

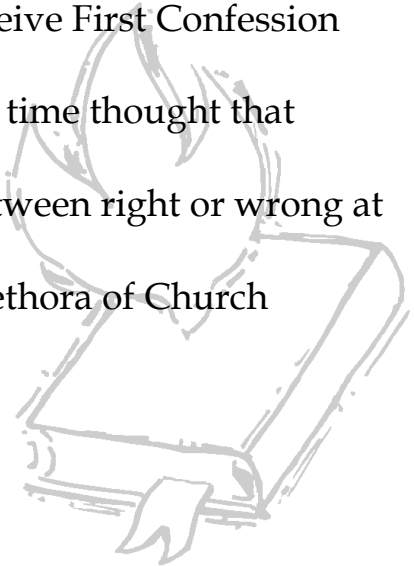
Homily
15th Sunday OT - C
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 09-10, 2022

Dt 30: 10-14
Ps 69: 14, 17, 30-31, 33-34, 36, 37
Col 1: 15-20
Lk 10: 25-37

You just never know whose lives who affect by the life you live...

A few years ago, I received a Facebook Messenger Post from a person named Benjamin Petty. About fourteen years ago, Ben and I crossed paths during a one-year period while I was serving as a resident priest at St. Joan of Arc Church in Lisle, Illinois.

During that time period in my life, I was living out my priesthood by battling over a couple of issues that I felt needed to be defended - one happened to be about sex abuse (a problem which I had been fighting for the first ten years of my priesthood... and still today) and the other had to do with parishes allowing children to receive First Confession *after* their First Communions (many folks at that time thought that children could not understand the difference between right or wrong at the age of seven; I responded with not only a plethora of Church



documents that stated otherwise, including the writings of St. Pope Pius X; I also stated that, besides the fact that seven-year-old children are *very aware* of the concept of right and wrong, if a child could not understand what was a sin then they certainly would not understand the meaning of Holy Communion, either).

While I spent that year in Lisle, I was asked by the bishop to cover for a priest on the other end of the diocese who was sent away for the same abuse problems that I had encountered a decade earlier. Because of this, I was travelling from one end of the diocese to another each week, serving various parishes who were in need of sacramental ministry. Because of this, I encountered so many folks that year that my head was spinning. Notwithstanding the fact that I cannot remember what I have for breakfast in the morning, let alone all the faces that come and go in my life, Ben's life turned out to become one of many to whom I ministered that one year. I just didn't realize that my short encounter with Ben was the first part of his wonderful journey.

While I was travelling throughout the diocese, the pastor in Lisle asked me to facilitate the RCIA process at the Church where he served, where those adults who had not received the sacraments previously would attend catechism sessions for a year in preparation for receiving the sacrament. Among the thirty or so individuals who were in the program that year, Ben had chosen to invest in the process as well.

I did not know Ben's story well – after fourteen years, for him to reenter my life was quite amazing. Rather than me telling you about this story in my words, I would prefer if Ben told the story for you, in the form of the Facebook Messenger Post he sent me and a story about him I found online. This is what I learned about Ben's faith journey...



From the website www.DCPriest.org

(<https://dcpriest.org/people/benjamin-petty>),

Ben writes...

I was baptized Lutheran and confirmed as an Episcopalian. A few years after studying philosophy and theater at Wheaton College, IL. I worked for a short time in professional and community theater as an actor and stagehand. I was received into the Catholic Church in 2006. I earned my Masters in Theological Studies in 2012 from the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family life while working at Trader Joe's in Silver Spring, MD. I was looking for positions teaching religion in local Catholic schools when I decided to enter seminary.

WHAT CONVINCED ME TO ENTER THE SEMINARY:

I had some draw to the priesthood shortly after my conversion, but dismissed it at first as a convert's enthusiasm. I felt a keener sense of attraction to it in the middle of a serious dating relationship, but again dismissed it because of how the immediacy of the relationship trumped the abstract and distant sense of the attraction to the priesthood. My studies at the John Paul II Institute helped to be more open to the beauty of both celibacy and married life. When they were completed, I realized that I had been hearing the voice of God inviting me to consider the priesthood, but that I had done little to respond to that invitation. At my pastor's encouragement I attended the Men's Discernment retreat, where I made two key discoveries. First, you don't have to be one hundred percent certain about the priesthood to enter seminary. Second, you won't be able to become

certain about a vocation until you enter the seminary. Once I grasped those two ideas, I realized that if I was going to take God's quiet invitation seriously, I needed to enter the seminary.

Fui bautizado luterano y confirmado como episcopaliano. Unos años después de estudiar filosofía y teatro en Wheaton College, IL. Trabajé por un corto tiempo en el teatro profesional y comunitario como actor y director de escena. Me recibieron en la Iglesia Católica en 2006. Obtuve mi Maestría en Estudios Teológicos en 2012 del Instituto John Paul II para Estudios sobre el Matrimonio y la Vida Familiar mientras trabajaba en Trader Joe's en Silver Spring, MD. Estaba buscando puestos para enseñar religión en las escuelas católicas locales cuando decidí ingresar al seminario.

QUÉ ME CONVINO A ENTRAR EN EL SEMINARIO:

Tuve un poco de interés en el sacerdocio poco después de mi conversión, pero lo descarté al principio como el entusiasmo de un converso. Sentí una mayor sensación de atracción hacia ella en medio de una relación de pareja seria, pero una vez más la descarté debido a que la inmediatez de la relación superaba el sentido abstracto y distante de la atracción al sacerdocio. Mis estudios en el Instituto Juan Pablo II ayudaron a estar más abiertos a la belleza del celibato y la vida matrimonial. Cuando terminaron, me di cuenta de que había estado escuchando la voz de Dios invitándome a considerar el sacerdocio, pero que había hecho poco para responder a esa invitación. Con el estímulo de mi pastor, asistí al retiro de Discernimiento para Hombres, donde hice dos descubrimientos clave. Primero, no tienes que estar cien por ciento seguro sobre el sacerdocio para ingresar al seminario. Segundo, no podrás estar seguro de una vocación hasta que ingreses al seminario. Una vez que

entendí esas dos ideas, me di cuenta de que si iba a tomar en serio la invitación silenciosa de Dios, tenía que ingresar al seminario.



