

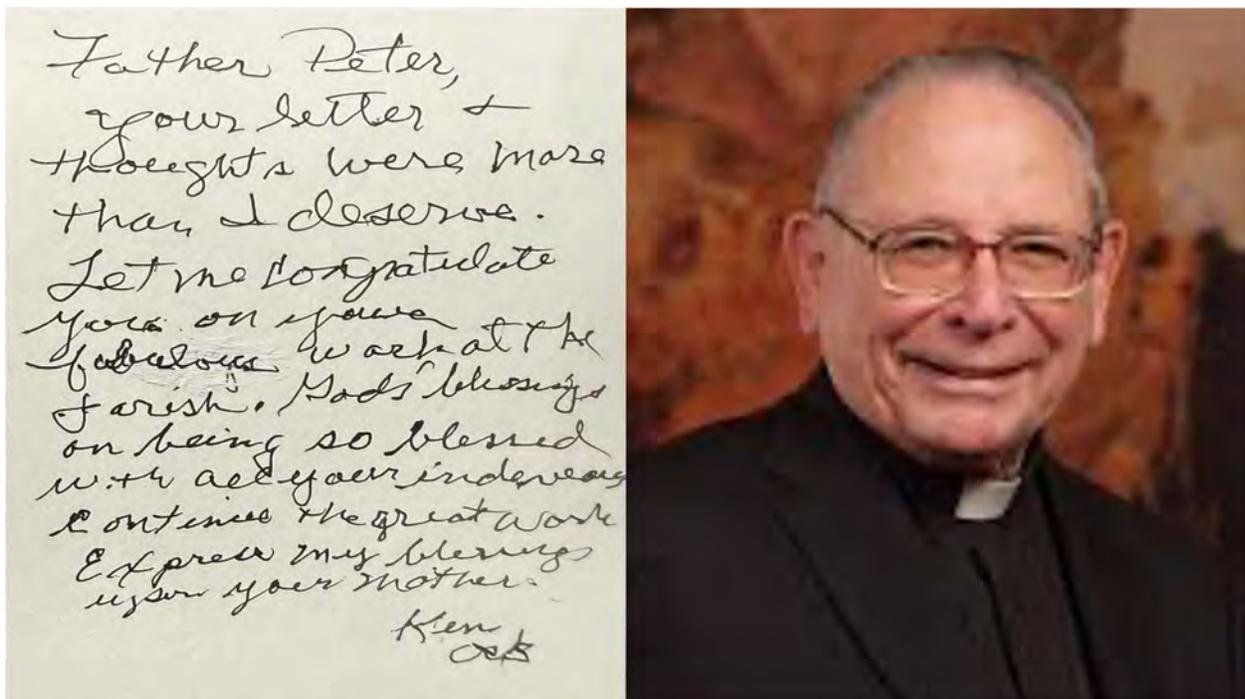
Homily

2nd Sunday of Lent - A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
February 28 - March 01, 2026

Gn 12: 1-4a
Ps 33: 4-5, 18-20, 22
2 Tm 1: 8b-10
Mt 17: 1-9

As we focus on the life of St. Benedict on this Second Sunday of Lent and the third of the minor orders that used to lead up to priesthood and the episcopacy prior to Vatican II, we have focused already on St. André Bassette (the Porter) on Ash Wednesday and St. Bede the Venerable (the Lector) on the First Sunday of Lent. Today, we focus on the minor order of "Exorcist" and the miraculous healings and the miraculous work of this St. Benedict of Nursia (480-547).



During my I was thinking about a priest named Fr. Kenneth Zigmond (1931-2026), with whom I had the honor of working administering back in 2005 over at St. Joan of Arc Church in Lisle, IL. Fr. Ken was a worker; I can stand here and drone on about all the charisms of St. Benedict himself and the “Benedictine Rule.” But what I really appreciate is when I see the “Rule of St. Benedict” lived out through those in the order like Fr. Ken. It is one thing to preach about the Benedictine Rule; it is another thing to live it. A lot of times we listen to this writings and teachings and then glaze over them, but when it sticks to the bone, in los huesos in Spanish, as we say, you see someone like Father Ken (who took to heart the Benedictine Rule and really dedicated himself to living this faith as a worker), and it inspires me to do as much as I can for all of you.



