

## Day 07 of Novena Healing of Blind Man

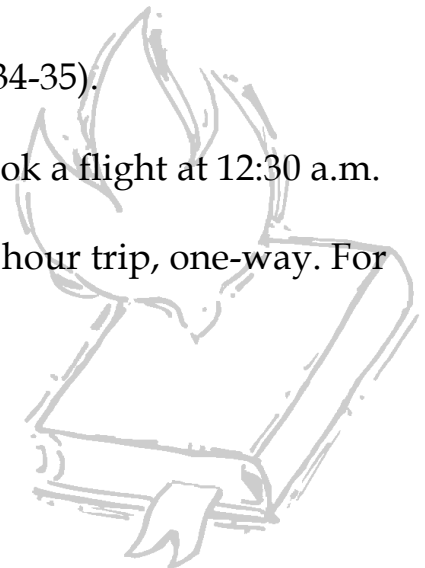
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
July 23, 2026

1 Sm 16: 1, 6-7, 10-13  
Ps 23: 1-3, 3-4, 5, 6  
Jn 9: 1-41

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As the people in my local communities know, the night of Easter Sunday at 12:30 a.m., I caught a flight from Chicago, IL to Hanoi, Vietnam, to teach 117 Vietnamese students a course in business ethics. I was asked to do this by the university because, as a Catholic priest, I am trying to instill a good foundation with the students to bring that charism of St. Francis to those in the other side of the world. I said “yes” to this invitation because I liked the challenge of getting out of my comfort zone and besides, I had never visited Vietnam before and I was hoping to instill in the students the same kind of respect and care that we need to afford every human being – this is the Golden Rule and God’s mandate “to love one another” (John 13: 34-35).

On the evening following Easter Sunday, I took a flight at 12:30 a.m. from Chicago to Hanoi Vietnam, a twenty or so hour trip, one-way. For



the two weeks after Easter, I ended up teaching one-hundred-seventeen Vietnamese students about the philosophy of business ethics, teaching the philosophy of business according to Aristotle, Confucius, Immanuel Kant, Alfred Moder and so many others.

I honestly believe in business ethics (and this has worked in the parishes I serve), I got the students to work with each other, building community, getting the students to know each other and teaching them inter-personal skills. I also took the students toys from the Dollar Tree stores in the US that were donated to me and all kinds of candy to pass out as prizes and gifts to the students who attended my classes.

During that time with the in-class sessions, one of the students asked me, "Why are we actually taking a course in ethics? We are supposed to be studying for a degree in business, and you are teaching us ethics." In response, I explained to the students that if they wanted me to teach you how to make money, if you wanted me to teach you how to be corrupt, that is not hard to do and I suppose that I could teach that well. If I went this way, I also would have to teach the students the consequences of running a corrupt business such as life in jail or losing one's soul.

In effect, I *could* teach the students about the corrupt practices of business ethics; examples of those who make lots of money this way and destroy one's good name is rather easy to do – I can teach the way of sinners in so many ways. If I followed the way of the philosophers and those with a good moral compass, *to have good business ethics*, to be a good neighbor in your community, to be a good steward in your family, then I would be teaching (and *did* teach to the students) about having a consistent ethic woven through all aspects of one's life, whether it be at home, whether it be in the community, or whether it be at work.

Teaching in this way, I instructed the students that if you have a good heart as philosopher Alfred Motor taught, if you wanted to pursue “a love of self” (Aristotle), if you wanted to find harmony with society (Confucius), if you wanted to do what is right in the duty of treating people well (Immanuel Kant), if you wanted to teach about the action that results in the greatest amount of good to the greatest number of people (the theme of *utilitarianism*, as purported by John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham), then you are showing people that you care.

If we travel in the path of *good* ethics, then all of a sudden, when business ethics is not just about making money (Milton Friedman), but it is being a good neighbor, being a good person, the business you serve and the person you are reveals a type of integrity that a computer cannot produce – a computer can be programmed in a certain way but a computer does not emit sympathy, care or certainly Christian charity.

In the world of faith, we know that good people with corrupt intentions can succeed in life but at a great cost to their reputation and well-being. These actions are the pitfalls to a free-will gone wrong – in a world where we can follow a path that is good or evil, we make that choice and reveal to society (and certainly to God for those with faith) what kind of person we truly are.

In the world of faith, I would teach a community about the pitfalls of doing evil – Lord knows each of us share in Adam & Eve’s Original Sin and most every one of us have done things that we regret. So if somebody says in the world, “that Pete Jankowski has done this, this, and this,” I respond by saying, “Forgive me for I am a sinner” – I acknowledge the sin without enabling myself to sin. I would also teach

that St. Peter denied Jesus three times, St. Paul killed Christians for a living and that St. Augustine had a concubine outside of marriage. All of us have our good and bad idiosyncrasies, as do you, me and everyone else.

