

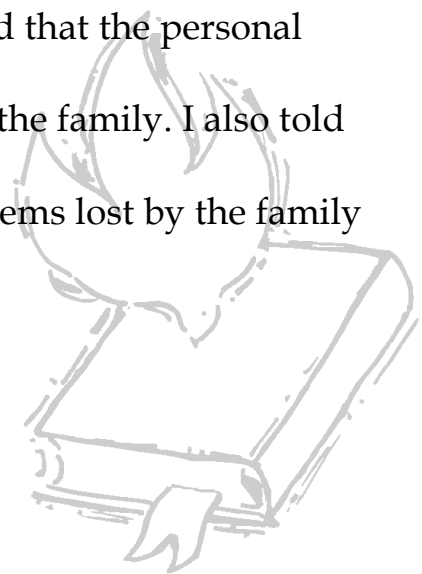
**Homily**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – C**

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
May 21-22, 2022

Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29  
Ps 67: 2-3, 5, 6, 8  
Rv 21: 10-14, 22-23  
Jn 14: 23-29

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A few years ago, I had announced to you that the first floor of my father's house became totally inundated with water due to a flood that totally destroyed the furniture on my father's first floor. If you recall, most of the furniture on the first floor became saturated with mud and grime, as did the walls, the insulation inside the walls and most of the appliances used by the family – the washer and dryer, the water heater and the water filtering system itself. Many of these items were of a personal value that had no monetary value – my brother had been working on a book the last two years and my father's coin collection had been left in the basement prior to the flood – and that the personal violation that took place caused a bit of grief in the family. I also told you that, in the life of my family, the personal items lost by the family



accounted to a bit of value but was completely insignificant to the lives that were most precious to my father.

This stated, I told you that my father was not looking for any financial help due to the flood but would appreciate if a few members of our parish would help him dispose of the two garbage trucks worth of furniture that would have to be brought out to the curb of the house to be thrown away. To that cause, just over two dozen faithful at the parish did just that on a Sunday afternoon following the Masses, something for which my family was (and is) extremely grateful.

Last week, I reflected on that act of kindness by those in the parish who were able to help out and reminded myself about the small moments of grace that often cross the paths of our lives like the one I had just experienced, moments that define the kind of people that we are and the presence of God that is immersed in each of these experiences that pass us by.

As a priest, I am often involved with the “big moments” of life, from liturgies to banquets to prayer services for the groups of the parish. I,

too, also am affected by the small moments of grace myself or opportunities for grace that take place at times most fortunate or even inopportune. I specifically recall how, more than a few Thursdays ago, a certain phrase not usually accepted as appropriate at any time would be spoken to me three times in an hour, a certain phrase that I certainly would not use in a public situation (or in *any* situation) but serves as an example of grace that affected me deeply last week. For the sake of this homily, allow me to replace the phrase in question with the expression, **“Have a nice day.”**

A few Thursday past about 10:45 a.m., I had realized that I was woefully late for my bi-weekly Mass over at Stateville Penitentiary in Crest Hill. The Mass is important to me, realizing that if this sinner can somehow be a part of the salvation of those whose sins resulted in their incarceration, possibly I can learn a lesson about forgiveness that God might one day afford to me. I also realized that there was much activity in the parish office that had to be addressed and that I was the only person in the parish who would be able to address them.

In the course of me dealing with the issues in front of me, a distraught man rang the doorbell at the parish, seeking help from us. Being in a hurry, I told the man that I was not available to speak to him at that moment and that perhaps our St. Vincent de Paul Society or Catholic Charities could help him out. The man's response to me was stark; he said, and I quote, **"Have a nice day, I don't want your money. I must talk to you NOW!"** Realizing that I had offended the man, I dropped whatever else I was doing, I took this man to a back room and he told me his story of his drug problem, his family problem, his inability to continue on with life and his desperate need for help. I listened intently to his problem, made some phone calls to lead him into the right direction and believed in my heart that this man was commissioned to me by our Lord as a lost sheep in search of a shepherd.

After the man left the house, I once again realized I was woefully late for Mass at the prison; I finished the rest of my business at the house and went on my way. During my drive to Stateville, I had to call a family whose child I thought was having some problems in our

Religious Education Program but turned out to be a much larger problem than the one I initially thought. I knew this phone call would be difficult; I had been involved in this situation throughout the week. So I called the family who wished to speak to me immediately, praying that I would find an answer to the problem that had no solution.

In the course of my discussion with the family, I told them that I was travelling to Stateville for Mass with the inmates and that I would be more than willing to continue our discussion after the Mass had concluded but the family was not very receptive to my invitation. It was then I received my second, **“Have a nice day”** when they hung up the phone on me. After the Mass at the prison had concluded, I was able to find a solution to the problem through the help of a neighboring priest in the area, who, in tandem with me, were able to provide a moment of grace to a family in a desperately painful place in life. I am not sure that the family ultimately will be satisfied with my personal efforts in this cause but at least they will be satisfied that the Lord came through for

them, which is consolation enough for me – the work of the Lord is much more important to me than my own personal reputation.

