

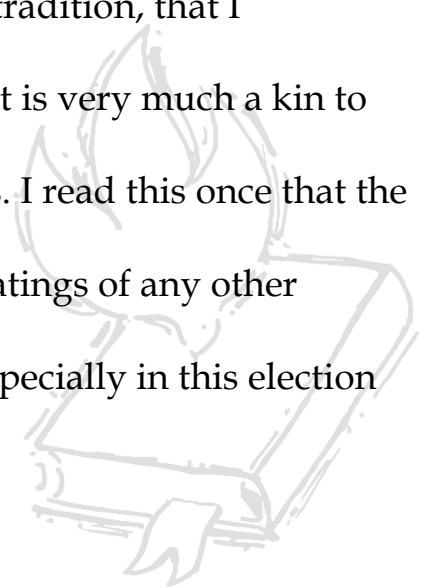
**Homily**  
**All Saints' Day - A**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
October 31 - November 1, 2020

Rev 7: 2-4, 9-14  
Ps 24: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6  
1 Jn 3: 1-3  
Mt 5: 1-12

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Of the numerous funerals that I have celebrated this last year for moms and dads, kids and seniors and even those in the workforce... certainly for Fr. James Fanale, the inspiration for today's homily comes from Lois "Jean" Balind. Now Jean was one of your typical moms who did "mom things" with the kids, from the girls scout work to sitting on the porch with the kids, to taking them here and there or even to going shopping with them to all the other things that mom does to take care of the ones she is commissioned to serve.

The reason I bring Jean up at this particular Mass is because, towards the end of her life, she had a custom, she had a tradition, that I absolutely *loathe*, but seems to be something that is very much a kin to the great majority of people in the United States. I read this once that the cable television station that draws the highest ratings of any other channel is *not* CNN or MSNBC or Fox News (especially in this election



year). The cable station that garners the best ratings... is *The Hallmark Channel* with those lousy, **LOUSY** movies that they churn out like a happy factory over and over and over again.

At a time in my life, I used to watch *The Hallmark Mystery Channel* early in the morning when reruns of the old *Columbo* episodes used to be broadcast (I was fond of watching *Columbo* in my childhood and the show brings back nice memories for me). Hallmark used to broadcast these *Columbo* episodes at seven o'clock in the morning; I often put the television on for noise in the morning and watched *Columbo* episodes until someone bought me the entire series on DVD.

I came to find out that if I kept watching the other Hallmark movies that they broadcast, I became nauseated by all the syrupy and sappy shows that other people absolutely love. In preparation for Jean's funeral and for this homily, I looked up on my computer all the current movies that Hallmark broadcasts – the shows are derivative (they have the same themes regurgitated over and over again). In the romance category, Hallmark has taken a page from those endless *Harlequin Romance Novels* and has churned out lover's "trash" like *Fashionably*

*Yours, The Royal Hearts, Hearts of Winter, Once upon a Winter's Date, Walking the Dog, Love in Store and Campfire Kiss.* **HOW EXCITING IS ALL OF THAT?**

In the mystery movie department, Hallmark has offered lots of detective “trash” like *Murder She Baked, Flower Shop Mysteries, Aurora Teagarden Mysteries*. Hallmark also churched out a bunch of mysteries starring Lori Laughlin movies that were popular until Lori Laughlin got in trouble with the law. As with the romance movies, those stories in the mystery category often concluded with everyone but the assailants getting a happy ending in the story.

Then, God help us, Hallmark notoriously is known for the plethora of saccharin Christmas movies that they broadcast June, July, August, and certainly the 24 days before Christmas. For 2020, Hallmark is shoveling the Christmas refuse with titles like *Jingle Bell Pride, Chateau Christmas, One Royal Holiday, On the 12<sup>th</sup> Date of Christmas, Never Kissed a Man in a Christmas sweater, Christmas with the Darlings, Christmas in Vienna, Timeless Christmas, Nashville Christmas, Christmas House, Loving*

*Gingerbread, Christmas Tree Grows in Brooklyn* and on and on and on...