I would also teach in the world of business ethics that if we apologize for the wrongs we have committed and make right that which we have done wrong, we can turn to God, turn away from sin, believe in the Gospel and get back on the right track. If we can open our eyes to see what is really bad in the world to avoid those pitfalls, if we make a conscious effort to do good in this world, then all of a sudden, we can persevere. If we are people with integrity and live with good business ethics, at least at the end of the day, we can say that we truly care. As Christians, living this way as humble servants allows us to say at the end of the day, "We are useless servants; we have done what God has asked us to do" (Lk 17: 10).

If we open our eyes spiritually, not just to see the things of the world, but go beyond the world and the senses to see God in the heart of every person we encounter... *that* is the key for us to get to heaven. In the

scriptures, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus healed one blind man at the beginning of his Galilean ministry (Mk 8: 22-26) and another at his end of his ministry (Mk 10: 46-52). At the beginning of the ministry, Jesus had to actually heal the blind man *twice*, in two different stages. The first time, Jesus gave the blind man *partial* sight – the cured man initially saw blurry images; Jesus’ second healing gave the blind man clear sight. This healing in two stages reflects our gradual growth in understanding God.

In the second healing story at the end of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee, the second blind man, Bartimaeus (the son of Timaeus), was able to see clearly, teaching us that God can restore spiritual healing to the blind.

These two healings of blind men “bookend” Mark’s story about our Lord’s Galilean ministry, showing us the power that Jesus has to make us see. In the Gospel of John, scholars reference this healing as a *Sign*, more than a miracle. There is a reason that Jesus offered sight to the blind man in John’s gospel. We learn in John’s story that the Pharisees did not want to believe the blind man’s healing story; they certainly did not want to believe that Jesus was God or even a prophet. As a result, the Pharisees tossed the blind man from their presence.

When the blind man now healed return to Jesus, the Lord asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

The man replied, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe?"

Jesus responded, "He is standing in your midst."

Sometimes the most obvious things in the world, the things spiritually that cannot see, are right in front of us. This "theophany" happened in the presence of Samuel and David; this theophany happened with the blind man in the person of Jesus. Sometimes there are people that are really, really good that stand right in front of us, and we do not even recognize that good because maybe we are looking another direction for good when good is right in front of us; the Holy Spirit is in our hearts.

When we believe the "good" comes in the form of political leaders, famous people of the world or even dignitaries, we seek out those who are popular and cannot see the obvious that exists in our midst. This misguided attitude of hanging on to those who are popular or important in society - in this way, we revert to a "high school" mentality, that hanging around the "cool kids" gives us purpose in life when, in reality,

often those who think are good are not and those who dismiss are full of good. Most importantly, we constantly forget that God is not just good; *God IS good!*

In my experience of faith, sometimes the person who is the humblest, sometimes that person who is rejected, sometimes the person who is a sinner that is found their way, is often dismissed when they are the people that have more “faith sense” than those who are the popular kids. The Lukan beatitudes reference this – “Blessed are the poor, the hungry, the weeping and are hated – they will find their reward great in heaven” (as opposed to the rich, full, popular and happy – see Lk 6: 20-26). The Samaritan, the Syrophenician, the people from the outside, the Gentiles and the people who are disregarded sometimes are the people that have the most faith, and those are the ones from whom we truly need to learn and to follow.

I often think in my life, there are so many people who are *not* Catholic who show me that faith. While teaching in Vietnam, I learned this lesson of humility from whole bunch of good students living in a Communist, atheist country. There are so many good people with good

hearts that wanted to learn across the ocean, and I saw that *good* in the students, and hopefully the students saw good in me. Even though the good can often be taken advantage of, can often be dismissed, can often be shut down we learn how they persevere.

I also have learned that I was not teaching the students in this country or the other. In the world of faith, I am not making these sacrifices for you. In a sense. I am doing this for God and you are the beneficiaries of this love, because God asked me to live this way, to open my eyes and see the good in every person I encounter. Going through all the pains and labors of offering this ministry, I choose this vocation and this life because God asked me to live this way and offer the sacraments on your behalf.

For this reason, I offer this Online Mass today. Like you, I need to open my eyes and you need to open yours. We all need to see what is *good* in front of us, though often we are blinded by the ways of the world who want to take us in wrong directions.

God bless all of you for staying with us. God bless all of you for seeing the miracles and signs that are all around us and are very often

dismissed. You are beautiful people. Each of you have a good heart filled with the Holy Spirit because God created you and the Spirit exists in you, just like God exists in me through the Spirit. If we can open our eyes to see that Spirit, then we can see what is good in you, in me, and in all people that we meet. This is our prayer.