By now, me being late for the Stateville Mass was a foregone conclusion. As I entered the Visitors' Center to check in and be searched, I profusely apologized to the guards for being late and asked them if they would be kind enough to let me jump to the front of the visitor line so that I could get to the inmates as soon as possible. The guards were very accommodating to me and as I passed through the crowd to cut to the front, one of the family members in the visitors' line was not paying attention to who I was and blurted out, **"Have a nice day, who do you think you are cutting to the front of the line?"** It was then I turned around and showed her my Roman Collar and my clerical dress. The woman became sheepish and quietly responded, *"Oh Father. I'm so sorry, Father. I didn't know it was you,"* to which I replied, *"Don't worry, you're the third person to use that phrase on me in one hour. I think I just hit the Trifecta!"* The woman thanked me for understanding, we both laughed about it and we both moved forward in our respective

ministries, her comforting her loved one in jail and me celebrating Mass for those incarcerated.

We encounter these moments of grace in our lives on a daily basis – some big, some small, some glaringly evident and some that take place in the most unexpected of times. Over this last week, I reflected on those moments of grace and connected them with the gospel message for today – *Peace I leave you; Peace is my gift to you*. In every heart that we encounter is that gift of peace, whether we know it or not, whether we attempt to experience it or not. When our hearts are open to realize that the image and likeness of God are shining forth through the people around us, it is then that we see the grace of God even in the most uncomfortable of situations. The question we must ask is whether we allow that grace of God to shine forth from ourselves.

In my reflection for this weekend's homily, I recalled a homily about the Holy Spirit that St. Basil the Great once preached over 1600 years ago, when he spoke of the work of the Spirit in all the moments of our lives. He wrote,

(The Holy Spirit is a presence within us that is) simple in nature, manifold in powers wholly present in each single one, and whole and entire in all places. (It is) impassively divided, yet wholly bestowed, like the rays of the sun whose favor each enjoys as though it shone forth for him alone; yet it shines on land and sea and fills the air. So the Spirit, to each one who receives it, as though given to him alone, pours forth sufficient and perfect grace on each one, not in the measure of Its power, but of their capacity.

(La presencia del Espíritu Santo dentro de nosotros es) simple en la esencia, es vario en sus maravillas, presente por entero a cada uno, también está por entero en todas partes. Repartido sin mengua de su impassibilidad, se le comparte enteramente, a imagen del rayo solar, cuyo favor se presenta a quien lo goza como si fuera el único, a la vez que alumbra a tierra y mar, y se mezcla con el aire. Así también el Espíritu, presente a cada uno de los dispuestos a recibirle, como si cada uno fuera el único, proyecta suficientemente sobre todos su gracia íntegra: de ella gozan los participantes según la capacidad de su misma naturaleza, y no según la posibilidad del Espíritu.

In these words, I started thinking to myself that this Holy Spirit is often found in the bond of a Church community gathering together in prayer and fellowship but just as importantly, it is found in the little moments, in the lived moments at home between a parent and child, between spouses or friends, between any two people who gather together with the Spirit of Christ in their hearts and in each one of us as if the Spirit



were meant to be received for each one of us alone. It can be found in our experiences with the poor and the rich, the imprisoned and the free, in the young and the old. We know that the grace of God is present with those who are well off. We also know that God challenges us to devote our primary evangelical mission to those who are not well off, to those who are most in need of God's grace, knowing that the well-off have more of an ability to nurture their relationship with God rather than those who have lost all hope. Towards this cause, I am so blessed that our parish is so invested with the work of the poor and the needy, with our work in the Food Pantry, St. Vincent de Paul, Shepherd's Table, English as a Second Language, our GED programs and those other things we do to take care of those the most in need of God's mercy.

As we approach the last weeks of this Easter Season, my challenge for all of us is to recognize the presence of the Spirit within the big and small moments of our life and within our lives itself. During the week, I ask that you stop once or twice each day to recognize a small moment

where this Spirit has been present in something you have done or experienced and to give thanks to God for the gift of this Spirit.

I thought is appropriate this weekend, as we usually honor our couples celebrating wedding anniversaries on the first Sunday of each month, that we offer the blessing we are about to impart on them as a reminder of the Spirit's work in this world. We are taught that the Spirit is seen most visibly and intimately in the ministry of husband and wife. May we dedicate ourselves to allowing the same Spirit to shine forth on the rest of us so that we may share this Spirit with those around us and allow the Spirit to shine through them as well. Thus, at this time, I invite those celebrating wedding anniversaries in the month of May to please stand.

## **MARRIAGE ANNIVERSARY BLESSING**

Lord God and Creator, we bless and praise your name.  
In the beginning you made man and woman,  
so that they might enter a communion of life and love.  
You likewise blessed the union of N. with N.,  
so that they might reflect the union of Christ with his Church:  
look with kindness on them today.  
Amid the joys and struggles of their life

you have preserved the union between them;  
renew their marriage covenant, increase your love in them,  
and strengthen their bond of peace  
so that (surrounded by their children) they may always rejoice  
in the gift of your blessing.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Te alabamos y te bendecimos, oh Dios,  
creador de todas las cosas,  
que al principio creaste al hombre y a la mujer  
para que formaran una unidad de vida y de amor.  
También te damos gracias  
porque te dignaste bendecir la unión familiar  
de tus servidores N. y N.  
para que fuera imagen de la unión de Cristo con su Iglesia.  
Tú que los has mantenido unidos por el amor  
en sus penas y alegrías, míralos hoy con benevolencia.  
Renueva constantemente su alianza nupcial.  
Acrecienta su amor, fortalece su vínculo de paz,  
para que rodeados por todos los que les quieren  
gocen siempre de tu bendición.  
Por Jesucristo Nuestro Señor. Amén.

This is our prayer.