

Homily
30th Sunday OT – C
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
October 25-26, 2025

Sir 35: 12-14, 16-18
Ps 34: 2-3, 17-18, 19, 23
2 Tm 4: 6-8, 16-18
Lk 18: 9-14

*The Lord hears the cry of the poor.
Blessed be the Lord.*

*I will bless the Lord at all times.
His praise ever in my mouth.
Let my soul glory in the Lord,
For he hears the cry of the poor.*

*The Lord hears the cry of the poor.
Blessed be the Lord.*

In my cruise journeys, I had once visited the country of Sicily and I was taking one of these land tours that the ship had offered. On one of those tours, I was visiting this beautiful church with these mosaic tiles that designed the entire floor of the church. As the story was told to me, the persons who built this church were slaves forced to install every single one of these tile tiles down and putting them together to make the beautiful designs in this church.

I have no idea if this story is true or not. If the story was true, then I imagine how these slaves were forced into servitude forced upon them

while those who were supervising were oppressing them. As I viewed and prayed at this church when I was, I thought how, if this story were true, that this entire church needed to be torn down except for the fact that those slaves who put those tiles down are probably standing in the front line of the kingdom of heaven and those who oppressed them are probably in the opposite place.

Concerning the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus (the one who was humbled and the one who suppresses Lazarus), this image and story seems to be a theme helps me as a Catholic priest because I realize that if I humble myself and keep doing the work of God, I am not supposed to be telling you about it. If I stay humbled, then I have a chance to enter heaven like everyone else. On the same token, I often tell you what I am doing like I am playing an open hand of poker, allowing others to take advantage of what is in my hand but also opening up the possibility of others to follow what I am doing for the sake of the parishes I serve.

I have known that by being this way, by playing with an open hand and telling you what I spend and how I spend it, I open myself up to others to take advantage of what I am saying, with some in our

community taking a positive and turning it into a negative because That is the way of our society can be. Depending on what side of the ledger you rest, Democrat, Republican, Cub fan, Sox fan, person from the States, person from China, we can package whatever has been told to us and spin those words or actions to justify whatever thoughts or positions we might have. We can twist words or actions, positive or negative, to push forward whatever our narrative happens to be in the world.

Rather, if we are living correctly, the only narrative that really matters is the one that follows God's will, since that happens to be the only way we are able to enter heaven. If we live this way, allowing the Spirit to guide us so that God's way becomes our way, then when we die (and *we will all die*), all of us are going to become accountable for whatever we have done or said in this world.

As for those who truly are humbled, for those who truly are oppressed, for those who have been treated badly, for those who are enslaved, their place in the kingdom of heaven is assured. For those who do the oppressing, for those who treat people with disrespect and

dishonor, there is a place for them as well. This is the gospel message.

This is what Christ teaches us over and over and over again.

In a quick scan of the scriptures, the subject of the last being first and the first being last can be found in so many places, from Mt 19: 30, Mt. 20: 16, Mk 10: 31 and Lk 13:30, today's gospel reading.

In today's story from the Rich Man and Lazarus, or story of the Good Samaritan, these humbled men are the people who get elevated because they live the humble life. Naaman the Syrian, a non-Jew, a non-Christian was given front place in the line because he lived a life of faith as opposed to those who claim to live the faith but really do not. The story of Jairus and his sickly daughter (see Mark 5: 21-24, 35-43) was a radical story about an outsider to the faith who showed more faith than those on the inside. In this miracle stories, we often are taught that faith precedes whatever miracle Jesus offers, even though all those who were cured are now dead – the true miracle is entering the kingdom of heaven with the faith exposed in these stories.

If you want to get to heaven, you have to empty yourself of your pride and of your ego. Pride is the worst of the sins. Every time we talk

about pride in this world and we turn it into a virtue, we forget what the gospel says about that specific vice. St. Paul and the prophet Isaiah are particularly harsh on this subject – they write that pride is going to lead us straight to hell. If we are as corrupt as the prideful, unrepentant tax collectors depicted in scripture, then we are doomed; if we ask forgiveness of sins and then give back to those whom we have robbed like the character of Zacchaeus in Lk 19: 1-10, if we repent like this man, this tax collector, this sinner who humbles himself to God by saying, “I am sorry for what I have done and I am willing to make up for my sins,” then we have the chance to receive eternal life.

The story of Zacchaeus, the repentant tax collector who gave four times more to his oppressors than he had taken, is an example of what each of us needs to do if we want everlasting life, to empty ourselves and by humbling ourselves for the sins we have committed. That is what I have to do; that is what you have to do. This virtue of humility needs to be a symbol of hope for people that says that God is going to raise us up.

That is why it is so important to confess our sins, do penance, amend our lives and support our churches because in these places of worship, we are praying in God's home. God's home is a place that provides hope for those who are hopeless.

How many people have come into these churches and prayed and asked for God's help during times of desperation? There is a teenager at St. Anne's after our Wednesday night Masses that often enters this church and keeps asking God for help away from everybody else because he really is in need of God's love. When this teenager comes to us, he and I have had wonderful talks about the faith and he just says he wants to be in this, God's home, because this is a place where he is told he is loved – *and he is* – and so are you.

Hopefully if I am doing this right, then maybe God loves me to and I am so supposed to love you in God's name, no matter who you are. So let us just keep doing what we are doing. Let us keep praying for those who need the prayers the most, those most in need of God's mercy, those who have humbled themselves so our prayers can lift them up so they can be exalted. Let us humble ourselves to God so that God can see

that humility in our hearts and fill our hearts with that divine love in response.

The Lord hears the cry of the poor.
Blessed be the Lord.

“{For he who humbles himself will be exalted and he who exalts himself will be humbled.” God teaches us that. Let us learn that lesson well, live that lesson and then let us share that lesson with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.