

Homily

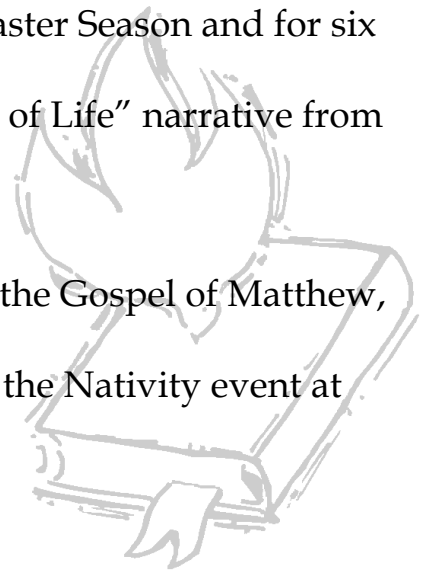
3rd Sunday OT - A

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
January 24-25, 2026

Is 8: 23 - 9:3
Ps 27: 1, 4, 13-14
1 Cor 1: 10-13, 17
Mt 4: 12-23

So the way the scriptures that we read for Sunday Masses in our Lectionary, are arranged through a set of three cycles of readings. The start of every Liturgical Year begins on the Sunday closest to or falling on, the Feast of St. Andrew (November 30). Currently, we just returned to Cycle “A” and the Gospel of Matthew. When we complete this cycle, then we have the Cycle B, which focuses primarily on the Gospel of Mark. A couple year from now, we turn to the Cycle C readings, focusing primarily on Gospel of Luke. We intersperse the gospel of John into all three Liturgical Cycles (as we saw last week) and utilize John’s Gospel significantly in the three Cycles of the Easter Season and for six weeks in the Gospel of Mark (called “The Bread of Life” narrative from John 6).

Concerning this year’s Liturgical Cycle from the Gospel of Matthew, we have already read this gospel’s rendering of the Nativity event at



Christmas, focusing on our Lord's foster father Joseph. We read how Joseph "adopted" Jesus into the lineage of the Chosen People so that Jesus could "adopt" us in the divine family (a story only found in Matthew and Luke's story). We covered the story of our Lord's baptism according to Matthew, which signified the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

Now that we have reached Matthew's story of Jesus, our Lord now instructs us that we need to be united in the faith of God. As we discussed from the letters St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he also is teaching the theme of unity to a group of people who would abandon the teachings when Paul left Corinth and do horrible things with the lessons that St. Paul had taught, desecrating the Eucharist and following the heresies of false teaches such as Apollos.

In reflection on these teachings, St. Paul teaches that one should not following the path of Apollos or Paul or Cephas; rather, one should following the teachings of Christ crucified, as laid out by the apostle Paul. The starting and ending of these teachings are supposed to pass through the cross.

Paul taught his followers that he is not God, nor is Cephas or Apollos. I am supposed to teach you that I am not God and neither are you. Every single one of us, our members of the body of Christ, are supposed to be following the teachings of Jesus Christ crucified, the head of the Church. If I live and preach correctly, I am only a humble servant of those teachings, not their master. I am supposed to represent Jesus Christ in the local parishes. A bishop represents Christ in the diocese, an archbishop represents the archdiocese, and the pope represents that for the entire universal church.

What we are supposed to do, every single one of us ordained ministers, is to allow Christ to “meet” you in the sacraments (a sacrament is called “a meeting with God”). You are not here to listen to me or to listen to what I think. You are here to hear about Christ crucified, how Christ’s Spirit works through me and you and how the Spirit works through the people that we encounter.

The key here is to talk about the Holy Spirit working through Jesus Christ and this grace imparted by God through the sacraments which I celebrate, allowing God to work through me to minister to you.

The problem we have in parishes, and certainly throughout life, is that as soon as we establish this message in any particular community, sometimes the community feels that enough people are praying together that we shut other people out and we do not let anyone else in, that essentially we have a large enough faith group; this, obviously, is *not* following the gospel message.

Especially when we are talking about the Corneliuses and the Gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles (Cornelius was the first Gentile baptized in the faith, by the first pope of the Church, St. Peter), we are talking about taking that ministry and breaking the shell and opening it up. Essentially, what we are saying is that even in a parish community where you have these little pockets of people that say, “We run the parish, this is our parish,” we need to remember that the local parish belongs to God, not us; we are the stewards of God that take care of what God has given us. *Christ instituted the Church* and he appointed leaders like me in his name to take care of the local parishes, the dioceses and the Universal Church, whether it be a pope, a bishop, a priest, or a deacon.

We ordained clerics are called to serve parishes in a specific way, to serve as God's ambassador, God's voice, in each community we serve. If any of us think that we are God and replace God's will with our own, we are missing the point. If any of us think that we are indispensable, we are missing the point (that would lead into heresies such as Pelagianism, Modernism or even Relativism, all of which have been condemned by the Church's teachings). More than any other gospel, the words according to St. Luke remind us that we are nothing but a useless servants – we have done only what God has asked us to do (Lk 17: 10). God is God and all the rest of us are servants.

In our three liturgical cycles within Ordinary Time, we always begin each cycle of readings with St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, a book whose theme is that we are members in the body of Christ and God is our head. In 1 Corinthians (as in Luke's Gospel), we encounter the words of the institution narrative we utilize at Mass, words that Christ speaks to change the bread and wine into his body and blood. St. Paul is very strict on this, and very strong on this, that we are here not to follow what I say or what he says, but what *God says* through us, to be

fed by the Eucharist and become strengthened to preach Christ crucified.

If we understand what Paul is trying to say, that God is God and that *we are not God*, then we follow what God tells us to do because, in the end, God has the final say concerning heaven; we must be humbled enough to follow God's will, not ours. Humility is the foundation of prayer.

We must be humble, and we need to live a humble life if we have any chance of getting to heaven. When we try to rule over others, when we try to suppress others, when we bully others, when we harass others, we are not living like Christ; we are living just the opposite. When we live this type of sinful life, then Satan has entered our lives and act as if we are destroying what God has created. Rather, when we empty ourselves (in Greek, *Kenosis*), when we live in a spirit of humility, that foundation of prayer, when we say that every person that approaches us, especially the poorest of the poor, is poured upon the grace our Lord has given to us, that is when we encounter Christ, because that's when God speaks to us the most, especially in the silence.

So we very much are thankful for God giving us instruction and showing us the way, for teaching us that it is not about any single one of us; our salvation is about Christ crucified and us working through, doing everything in the name of Christ Jesus. For this reason, God commissions us to pray together at these sacraments, in God's house, so God can lead us and guide us. For the sake of our homebound parishioners, I offer these Masses for your benefit so that all of us, you and me, are strengthened and fed by this word of God, understanding our purpose in life, to minister to every single person that we meet. *This* how we are going to get to heaven. This is our prayer.