From Ben's Facebook Messenger post to me last month (which I did not read until this week; attached is Ben's RCIA pic from 2006)...

Dear Fr. Peter, I hope you remember me from my time at St. Joan of Arc. I wanted to let you know that I was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington on Saturday. It was through your hands that I was received into the Church and now I have that chrism on my hands as well. I was saddened to read about the circumstances of your sabbatical when I went to find out how to get in touch. I will be passing through Illinois within the next two weeks. If you are around, I would love to get together.

Estimado Padre Pedro, espero que me recuerdes de mi tiempo en St. Joan of Arc. Quería hacerle saber que fui ordenado sacerdote de la Arquidiócesis de Washington el sábado. Fue a través de sus manos que me recibieron en la Iglesia y ahora también tengo ese crisma en mis manos. Me entristeció leer acerca de las circunstancias de su año sabático cuando fui a averiguar cómo ponerme en contacto. Pasaré por Illinois en las próximas dos semanas. Si estás por aquí, me encantaría juntarme.

<https://dcpriest.org/people/benjamin-petty>

How do you know whose lives you are going to affect? Amid all the joys and struggles in our own lives, how often do we dedicate ourselves to making a difference in the lives of others? As a university professor, I have encountered more than a few individuals who have expressed interests in entering the priesthood or religious life. As someone who was encouraged to consider the life as a priest by those who thought this life might be my calling, I feel it necessary to “pay it forward,” presenting this opportunity to others who might have the same calling as I had. I have directed those at the university interested in this type of vocation to those better suited in this pursuit than I could provide. I have had the privilege of being involved in the ordination process of two of these candidates within the last couple of years. Realizing that my example of faith might not be the best or purest of examples (whose is, in some respects?), all we can do is make a difference to everyone we encounter, regardless of our own challenges in life, so that God may

Speak to that person and tell them that they are loved and they have a purpose in life.

Certainly in the first century, no obedient Jew of faith would look twice at a Samaritan to offer this example of faith; even in the gospels, the apostles thought that Samaritans should be annihilated by the Lord because of their perceived negative view of the Samaritans' faith life (we just read this two Sundays ago – see Lk 9: 54). During the time of exile while faithful Jews were removed from their Promised Land into the pagan region of Babylon, the Samaritans chose to stay behind to intermingle and often marry the so-called “enemy” of the people. No faithful Jew would place their faith or reputation on the life of a Samaritan. Yet, Jesus did just that in using the example of a “Good” Samaritan as an example of someone who could make a difference in the salvation of a soul, as he often did in the writings of the gospels.

I cannot take credit for Ben's path and vocation; as a priest, I look at myself as the “useless servant” that is referenced in Luke 17: 10, whose

commentary serves as a manner in which I have to live my life if I truly am fulfilling what God has called me to do...

(In referring to the life of a disciple as a “useless servant”), These sayings of Jesus, peculiar to Luke, which continue his response to the apostles’ request to increase their faith ([Lk 17:5-6](#)), remind them that Christian disciples can make no claim on God’s graciousness; in fulfilling the exacting demands of discipleship, they are only doing their duty.

(Al referirse a la vida de un discípulo como un “siervo inútil”), Estos dichos de Jesús, propios de Lucas, que continúan su respuesta a la petición de los apóstoles de aumentar su fe (Lucas 17: 5-6), les recuerdan que los discípulos cristianos no pueden reclamar la gracia de Dios; Al cumplir con las exigentes exigencias del discipulado, solo están cumpliendo con su deber.

If we just do as God asks, knowing that all of us have faults and all of us stumble along the journey, we still can make a difference in the faith if we can just do what God is calling us to do. Let us make it a good calling; let us make a difference in the life of others, regardless of the struggles we face in our own lives or even regardless of what others

might think of us. Our salvation, and the salvation of others, is dependent on the call to Christian service.

Fr. Ben Petty is a good example of how “paying it forward” can make a difference. Let us do the same for the sake of the people that we meet.

This is our prayer.



DEACON BENJAMIN PETTY

Fourth Theology
North American College
Home Parish: St. Bernadette, Silver Spring
Grew up in an Air Force family. Studied Philosophy
and Drama at Wheaton College ...

Grew up in an Air Force family. Studied Philosophy and Drama at Wheaton College which led him to the Catholic Church and the John Paul II Institute in Washington, DC.

MY LIFE BEFORE THE SEMINARY:

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OTHER INTERESTS INCLUDE:

I have always loved good theater and singing, either as a participant or as an audience member. I like to cook. I enjoy baseball and almost any sport that involves water, but especially sailing. I appreciate a good hike in beautiful country. Indoors, I like good movies (Master and Commander is a favorite) and good books, especially anything by George MacDonald, and board games.

Also see...

<https://cathstan.org/news/local/like-saint-john-paul-ii-deacon-petty-worked-in-theater-before-seeking-priesthood>

<https://cathstan.org/news/local/at-joyful-mass-archbishop-gregory-ordains-10-new-priests-for-archdiocese-of-washington>

<https://adw.org/event/mass-of-ordination-to-the-priesthood/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G3rC8T6hO5Y>

<https://church.stmaryslh.org/>

<https://dcpriest.org/people/benjamin-petty>