

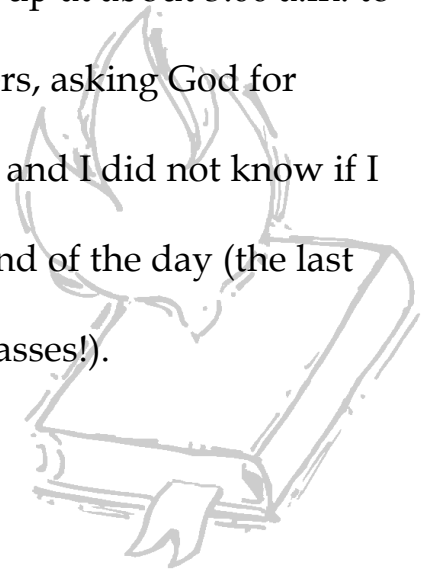
Homily
19th Sunday OT - B
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
August 7-8, 2021

1 Kgs 19: 4-8
Ps 34: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9
Eph 4: 30 - 5: 2
Jn 6: 41-51

My long day of Novena Masses started and ended with the same bowl of chili. Chili is the breakfast of champions... protein extravaganza!

I ended up having a bowl of chili for breakfast and the same bowl of chili that I had as leftovers for dinner, because let's face it. Chili tastes better when all the flavors meld and everything comes together. Yes, it's disgusting have for breakfast, but this particular day where I needed the energy, that really did the trick on the Saint Anne Novena day, with three masses approaching on July 26th.

The morning of St. Anne's Feast Day, I woke up at about 3:00 a.m. to take my bath, eat my Chile and to say my prayers, asking God for strength because my knees are not all that good and I did not know if I would have enough strength to make it to the end of the day (the last year, I could not walk for days after all those Masses!).



I tried to endure those Masses this year because everything I was doing was all about the faith; it is all about grace. Celebrating those Masses and processing with that relic is all about taking care of the people that I'm called to serve.

So, on this feast of St. Anne, we celebrated Masses in English, in Latin and in Spanish. Fr. Jason Nesbit, CSV was kind enough to preach in English and Fr. John Peeters, CSV preached at the Spanish Mass. In total, about five hundred souls gathered in St. Anne, IL on the 26th of July to give thanks to God for his presence in our life.

I felt like Elijah in today's first reading, the way I collapsed at the end of my ministry day. At times in my ministry (as with yours), I wonder if everything I do is worth it. Do I make a difference in what I do? Is the work truly worthwhile? Sometimes when I am suffering in the ministry, I channel our Lord's thoughts in the Garden of Gethsemane and ask the Lord "why me" before I venture forward, knowing that my sacrifices in life infinitely pale to his on the cross.

When I get to these crossroads within my ministry, when my human emotions cloud the work of God that is channeled through my soul, I

serve myself well by stopping and reflecting on what gives me sustenance in the ministry our Lord has called me to live. The sustenance of a hearth cake and drink certainly is necessary for the body, and I certainly need to sustain that – for this reason, our parish devotes itself to serving the hungry in the parish through a Food Pantry, Vincent de Paul and our Head Start program. What we offer there does good for the body, although the start and end of our ministry cannot be solely that.

What inspires me “to keep on keeping on” is the spiritual food that God provides me in the word, in the sacrament, in my personal relationship with God and through all of you.

What motivated me this last Monday was that the love of God really that was made manifest and really came forward in the hearts of others who receive it. I often find that I best see God when these sacraments are offered to others and when grace is given away, not what I get, but what I give. For me, the miracle appears in the response of those who are seeking this love of God. When good souls arrive to encounter God, people are asking for God's love and to see how God responds

accordingly is most important to my own faith life.

The day after the Novena is I was really shot. Nevertheless, I ended up celebrating three more liturgies in Latin, English and Spanish – a Latin Mass for the Poor Clares at their convent in Minooka, the English 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph’s Church in Joliet and a Spanish funeral at 10:00 a.m. at Immaculate Conception Church in Morris, IL, where I had celebrated Spanish masses for a good fifteen years of my priesthood. For me, when I celebrate Mass for the Poor Clares, I can climb the mountain, to find God, to have a place of quiet and respite. I also know that when I leave the Minooka convent, God's returns me to the life of a parish priest, where I am called to descend the mountain and spend time with folks who really are seeking. God's love.