So, on this Feast of St. Benedict, I also was thinking about the work of the Munyon family, who wanted to

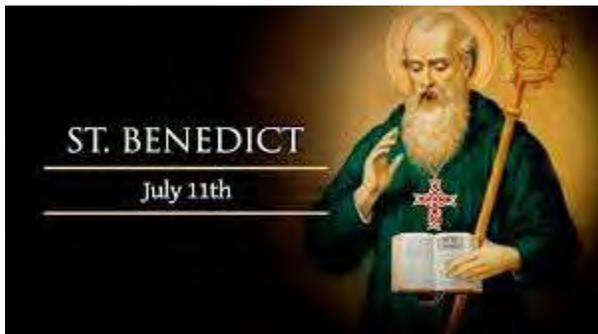
commission a statue of St. Michael the Archangel to be placed inside our church. (After discussing this gift, we chose to put the statue in the entryway of the church by our elevator to protect us as we're walking through this worship space.)

As I was talking to the Munyon family and thinking about the charism of St. Michael, I thought about how this non-corporeal being and St. Benedict both devoted themselves to the power of exorcism. When we say the word "exorcism" in the Church, we might think about movies that focus on the subject and all the CGI and AI effects that are produced for entertainment value. In reality, we generally know that there are two kinds of exorcisms on which we focus in the faith which do not often reference Linda Blair (if you remember the movie from the 70s about this subject): Minor Exorcisms and Major Exorcisms.

Minor Exorcisms involve the less graphic ones in our lives where the devil leads us to temptation (or as CS Lewis might say, "the slow, gradual descent not hell). With minor exorcisms, the devil and the devil's minions tempts us to fall to the small immoralities of life, from cheating and lying,

stealing or whatever it might be, those small things that lead to the big things.

In reference to the small corruptions, Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013), who would liken the cleansing of those sins to sweeping a floor in one's room or house. He would say, "Clean the house, sweep the floor at least once a month from all the dust so that your house will be clean and you can breathe easier." I was thinking the previous Pope Benedict, Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922), who, during World War I, tried to "clean the house" and bring an end to the violence... and was rejected by the people of the world.



To live this way, to clean one's house, is not easy. To live this way and to live a pure life will result in a great deal of opposition, as has

happened with many of our Benedicts in the world. However, when we see how their examples of faith live out and how those of the faith really try to live the straight and narrow life ("turn away from sin and believe in the

gospel”; “Remember you are dust, and unto dust you shall return”), we realize how Satan has a stranglehold on the world but the people of faith hold on to Christ to fight off Satan.

As I referenced last week, I read an article about politicians and how politicians in the media tear each other to pieces, doing everything that the gospel tells us not to do. That said, as soon as the cameras are turned off, as soon as the writers of the periodicals or magazines, go away, all of a sudden the politicians are civil to each other, sometimes even friendly with each other. When the politicians are asked about these “double standard,” many politicians talk about political theater as “a game” that needs to be played if you want to win elections. We also know that this kind of lifestyle wins elections but loses one’s soul in the process.

We have to remind ourselves that in the world of faith, many are called but few are chosen. If we choose to allow Satan to let us win at all costs and to guide us in life, then in the end we are going to lose. Living the faith is a ministry where we are going to “lose,” just like Christ lost on the cross and the martyrs lost through their deaths.