*como se dice BARF en Español?*

I understand why Jean watched these shows on the Hallmark Channel; I get why people watch what I consider trash. The movies are syrupy. The movies are sweet. The movies have the happy endings because at the end of the day, you just want to go to sleep with a smile on your face. I realize that people just want to get to the end of the day and hope that the next one goes just as well. If you add up enough of those good days, one might say that they have accumulated themselves a good life.

On this day in honor of our canonized saints, I am well aware that a lot of people are just looking for contentment in life; they are looking for peace in their hearts. Folks in the pews are not looking for tension; they are not looking for anxiety. They are not looking for hatred or animus - they are just looking for peace in their hearts. There is a great number of people that are just looking for the smile.

For us Christians, our responsibility in following the saints is sometimes the rest of us have to make a sacrifice so others can smile in

life. The rest of us have to suffer in order to bring a smile to those who are in need a parent who sacrifices to make a living. At the end of the day, the saints that have gone before us and those who live saintly lives among us try to provide comfort and peace on behalf of the people they serve, whether it be a husband or a wife, an employer that takes care of the people under their, under their care, a bishop, a priest or a deacon who is commissioned to serve a community. The saint is called to show the light of Christ so that others can persevere so that the lives of others might become better than the lives of those that sacrifice.

For me, at least, this is how I perceive the life of a saint. The role of the saint is the model that illuminates the way of Christ, who sacrificed his own life so that we could live a better one, so that we could live a holy one. So many individuals have made that sacrifice for our sakes, who have endured that suffering so we do not have to, who have done what is necessary for the salvation of others, knowing that they themselves would suffer in the process. If we follow that example to live like Christ, then we offer this love to others, we offer God's *smile*, and Christ will certainly care for those who care for others.

So today, we remember those saints who have shown us the smile of Christ. We know that many of these saints, *most all of them*, had their own shortcomings and their own faults and their own problems of life, just like most all of us do. Jesus said his mother were sinless; the rest of us sometimes succumb to the temptations that sometimes make us fall. With Christ's help and the examples of the saints, we encounter models of faith that gives us strength to endure. We encounter folks like us that strove to be better, to be holier, the model the life that we are supposed to lead. In our litanies and even the First Eucharistic Prayer, we encounter models of faith such as Ss. Peter and Paul, Ss. James and John, St. Andrew and Philip and certainly the patrons of our border town parishes, St. Patrick and St. Anne.

Concerning those saints associated with the United States, we encounter so many examples of faith so that we can persevere. We recall St. Damian of Molokai, who contracted Hansen's disease while ministering to those who were sick, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, a disfigured Native American who converted to the Catholic faith and converted the young at such a young age herself, Ss. Isaac Jogues and John Brébeuf,

two Jesuit priests who suffered dearly to bring the message of God, to native Americans... and so on.

On this day of the saints, we remember so many that have suffered because they, at the end of the day, just wanted people smile because someone would make a sacrifice to help folks encounter Christ and make them smile. For that reason, we are called to live like the saints of today's age; that is why we are here today. We are here today to remember those saints who have gone before us, who are marked with that sign of faith and we try to live the same way for the sake of others. Certainly for the sake of our own salvation today, we all should remember those who have died, those like Jean Balind who tried to make the lives of their kids just a little bit better than they had themselves.

For those whose funeral services have been celebrated, especially in this last year, we are offering this weekend a special litany in their honor. At the end of this homily, I will invoke the names of the saints to pray over these good folks who have died and have had funeral Masses celebrated here in the border towns. I would ask you to pray for these

good folks as well, asking God to be with them as we ask God to be with us as well.

If we learn to follow their example and make that sacrifice for the sake of others, hopefully we can offer them a smile that often is lacking in the world and they can be at peace. We do for others as we hope others do for us, certainly what Christ does for us, so that through this suffering we and others may encounter our God in a heaven where there will be no more suffering, no more tears and no more sadness... just the smiling face of God that we adore for the rest of our existence.

Let us give, thanks to that example, let us understand the sentiment that the Hallmark Channel provides (even though their movies still make me cringe). Let us carry that sentiment throughout the world by the way we offer that smile and that peace to the people that we meet. This is our prayer.