

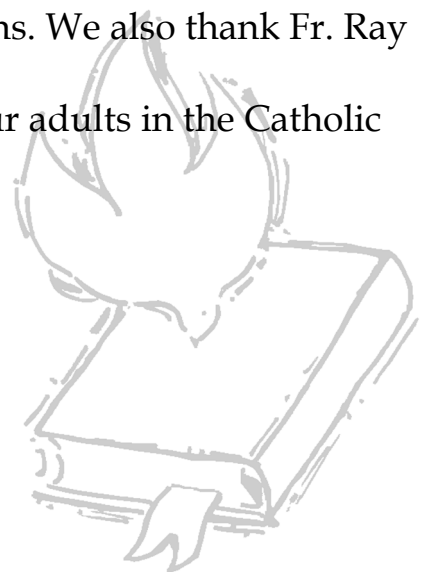
Homily
Pentecost – A
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
May 30-31, 2020

Acts 2: 1-11
Ps 104: 1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34
1 Cor 12: 3-7, 12-13
Jn 20: 19-23

By this time of year, normally we would have celebrated all our Confirmation and First Communion liturgies. Once again, we will find a way to acknowledge all of those who are to receive sacraments.

Certainly, we pray for them and we want them to know that they are not alone in this journey – we are the “Body of Christ” and we are supposed to take care of each other in Christ’s name.

Towards that end, I wish to thank John Rehmer, Kim Emerson and Sr. Mary Beth Clements as well as all those catechists who have volunteered their time to help our kids and our adults learn about the faith in our various religious education programs. We also thank Fr. Ray Lescher and Beth Crouch for their work with our adults in the Catholic initiation process.



We have a great number of individuals who have brought the word of God to so many of our parishioners and we are very much blessed to have them. I certainly want to acknowledge them at this mass. I also know that their task is a daunting one because to get our kids to learn some of the basic prayers (the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be) as well as the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Church is more difficult than we might think.

It is so difficult in today's age because we are so tempted to follow the ways of society rather than the ways of God. In our English lexicon, we have created the phrase, "Supermarket Catholic" that applies to so many people within the faith who choose to accept and learn some teachings of the Church and abandon others because of our free choice – God allows us to choose whether we choose to accept the tenets of the faith or whether we choose to disregard them and, as a result, we disregard God. In the end, each of us is accountable to the demographic of *ONE* who is going to accept the choice we make whether to enter heaven or not, depending on the choices and lifestyles we live on earth. What I teach kids is that we determine our own path to the faith, the

way we decide to answer God's call and live our lives and our conscience decision to go to heaven or not go to heaven.

All this said, I was sent a news article from the internet about a priest from the United Kingdom who lamented about the 120 students who received First Communion in his parish this year, only to find out that only twenty of them returned to Mass the following Sunday to live their faith. The article really is not appropriate to read in this liturgical setting, but the point was a relevant one – when communion is reduced to a commercial element rather than a spiritual one, when communion becomes more about the dresses and suits and parties and earthly gifts rather than the spiritual one that infinitely is more important, then we lose focus concerning the meaning of the sacrament (see <http://catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/05/29/priest-criticises-parents-who-reduce-first-communion-to-orgy-of-materialism-with-miniature-brides/>).

I suppose we can go “negative” in our interpretation of the earthly benefits of this celebration, but I would rather see what benefits come out of this sacrament on this, the final weekend of our Easter Season. On

this particular weekend, I cannot help but feel blessed by sharing the Christian witness of those in our community that volunteer their time, talent and financial resources as a response to the gospel message with the kids who represent the future of this parish. I know our staff believes this because I know how much the staff gets paid!!! Our staff certainly offers significantly more than what we pay them because they love our kids and want to see our kids get to heaven. I know our volunteers feel this way because the time and talent they offer our kids is a great sacrifice that they offer for nine months out of the year, often without fanfare save the grace of God that they share with the kids they serve.

On this Pentecost Sunday, the fiftieth day of the Easter Season, we know that with that suffering comes great joy; with the pains of labor comes a great birth (Mt 24: 1-8)! The whole reason we make this sacrifice is so the faith we pass on may produce fruit in the next generation for the sake of our kids' salvation... and our own as well!

What we are called to do in life is give the next generation hope that even when we abandon God – and in times of sin, we *all* abandon God

in some little or large way – but God never abandons us. God *wants* us all to be with the divine on the last day and God keeps the divine end of the covenant through people of faith who share this gift to those in our community.