Just like many people did not listen to the Benedicts of the world to hold on to the life of faith, many people do not listen to any of the saints because we want what we want and we do not care what repercussions or consequences. As we learn in this particular season, living the faith will cause us to “lose” in the world but will save our lives – “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Mt 16: 25)” God will tell us it will be easier for a camel to get through an eye of a needle than a rich man, a haughty man, or a prideful man (or woman), to get into the kingdom of God (Mt 19: 24).

This is why we need to be dedicated to focusing on what God wants us to do instead of man or certainly Satan, and that is why, for me, when I was thinking about this particular saint, we can talk about his biography, his life and all the wonderful things that St. Benedict has done for us. That said, as we are focusing on the theme of exorcist, as we are focusing on Jesus standing on top of Mt. Tabor, with Peter, James, and John, watching Jesus converse with Moses and Elijah, telling us, showing us, that Jesus is the new Moses; Jesus is the new Elijah. Jesus is the new law; Jesus is the

new prophet, the perfect prophet, the perfect law. Yet, knowing all of this, the apostles just did not get it... and sometimes the same can be said for us. When that day of judgment comes, just like them, we will be afraid out of their minds if we do not change our ways.

What we learn is that if we stay with God, God is the only being in this universe that can defeat Satan. Satan was defeated on the cross; Satan is defeated in our daily lives when we put our faith in God, when “We place our trust in you.” This is why I was focusing on the St. Benedict Medal during this Mass, which is worn by so many people to fight off the scourges of Satan, fighting off minor and major sins of our lives.

The St. Benedict Medal, which has been utilized for centuries, focuses on God in our life. To wear the medal, to wear a scapular, to adorn a cross in a household, to place holy items, holy rosaries or holy images in our homes are reminders to us of what we need to do to get to heaven. “Turn away from sin and believe in the gospel”; “Remember you are dust and in the dust you shall return.”

When we see those images of faith, these signs, these symbols, and even the rituals of life that point us to God, these signs, symbols and rituals constantly remind us of God. That is the reason so many people wear the Benedict medal; that is the reason why so many people wear the brown and white scapular, so that God may be close to them in a physical way, These signs, symbols and rituals remind me of what I need to do, to get to heaven. Benedict modeled this in so many different ways.

In weeks three, four, and five of Lent, those who wish to receive baptism come forward in our church and they recite the Nicene Creed and the Our Father with us. In return, we offer them a prayer of exorcism, a prayer “to clean the house,” to wipe away the minor sins of life. We are told that if we allow those minor sins to accumulate or if we have major sins, we have to go to confession to allow God to heal us and make us new. We go to confession so that we can say to God that we are sorry for whatever sins we have committed and that we want to get back on the right track.

When we offer this confession and contrition, God says to us, “I forgive you; I love you” and God forgets, as does the community. This is the

beauty of sacramental confession that humanity can never offer us. That is the beauty of an exorcism, that if we do this properly, that when our hearts are in the proper disposition, that God can clean our hearts from Satan, to kick Satan out of our lives, so that we can stay focused on what is going to get us to heaven.

Many times in life, people are so caught up with the ways of the world that they forget about the ways of God. We are so attached to sports, music, concerts and all those other diversions of life (which are good as diversions but are not the source and summit of our life) that these diversions often become our “gods” as opposed to the only one that counts. When we allow the secular world to become our gods, as has happened so many times in the past, age upon age, generation upon generation, we are then lost. When we “lose” our lives and remind ourselves that we stay focused on God by attending weekly Mass so that God can feed us with the word and sacrament, then we understand what the source and summit of our lives truly are.

The reason these Lenten reflections are so important to me is because when we learn about the lives of the saints, if we learn about those who have modeled this life for us, then maybe we can follow this example by living like Christ and allowing Christ to guide us to heaven because we have learned in history that there is no way we will get there ourselves.

What I would like to do to conclude this homily about St. Benedict and that miraculous medal (and the prayer I have included in your bulletins) is to offer a “Litany to St. Benedict” and the prayer that is utilized with that miraculous medal that many adorn to prevent Satan from entering our hearts. At the end of Mass, we couple that prayer to the minor exorcism attached to that Prayer of St. Michael (which Pope Leo XIII instituted in the late 19th Century), so that we can cleanse ourselves of Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world who seek the ruin of souls.

