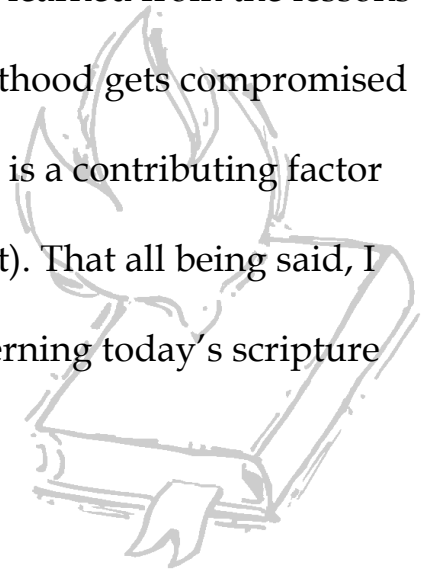


Homily
26th Sunday OT - C
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
September 28-29, 2019

Am 6: 1-7
Ps 146: 7, 8-9, 9-10
1 Tm 6: 11-16
Lk 16: 19-31

A couple months ago, I wrote a letter to two of the congregations at the Vatican about how the leaders of our Church need to be more strident about protecting children in the Church and community. I referenced the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus and how for hundreds of years we have been given warning signs about our neglect in this certain aspect of our Church life. The prophet Amos is even more unrelenting in his writings than our Lord is in today's gospel. Unfortunately, those so-called "Chosen People" of the Old Testament did not listen to Amos, many in Jesus' time did not listen to him and certainly many of us in today's society have not learned from the lessons of the prophets and teachers. Whether my priesthood gets compromised over these letters is yet to be seen (and certainly is a contributing factor as to why I am serving all of you at this moment). That all being said, I would rather speak about a positive story concerning today's scripture



readings that rehash the uphill challenges I address in life which causes me more than a few restless nights of sleep.

A week or so ago, I was asked to celebrate a last-minute funeral for a woman named Dorothy Bee, a ninety-five-year-old trailblazer of the golf course and all things sports. I was told that she loved to spend time with her family and friends at sporting events and loved to go shopping with her grandkids – pretty much the kind of grandmother life you hear similarly from those who really love their matriarch.

I was asked to celebrate this funeral service for Dorothy because the priest who was supposed to be present ended up getting sick at the last minute. I had about ten minutes to spend with the family prior to the service; I try to meet with families to make the homily more personal and to find a way to connect the life of the loved one with the message from the scriptures.

On this particular occasion, Dorothy's children lamented that they could not find a prayer close to their mother's heart. I guess when Dorothy's own mother passed away, a prayer card was hidden in the kitchen cabinet that Dorothy's mother used as a credo for her own life.

The children kidded with me that Dorothy's mother probably "kicked" the prayer to her daughter from the cupboards and that Dorothy proudly displayed the prayer as a way of life to which she adhered as her days got a little older. The family also lamented that they could not find the prayer among Dorothy's things and very much wanted to hold on to that prayer as a keepsake for their own lives.

With very little on which to go, I quickly scanned the internet from my iPhone and came across a few prayers that addressed the issue of growing older. In particular, I found some beautiful words from a religious sister, I guess from the 1600s, who offered the following reflection on growing older that I thought would be appropriate for all ages (at least I found it appropriate for me!) and certainly appropriate to share with you at this Mass. This is what I found on the internet and offered at the funeral...

A NUN'S PRAYER ABOUT GROWING OLD

Lord, you know (better than I know) that I am growing older. Keep me from the habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from the craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but

not bossy.

With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all, but
You know I want to still have a few friends at the end. Keep my mind
from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.
Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and the love
of rehearsing them becomes sweeter as the years go by.

I dare not ask to enjoy the repetitious tales of others but help me to
endure them with patience. I dare not ask for improved memory, but
for a growing humility when my memory seems to clash with the
memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I
may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet. I do not want to be like a Saint; some of
them are so hard to live with. But a sour old person is one of the
crowning works of the devil.

Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and
talents in unexpected people. And, Lord, give me the grace to tell
them so. Amen.

- Attributed to a Nun in the 1600s

LA ORACIÓN DE UNA MADRE POR CRECER ANTIGUO

Señor, sabes (mejor que yo sé) que me estoy haciendo mayor.
Mantenme alejado del hábito de pensar que debo decir algo sobre
cada tema y en cada ocasión. Libérame del deseo de enderezar los
asuntos de todos. Hazme reflexivo, pero no malhumorado, servicial
pero no mandón.

Con mi gran reserva de sabiduría, parece una pena no usarlo todo,
pero sabes que todavía quiero tener algunos amigos al final. Mantén

mi mente alejada del recital de infinitos detalles; dame alas para ir al grano. Sella mis labios con mis dolores y molestias. Están aumentando y el amor de ensayarlos se vuelve más dulce a medida que pasan los años.

No me atrevo a pedir que disfrute los cuentos repetitivos de otros, sino que me ayude a soportarlos con paciencia. No me atrevo a pedir una memoria mejorada, sino una humildad creciente cuando mi memoria parece chocar con los recuerdos de los demás. Enséñame la gloriosa lección de que ocasionalmente puedo estar equivocado.

Mantenme razonablemente dulce. No quiero ser como un santo; algunos de ellos son tan difíciles de vivir. Pero una anciana agria es una de las principales obras del diablo.

Dame la capacidad de ver cosas buenas en lugares inesperados y talentos en personas inesperadas. Y, Señor, dame la gracia de decirles eso. Amén.

As I was reading this prayer at Dorothy's funeral, the daughter began to cry severely. Normally folks go asleep on my homilies; sometimes I stir up the faith and cause folks to write letters to me. In this case, I paused at the end of my reading and asked the daughter if everything was alright. She responded by saying, "You just read the prayer that grandma kicked to my mother from the cupboards..." Not always being quick for a good response, I replied to the daughter, "I guess your mom kicked the prayer to me so that I could give it to you." I handed the

daughter the prayer that I had just read and the daughter had a keepsake of her mother to pass on to her family.

I very much understand in life that the wisdom imparted by those before us sometimes is neglected by those of us who hear these words. Time and time again, the warnings and advice that our ancestors offer us are not embraced often until we experience the same problems in our lives and have to pay the price for the lessons we have ignored. Often the stories from the Old and New Testament we hear over and over again like the ones from Amos and the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus do not make sense to us until we get to a point that the lessons become personal and we have to suffer the consequences of not heeding the advice from those who try to form us.

For this reason, I often joke that grandchildren are the grandparents' way of getting even with their own children – the lessons that children do not often learn are experienced when those children have to raise the kids of the next generation. That is why I often impart on children what I call “the twenty year penance” in confession – I tell the kids to wait twenty years until they have children of their own, realize that their

own children are pulling the same shenanigans that they did in their youth, and offer a prayer for their own mothers and fathers for enduring the hardships of parenthood that their own children eventually will have to endure themselves.

We all have lessons to learn in life – more often than not, we often learn these lessons the hard way. May we have the wisdom to learn the sage advice from a seventeenth century religious sister who offers good words of common sense, the same type of common sense repeatedly offered during our readings at Mass. Let us not take these words for granted; let us not learn these lessons through the suffering we endure by not adhering to these words in the first place. Let us learn these lessons well and then share them well with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.