

## **Homily**

### **Thanksgiving Day - C**

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski

November 27, 2025

Sir 50: 22-24

Ps 138: 1-2a, 2bc-3, 4-5

1 Cor 1: 3-9

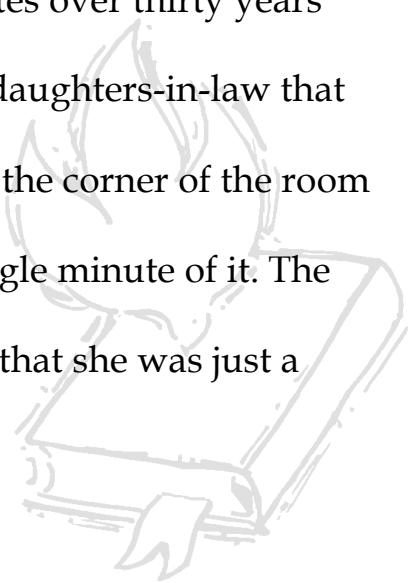
Lk 17: 11-19

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On this day, while I am recording this mass of Thanksgiving, I had just finished celebrating a funeral for a woman named María Gloria; I also held two funeral meetings for the families of Patricia Hart and Marilyn (or Mal) Peterson. These three families that I encountered this week had three different stories about three different mothers who offered three different types of love for which these families were exceedingly graceful.

Concerning María Gloria, when I was talking to her family, I was told that María was the mother of eight children, that she lived in San Luis Potosí in Mexico and that she came up to the states over thirty years ago. I was told that María lived with one of her daughters-in-law that she was like the kind of person that would sit in the corner of the room in the chair, watch life go by and enjoy every single minute of it. The family told me the kind of heart that María had, that she was just a



giving, loving woman, that she loved spending time with her children and her children's children and she was exceedingly affectionate. When I asked the family about specific things that María liked to do, they shared with me that in her casket, she the family had placed Christmas cards from all the wonderful family members and friends who had written her every single year. Hundreds of Christmas cards were inside that cast with María because she loved to send Christmas cards to her family and friends. María loved sending Christmas cards and she loved to receive them as well; for her, every single one of them was a treasure. You all know when it comes to gifts or cards or things of that nature, most of them are probably going to end up one day in a landfill in Boise, Idaho or somewhere like that. That said, this particular woman cherished them so much that she held them close to her heart; every time she read one, she thought about how wonderful the person was who wrote that card to her. María very much loved and prayed for every single person who wrote cards to her, according to her family. For her, every day was Christmas, and she wanted the family to know that she loved them dearly.

When it came to Patricia Hart, her family shared that she was a different kind of woman. Patricia was married for over sixty years; she was the mother of two sons. Patricia could just as easily do gardening and pulling out weeds (even the metaphorical weeds of life and the ones in the garden). Patricia could get under her car to repair it, getting grease under her fingernails. Patricia liked to help her son tune up his vehicles that were not in such good shape.

Patricia was the kind of person that also would go to the ballgames and sporting events. She was the kind of person that would walk down the street or in the park with her kids, with her grandkids, with her family and friends.

According to her family, Patricia very much loved being with those around her. Her house seemed to be a magnet for all kinds of people who used to visit because they loved Patricia and they love the way Aunt Pat used to treat everyone in the neighborhood.

Marilyn “Mal” Peterson was very unique; I referenced her as what I called the “backbone” of St. Patrick is Church. According to family stories, Mal was a boarder at the academy when the academy actually

had students living there. She made so many friends at the academy who happened to be boarders at the school; not only did her children go to St. Patrick's School, but she helped the academy in so many different ways, whether it be through volunteering at the school or providing financial assistance when necessary.

I was told one story about Mal concerning the last year of the academy's existence. When the diocese mandated that at least one-hundred students had to attend the school or else the school would close, Mal donated \$30,000 to make up the difference in finances for the students that did not attend the school to make the one-hundred student mark, she loved the school that much.

Marilyn's family told me that Mal loved her children that much; daughter Susan made this very clear to me. Mal was not the kind of person that wanted to be visible in the front lines of the parish to be recognized. For the family, Mal was the kind of person that would do the things behind the scenes and *did not* want people to know she was doing because she offered her volunteer service from their heart.

Over this last week or so, I encountered three mothers who offered three different types of love, three different ways to express their care to the people of our community. I give thanks to these examples of Christian charity because a good number the times, those three ways often get taken for granted.

Do we recognize these ways that people love us and STOP to thank our moms and dads, our priests, our religious, our family, our friends, the people who are close to us and those who are not, how much we love them, how much we care for them, how much we give thanks for them, for what they do for us? So many good souls who work at the kitchens and the dinner tables, who clean houses and institutions of care trying to make everything nice are often taken for granted and unrecognized. Parents are that way – kids do not realize the kind of sacrifices parents offer until they have kids of their own.

On this Thanksgiving Day, I am going to go to my father's house and Maria Jankowski (my father's second wife) is going to cook a wonderful feast that will put me out like a light! After recovering from that dinner, I will spend time with my dog, who will be begging for scraps at the

foot of the table and then, after getting full from all the scraps, will retire to the couch and take a nap. After dinner, Maria, my brother and I are going to have our conversations about life, and I am going to leave that house knowing that a woman who took care of my father for a good thirty years of his life, is taking care of me as well, as I do for her and her son Julian. Towards the end of my father's life, Maria stayed by his side, to the detriment of her family in Poland, who had to grieve over the loss of Maria's mother, who could not attend that funeral because of my father's cancer (I went in her place and recorded the funeral homily for her in Poland).

For me, these funeral Masses are so important, today's Mass is important, to tell the families of Mal, Patricia and María that they are not forgotten, that *you* are not forgotten. On this Thanksgiving Day, we need to take a moment to say how much we care about you, we love you in God's name and we remember you. Even though the Online Masses we celebrate may not have the big ratings or large viewerships, we do them to tell those watching our Masses that *we care for all of you as well*, to thank you for supporting us, and for us more importantly to say that we

are supporting you, telling you that that Holy Spirit passes from us to you, especially on a day where Abraham Lincoln encouraged us in 1863 to stop and give thanks to the source of all goodness, our Lord and God.

From the communion of saints to your household, we want you to know that you are very much loved. This Mass is offered for you, your intentions, and all the wonderful things you offer our parishes through prayer, time, talent and your financial resources. Just keep doing what you're doing. Keep praying for me. Stop today and give thanks to the person who delivers your mail, the person who cleans your house, the person who waters your lawn, the person who comes and brings you a Thanksgiving dinner. Please stop to give thanks to the members of your own families. Please continue to pray every person that you and I meet. This is our prayer.