

Homily

34th Sunday OT - C

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski

November 22-23, 2025

2 Sm 5: 1-3

Ps 122: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5

Col 1: 12-20

Lk 23: 35-43

“The church is alive when disciples make disciples.” Hi, this is Bishop Hicks here and I am excited to share my new pastoral letter. Make a call to action for every Catholic in the diocese of Joliet. It builds in my vision of catechesis, evangelization and faith into action and it is rooted in Jesus' great commission. Go and make disciples. In this letter, I lay out four essential steps, conversion, confession, communion, and commission, all held together by a daily life of prayer. We cannot rely on the culture to pass on our faith. It is up to us and our homes, parishes, schools and communities to share the joy, knowing, loving and serving Jesus Christ. It is time to live our faith boldly together, let us make disciples for Jesus starting now.



What you see before you is what is called a diocesan Chasuble, the front and the back. The back has the insignia of the diocese of Joliet. It is coat of arms and in the front is just a simple cross. A few years back, there was a request by the priests of the diocese that whenever we gathered for large functions, whether it be for Ordinations or the Chrism Mass, or even if we are

going to local parishes to celebrate funerals and such, that we would all have the same Chasuble we would wear is a sign of solidarity. In fact, in the diocesan publications that they send us, the bishop's office give us a picture of all the priests wearing the exact same chasuble in solidarity with the bishop. The whole idea is that we are doing this as one and that the one is important. The bishop is supposed to be the shepherd of the diocese, the head priest who serves all of us other priests who come to serve all of you in the local communities.

The whole idea is to unify us under the umbrella of the diocesan bishop. The reading from 2 Samuel lays out how this shepherd named David, someone of no great esteem, was made king over all of Israel, the entire twelve tribes that were joined so that the people could be under one rule.

Unfortunately, the problem with David was that he was supposed to stay holy to make all of this work. David was supposed to be an important figure of faith for people who needed God in their lives. The problem was that David was a human being. All of us are human beings and outside of the Blessed Mother and very select others, David had

grievous sins in his life that ultimately caused division in the kingdom and the destruction of the kingdom of Israel. His son Solomon was offered by God whatever gift he wanted, so Solomon chose wisdom. For a little time, Solomon stayed true to God until he, too, sinned as most all human beings do. After Solomon died, the kingdom split into two. Ever since the return from exile in 586 BC, the Chosen People wanted to rebuild the temple and find a new king.

In the reading from Malachi last week, he prophesied about the coming of a new Messiah, someone who was going to reunite the entire Church into one. As we learned, the Messiah the people sought was different than the Messiah who actually came. The Messiah who people wanted would restore Israel on earth to its former glory. The Messiah who actually came pointed them to a new Jerusalem, not the one on earth but the one in heaven.

Look what happens in Israel ever since; the people were exiled and it took them just under two thousand years to retain what they once lost. The current Israel was declared as a state in 1948, yet the area still continues to suffer with division, so much violence that has taken place,

even at the time of this recording. At this moment, somehow we have moved a little bit further inch closer to peace in that country, but that peace is very fickle, a peace that could fall apart in a second. This same “divide and conquer” game with Israel has taken place for thousands of years and most likely will not change in the near future.

As Christians, what we seek is entrance into the New Israel with the New Moses, the New Messiah. The only way we get to this New Jerusalem is if this New Messiah leads us and we follow him together. To do this, we must understand that Jesus, the Christ, is our head, the king of the church. Christ is our Messiah and King, the bishop represents Christ in the diocese, and I represent Christ in the parish. My responsibility is to answer to the bishop by serving all of you. All of us, led by the head, are supposed to work together to build the kingdom of God. If we have love in our hearts, if we are doing this correctly, then we build. If we turn ourselves or each other to gods, then we are bound to be destroyed.

As we have read over the last few weeks, especially the last couple weeks in Ordinary Time (the theme of these last two weeks in Ordinary

Time each year always reference the eschaton or “the last day”), what is going to happen to us when we follow God and what happens to us when we do not? The beauty of these particular readings today and the gospel of Luke in general, the same gospel that Jesus says, “Forgive them Father, they do not know what they do (Lk 23: 34),” is that last hour when Jesus was nailed to the cross and Jesus was going to die for our salvation, he had yet one more act of ministry to accomplish on earth before his death, which was really, really important for all of us, and it has to do with that repentant thief.

Jesus knew what the thief did and the thief knew what he did he was wrong. The thief was paying the human price for what he had done, but in the end, he asked forgiveness from God and God gave it to him: “Amen. I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise” (Lk 23: 43). That is a moment of hope. No matter how bad life is , no matter how many sins we have committed, even at the end, if we say “I am sorry” to God for what I have done, then God will love us and God will forgive us.

The problem in our lives is that we are so caught up with the human ways of life that we are destroying ourselves in the process. We are destroying our Church (not really – no one can kill the Church but God), or at least we are trying to destroy the Church by our actions. We come to learn this year that the Church is more than just the people of God; the Church has been instituted by Christ and Christ is the head. For those people who choose to follow God, for those who repent even at the very last moment, if we confess our sins, if we do penance, if we amend our life, amen, then Jesus will welcome us into paradise.

This last act of ministry before God's human death is a moment of hope because none of us are clean. You're not clean; I am not clean. All of us need to go to confession, each and every one of us, from the pope to the peon down below, and sometimes the peons down below have a greater chance of getting to heaven and the rest of us because the first will be last and the last will be first. This is why I always reflect about the people who are unrecognized, who quietly and humbly do God's work. They are first in line for the kingdom of heaven.

According to the scriptures, the repentant thief, the one who was nailed and died on the cross, he was going to go to heaven because of his faith. That gives us a chance to do the same thing, which is why I ask you to pick up a rosary or prayer book and pray for those who are most in need of God is mercy. Especially today with all the hatred in our parishes, in our communities, in our world, to have peace in our hearts, knowing very well that the world is going to destroy us anyway, because that is what the world does. If we pray today, then Jesus will prevent from us encountering what theologians call “the second death,” the death of the soul, that soul will remain intact, leading towards heaven with the prayers from the communion of saints, and for all of us down here on earth.

Thank you very much for staying with us. Please do not give up hope. Please confess your sins, receive penance. Do right by God, live the Christian life. I will do that for you; I ask you to do it for me and for all people that we meet. God bless all of you. This is our prayer.