Being a parish priest is the role I have been called to live as a servant to others; this is role that God has asked me to do. For me, there is nothing more important than to serve in communities that others may not find very attractive, that are small, that are out of the way, but these folks needed God's love just as much. For me, it's an honor and privilege to serve folks in the country. I understand that my ministry has been

directed in protecting children where others have not, to serve at the University of St. Francis where I teach theology courses, to serve in the prisons and detention centers and to serve people who are suffering. For me, this type of service is so important because if the 25th Chapter of Matthew's gospel means anything to me, I need to do what God asks me to do to come down that mountain and to serve.

This year, Pope Francis designated it as “The Year of St. Joseph” which I will be concluding by instituting a “Service Pilgrimage to the Holy Land,” living the life of service that St. Joseph offered to his Son, our Savior of the world. I suspect that if this homily came from the perspective of a loving, Christian parent like St. Joseph, a Christian in the workplace or even one in the community, we would be hearing story after story that reflects the sentiments that I offer from my unique vantage point. So much grace is shared by so many people in this community that I find great strength in what I do through people like all of you.

As much as I feel God’s presence in what I do, I have heard from so many of you how the grace of God channels through your own

ministries and your lives. As you tell me of the challenges that are set before you in what you do, I can't help but think how each of us, individual members of this body of Christ, come from our respective points of view and unique lives to help build the Church with our respective gifts. For this I give thanks and readily acknowledge that God's strength and nourishment flows from your service to others, as I hope and pray, I am able to offer through the ministry our Lord has afforded me as well.

As I came home and ate the rest of my leftover chili after a long day of ministry (and let's face it, chili tastes better the second day than the first), I wanted to find a prayer for the Christian servant as a fitting conclusion to today's homily. I came upon my answer by a prayer written by Pope St. John XXIII attributed to St. Joseph the Worker, which is most appropriate for this year in honor of Jesus' human father.

The Holy Father writes,

O glorious Joseph! Who concealed your incomparable and regal dignity of custodian of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary under the humble appearance of a craftsman and provided for them with your work, protect with loving power your sons, especially entrusted to

you.

You know their anxieties and sufferings, because you yourself experienced them at the side of Jesus and of His Mother. Do not allow them, oppressed by so many worries, to forget the purpose for which they were created by God. Do not allow the seeds of distrust to take hold of their immortal souls. Remind all the workers that in the fields, in factories, in mines, and in scientific laboratories, they are not working, rejoicing, or suffering alone, but at their side is Jesus, with Mary, His Mother and ours, to sustain them, to dry the sweat of their brow, giving value to their toil. Teach them to turn work into a very high instrument of sanctification as you did. Amen.

Oh san José, custodio de Jesús y esposo purísimo de María, que transcurriste la vida en cumplimiento perfecto del deber, sustentando con el trabajo de tus manos a la Sagrada Familia de Nazaret, nos dirigimos a ti con gran confianza: protégenos propicio.

Tú conoces bien nuestras aspiraciones, nuestras angustias y esperanzas. A ti venimos porque estamos seguros de encontrar en ti quien nos protege. Tú también experimentaste la prueba, la fatiga y el cansancio; pero tu ánimo, lleno de profunda paz, exultó de gozo por la intimidad con el Hijo de Dios a ti confiado, y con María, su Santísima Madre. Ayúdanos a comprender que no estamos solos en nuestros trabajos, a saber, descubrir junto a nosotros a Cristo en la persona de los hermanos y a custodiarlo fielmente como tú hiciste. Amén.

Chili tastes a whole lot better when you know that souls are being saved in the process. And when you can, the end of the day with a bowl of food and the grace of God, there's nothing better in the world. It's

important to stop and give thanks to what you have. It's important to come down from the mountain and to serve those that you're called to love. May we continue to learn from the example of St. Joseph the worker. May we continue to feed others as Christ has fed us. Let us be like Elijah by taking a moment to travel up the mountain in prayer so that when we descend the mountain, our lives are nourished to do God's work. I pray that all of us be strengthened to go off and do the work that God has asked us to do, both for the sake of our own lives and for the people that we meet. This is our prayer.