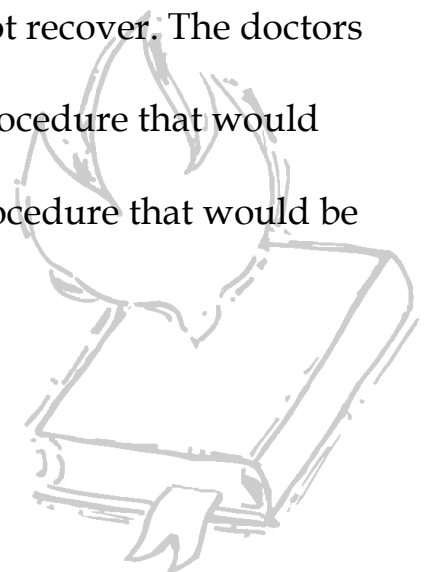


Homily
16th Sunday OT - C
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 16-17, 2022

Gen 18: 1-10
Ps 15: 2-3, 3-4, 5
Col 1: 24-28
Lk 10: 38-42

A few years back, I received a sad call from one of my former parishioners named Jane about a death in her family. Now I tell you in advance that this story, though tragic, has a very inspirational moral for Jane's family and for me. Hopefully you can see through the tragedy in order to grasp the inspiration within the event.

The funeral in question involved Jane's child who was just over a month old when she died; the child's name was Gabrielle. Shortly before the child's delivery, Jane was told by her doctors that the baby she was carrying would not live very long after birth, due to a physical malady from which the baby would not recover. The doctors suggested to the woman that she submit to a procedure that would terminate the life of the baby prematurely, a procedure that would be



gravely sinful and against this woman's Christian and moral principles.

As she listened to the doctor's suggestion, Jane became very distraught and subsequently called me, challenging the doctor's viewpoint and asking me about the Church's moral position on this particular procedure. I responded to Jane by telling her that the Church saw this life of the child as sacred and that Jane was carrying a gift that should not be neglected or abandoned.

In the end, Jane carried the baby to term and I had the honor of baptizing that child with Jane's family present. As Jane and I talked on the day of Gabrielle's baptism, Jane conveyed to me that even one hour or day with her child was a sacred moment and that the spiritual life of this baby depended on the spiritual life of the mother. If the mother treated this baby with the love of God, then even for that brief period of time, the child and the family would be very blessed indeed.

As I once again prayed for Gabrielle and reflected on today's readings, I thought to myself that the spiritual welfare for every soul should be given the respect and honor that Jane offered the soul of her child. The fact is, the spiritual welfare of each individual being is the most important element of the human person, yet can often be relegated by us as the part of us the least nourished.

I was reflecting this week about how our secularist society of today's age views the human person, how the thinking of today is so far off base from those of our forefathers and certainly those of the bible and tradition. Somehow in today's age, our society has convinced itself that the needs of the body supersede those of the mind or the soul, as if the need for the basic carnal desires of life which outweigh those of faith or even common sense. In today's society, those sins of the body which we used to view as sinful through the eyes of the soul have been replaced by our own hedonistic tendencies – in today's age, drugs, premarital sex, violence, and the other sinfully carnal desires of the body have all of

a sudden become the important part of the human person, pleasures of the body without regard to health or moral responsibility.

If we made the mind the most important part of the human person, then we would follow the example of someone like Friedrich Nietzsche, who theorized that the mind of a person balances and provides order for the needs of the body (of course Nietzsche disregards the spirit of the human being altogether, being the good atheist that he is). In this view, the mind has no need for prayer and certainly has no need for carnal desires – its singular purpose is to provide a mathematical balance within the life of the scientifically produced carbon unit we call a human being.

What God is trying to tell us in our scripture readings today is that *the spirit of the human person* must be the guide and center of our existence in order that the mind and body can be guided in the proper manner. No matter how much Martha work we do in the world, if we are not guided by the spirit that Mary represents, then the work we do in the world becomes work without purpose. We

encountered this purpose in our first reading from the Eighteenth Chapter of Genesis. Because Abraham's work was motivated by the spirit of God within him, Abraham was rewarded by God with the gift of children and the gift of the chosen race. We encountered this purpose in today's gospel from the tenth Chapter of Luke – because Mary's work was motivated by Christ's presence, Christ rewarded Mary with the gift of eternal life.

And because Jane was inspired by the love of God to embrace this child of hers, even for a brief time in this world, both Jane and her child became blessed with God's presence, something that only a Holy Spirit can provide. Jane's example should be an inspiration for all of us to allow the Spirit to lead us to a God-inspired life, whether it be as a parent, a priest, or a good Christian following God's way in the world.

The fact is, a Spirit-led life inspires everything that we do in our lives. If we put God first and are inspired to live a God-filled life in the Spirit, then the presence of this Spirit affects the way we treat our

bodies, our minds, and the people around us. If we are filled with the example of Mary, then the Martha work in our life has purpose. If we put our priorities of faith in the correct order, then the health of our soul influences our lives and the lives of others. It is through this Spirit that we become whole, we find our purpose in life and we live out that purpose in the way we conduct ourselves in this world.

As I reflected on Jane's human condition and the message God was speaking to me through this week's readings, I recalled an article once written in a homiletic journal written by a priest named Fr. John, an article about this balance between spirit, mind and body, communicating this theme in the following manner:

The health of the (human) body must not be considered apart from the health of the soul. If the body was the only determining factor in making medical choices or for that matter the only determining factor in daily or vocational choices then probably a great number of virtuous activities would never be considered. Fasting, the long hours of prayer in the contemplative life, missionary activity in dangerous lands, parenthood and the vocations of countless saintly people would never be considered (if the needs of the body were placed ahead of the needs of the soul).

La salud del cuerpo (humano) no debe ser considerada aparte de la salud del alma. Si el cuerpo fuera el único factor determinante al tiempo de tomar decisiones médicas o de hecho el único factor determinante en decisiones diarias o vocacionales entonces nunca se considerarían un gran número de actividades virtuosas. El ayuno, las horas largas de oración en la vida contemplativa, actividad misionera en tierras peligrosas, la paternidad y las vocaciones de un sinnúmero de personas santas nunca se considerarían (si las necesidades del cuerpo se colocaran por encima de las necesidades del alma).

This weekend, I ask you to offer a special prayer for Jane, Gabrielle, and her family. I ask that we take time to thank God for everything that has been given to us this week. For when we do, then we recognize the Spirit in our lives that leads us and guides us and inspires us to do the Martha work in this world with conviction so that we can serve others in the name of our Lord. This is our prayer.