That said, our tendency to treat the faith as a type of “supermarket. Catholicism” often tells us that people attend Church services during milestone times of life, whether the event be Christmas, Easter, First Communion, Confirmation, weddings, funerals, baptisms. So many times in our life, we follow the way of our secular government and treat God as if he is *not* essential. Especially with our society the way it is today, God seems less essential now than the need for our secular folks to enter what the secular world considers “essential” institutions such as drug stores, liquor stores, bars and hardware stores. Towards this end, God does not seem to be first and foremost being in our lives.

This is what I preached at our Good Friday service a few weeks ago. In our secular way of life, we have put God on the back burner in so many ways. We focus too much on the “second day” and we forget about the “second death,” the loss of faith. In fact, I have had many

people that have said to me that they find it more convenient now to watch Mass online because they can now watch in their pajamas. The “Pajama Catholic” is now part of our English lexicon and lifestyle. Those who watch Mass online who don’t have to get dressed up, who can kind of fast forward through that boring parts and get to the good stuff and then feel like that, that they have satisfied their obligation by jumping through the online liturgies

I also noticed that on Holy Thursday and Good Friday, we reached 2,700 hits on Holy Thursday and 1900 hits on Good Friday. Maybe because I am a lousy preacher or maybe folks have settled back into their secular way of life and are bored with online Masses, I think we now reach about 200 to 300 hits each week on YouTube, which is fine. What I realize in the ministry I am called to live is that I need to do what God asks me to do; if I do that, I have fulfilled my end of the covenantal agreement. The question remains as to whether others have held their end of the covenant. What I propose is not a judgment; this is just my observation and reflection on our Stay-at-Home order.

Even in our secular world, this lax attitude affects our workforce as well. Some internet articles tell us that reporters or workers in the field who videotape their report or attend zoom conferences on the computer sometimes only dress from the waist up and are dressed in their pajama bottoms because no one can see from a videotaped person below the waist. I teach our university students that the way we present ourselves to God is so important because our attitude on the “inside” reflects the manner in which we present ourselves on the outside; if we choose to live a pure life, we act accordingly and that life is reflected in the way we live, the way we breathe and certainly the way we dress. We react the way we allow the Holy Spirit to work through us, which requires us, requires us to be attentive and what do we say on the job and in our ministry.

What we learn in our faith lives is that if we prepare well to avoid the Second Death and “put on Christ” (Colossians 3: 12-17), today could be our last day on earth... and we have no worries. As long as that light of God is within us, that Spirit of God, the Spirit to which we are introduced at our time of baptism and sealed at the time of our

confirmation, if we truly believe of baptism and sealed at confirmation, if we allow God to lead us and guide us *en los huesos (in the bone)*, , then what is on the other side of this life results in no more suffering, no more tears, no more sadness.

God *wants* us to make it to the last day with a clean soul. God *wants* us to get to heaven. God has done God's part; God has never abandoned us. Now we must do our part; we must be attentive. We must toss away the metaphorical pajamas of faith and "put on Christ" and seal ourselves with the gift of the Holy Spirit. We cannot allow just theological dust to sit on those pews. We must be invested in full, active, conscious participation at this liturgy and in our faith lives.

On our part as a staff, we have tried to do what we could to offer the sacraments and we continue to do that. We have made great efforts to communicate with our parishioners, to tell them that they are not alone. We have overextended ourselves in so many different ways, but in return, what you have done for all of us, not just to pay the bills, but to express the faith, to live the faith, to share it with each other? In so many ways, you all have exceeded our expectations in how you have offered

your time, talents and financial resources at a distance from the Church.

Like all aspects of life, we all have a long way to go to get better in the faith as well.

As we conclude this Easter Season in our Kankakee border town communities, I would like to thank all of you for being perseverant in your faith for allowing that spirit to shine forth. It is important for us to realize that as this thing continues to drag on into weeks and months, that we do not lose our focus. In the history of the church, we have learned that far worse things have happened to the people of faith, whether it be the Dark Ages or the schisms, the time of Reformation and the subsequent enlightenment or the problems with Modernism that plague us to this day.

For what time remains for us on earth, let us make what we have a good existence. Let us keep focused on God, focused on that light, focused on that spirit. We may extinguish the light at the end of the Easter season with that candle, but it is still in our hearts. Let us keep in burning brightly as we share that light and that love with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.