experience, I honestly think that being banished down here in the Border Town Parishes actually a *good thing* because it gives me an opportunity to help save a couple parishes that have otherwise might not have been helped. Being exiled down here is an opportunity to help all of you out because there are not a lot of us priests left and I lament as to what would happen to these parishes if I leave. I think the persistence of prayer is what gets me through these moments of trial.

When half the people are sleeping through the homilies, many people want you to go and many others are begging me to stay, all I can do is ask God to give me strength to endure those who, when I finish my homilies by saying “this is our prayer” they jump out of their seats to say “thank God the homily is over!!!” I get that... I used to do that myself (and at times still do). It is during those times that I ask whether there is any benefit to anything that we do? Is there any benefit of the effort I put forth in my ministry?

As I reflected on these questions, it was then I received a letter this week that I wish to share with you that gave me a little hope in my own dark nights of the soul. I have reconfigured the letter a bit but the letter reads as such...

Hello Fr. Pete! Thank you for your homilies. What has helped me to pull out of my darkness has been your homilies (hey, there is somebody who actually stays awake during the homilies!). Your homily that hit me hardest was when you spoke about Charlie Kirk. The anger and hatred I had in my heart for his killer was about as much as I could endure that day. You said, even though we are sad, we are to love. We are to love our enemies, the ones that hurt us the most. The day I watched and heard Eric Kirk's wife forgive her husband's killer was the day I broke free of my own anger. I am to love and not judge that has got what God wants me to do. That is what God wants all of us to do.

A couple of days ago I was listening to a TikTok reel about grief. It said it was okay to grieve. We are just not to live in it. We are to walk through the valley, not stay in the valley. This was a rather powerful message. Some days I feel like I am dragging my feet through the valley, if you know what I mean. I just want to say thank you genuinely. Thank you for taking care of all of us. I know how busy you are. You made sure you were there for us during our time of need. Thank you for your powerful homilies. They have helped us in so many ways to climb out of the darkness.

I just, I think about that and just like all of you for what you do in your respective vocations, you have no idea who you touch when you

live your life, as also happens to me. Sometimes you are touching one person, sometimes you are affecting people you do not even know. You just try to get on the horse, fall down and get back on the horse again. You try to take care of life and you try to move on with life, come what may.

Concerning my vocation, this week (just in the last two days), I was able to help someone with an annulment that the couple did not think could be resolved. I celebrated the tenth baptism at our parishes in the last four weeks. We ended up having, all kinds of events, both good and bad, happen in the last couple days. We said goodbye to secretary Ema Elvir who went back to Mexico to take care of her mother. That same weekend, I travelled to the farm of a gentleman named Andy Paquette, parishioner from St. Anne who lives on a farm, and asked me if I could bless an area on the farm that has turned into a makeshift cemetery (I have never blessed a family cemetery before!) Andy's daughter Nicole passed away in 2015 and Andy provided space on the farm to bury her and a couple of his relatives (and one day his parents). of his, brothers had passed away. He was buried by a tree. So we

blessed a spot of land that is nothing spectacular but meant everything for Andy and his family.

If you are persistent about preaching Christ crucified and living the Christian life, it does not matter what anyone else thinks or even how you are treated. It matters entirely about what God knows is in our hearts and lives so when people write me and tell me about what is happening in their lives at the Border Town Parishes, this little slice of heaven that is forgotten by most of the diocese gives me hope because I can at least offer this grace of the Lord to those who feel neglected, who have not lost faith in God. If we keep doing what we are doing, we just keep growing and allowing God to guide us along the way.

If welcome people into the Church, if you tell people they have value, all of a sudden I become overwhelmed with all the weddings and the baptisms and the quinceañeras, the annulments, the marriages, people coming in from far and wide, and us taking care of sacraments and moments of grace that could not be taken care of in other places for whatever reason. For this reason, it is so important for Andy Paquette to hand out the Bibles to his family whether they are receptive to this or

not. That is why it is important to keep loving families, even when families do not love us. That is why it is important to live the gospel message so that we do not forget what our purpose in life actually is, to love your God and to love your neighbor.

Please stay persistent in the faith. Keep your hands raised in prayer, especially when others tell you to put them down. Metaphorically (or literally) get up at 4:00 a.m. if you have to, but make sure you never stop talking to God so God can talk back to us and encourage us to go out and live this life for the sake of the people that we meet. This is our prayer. (Now you all can jump out of your seats to continue with the Mass!)