In this cause, we *want* God to life up our soul, not tear it down. We want to lift other people up, not tear them down. So let us utilize this litany to St. Benedict and offer this special prayer for the St. Benedict Medal.

THE LITANY OF ST. BENEDICT

“Lord, have mercy on us. (bis)
Christ, have mercy on us. (bis)
God the Father of Heaven, Have mercy on us. (bis)
God the Son, Redeemer of the world, Have mercy on us. (bis)
God, the Holy Spirit, Have mercy on us. Holy Trinity, One God, Have
mercy on us. (bis)

Holy Mary, Pray for us (repeat after each line).

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of virgins,
Holy Father, Saint Benedict,
Father most reverend,
Father most renowned,
Father most compassionate,
Man of great fortitude,
Man of venerable life,
Man of the most holy conversation,
True servant of God,
Light of devotion,
Light of prayer,
Light of contemplation,
Star of the world,
Best master of an austere life,
Leader of the holy warfare,
Leader and chief of monks,
Master of those who die to the world,
Protector of those who cry to thee,
Wonderful worker of miracles,
Revealer of the secrets of the human heart,
Master of spiritual discipline,
Companion of the patriarchs,
Equal of the prophets,
Follower of the Apostles,

Teacher of Martyrs,
Father of many pontiffs,
Gem of abbots,
Glory of Confessors,
Imitator of anchorites,
Associate of virgins,
Colleague of all the Saints,

Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world,
Have mercy on us.

V/. Intercede for us, O holy father Saint Benedict,
R/. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray:

O God, Who called us from the vanity of the world, and Who incites us to the reward of a heavenly vocation under the guidance of our holy patriarch and founder, Saint Benedict, inspire and purify our hearts and pour forth on us Your grace, that we may persevere in You. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. **Amen.**

THE ST. BENEDICT MEDAL PRAYER

The Holy Cross be my life.
 May the dragon never be my guide.
 Get away, Satan!
 Never tempt me with your vanities!
 What you offer me is evil.
 Drink the poison yourself! Amen.

This is our prayer.

THE MEDAL OF SAINT BENEDICT

FRONT OF THE MEDAL
 Saint Benedict holding a cross in one hand and the book of His Rule in the other.

**EIVS IN OBITY
 NRO PRA SENTIA
 MVNIAMVR**
 "May His presence protect us in the hour of death."

CHALICE WITH SERPENT
 This image represents the event when a group of monks plotted to murder Saint Benedict because they believed his doctrines to be too strict. They poisoned the mass wine, but when Saint Benedict made the sign of the cross over the chalice it fell to the ground and was shattered.



**EX-S-M CASSINO
 MDCCCLXXX**
 "From the Holy Mount of Casino, 1880"

SAN AGUSTIN CHURCH
 Immaculate Conception Parish

CRUX PATRIS BENEDICTI
 "The cross of Our Holy Father Benedict"

RAVEN WITH BREAD
 This image represents a second attempt to murder Saint Benedict by poisoning the bread he was about to consume in mass, but God sent a raven who carried the bread off before he could even consume it.

THE MEDAL OF SAINT BENEDICT

PAX
 Latin for "Peace"

IPSE VENENA BIBAS
 "Drink thou thy own poison."

SUNT MALA QUE LIBAS
 "Evil are the things you offer."



CRUX SACRA SIT MIHI LUX
 May the Holy Cross be my light.

NON DRACO SIT MIHI DUX
 Let not the dragon be my guide.

SAN AGUSTIN CHURCH
 Immaculate Conception Parish

VADE RETRO SATANA
 "Begone Satan!"

NON SUADE MIHI VANA
 "Suggest not to me thy vain things."