

Homily
Trinity Sunday - B

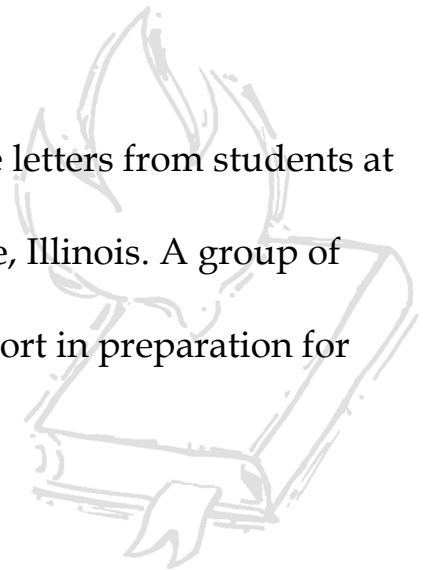
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
May 29-30, 2021

Dt 4: 32-34, 39-40
Ps 33: 4-5, 6, 9, 18-19, 20, 22
Rm 8: 14-17
Mt 28: 16-20

Adapted from the first homily I preached as a priest twenty-five years ago (June 2, 1996).

This homily is somewhat poignant to me because this is the first time I preached a homily as a Catholic priest on June 2, 1996. The day before, I was ordained a priest in the diocese of Joliet in a class of three; of the three individuals that were ordained, I am a lone survivor. I certainly am not the best of the three, certainly not the most intelligent, but I have persevered despite a lot of the hardships. (If you want to hear about some of those hardships, go back to the homily I preached last year on the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, where I listed the struggles that I've had during my ministry).

The year when I was ordained, I received the letters from students at Saint Isidore's Catholic Church in Bloomingdale, Illinois. A group of eighth graders wrote these letters to me of support in preparation for



what I was about to do. I began my homily in 1996 by reading portions of letters the students wrote. Three of the letters were addressed as follows:

“Dear Deacon Pete: I am very happy for you on becoming a priest. Congratulations and good job. I am sure that you are glad to get out of school... I am also graduating from the eighth grade and I think I feel the same way.” (P. Randy Thomas)

“Dear Deacon Pete: Our eighth-grade class would like to congratulate you on your ordination from a Deacon to a Priest who will be able to perform the Masses on his own. I will always pray for your safety...” (Jim Morrissy)

“Dear Deacon Pete: I am writing this letter to congratulate you on your ordination. I thank you for all you have done for this parish. You have done many things for us like helping us during the Mass when we had no idea what we were supposed to be doing.” (Eric Woerle) *Eric, I still don't know what I'm doing at this mass. And now that the sisters in the union station monastery have been teaching me the Latin Mass, I am as clueless in learning the Mass as I have ever been!*

The last time I offered this homily, a new generation of students from St. Joan of Arc School in Lisle also wrote cards and letters of support on my behalf, reminiscent of the letters I received some ten years ago:

“Dear Father Pete: I wish you weren't leaving because you were a fun and nice priest. I hope one day you will become pope. Your name

could be like Pope Pete V because you were the fifth priest who came and left or is still here while I can remember.” (Katie Ilich) *nb: I have no idea what this letter means and I want to know what happened to Pope Peter II, III, and IV. All I can say is God help us if they were stuck with Pope Pete #V!!!*

Pope Pete V... last week, I celebrated the Mass for Pope Celestine V, who was the last Pope that resigned voluntarily before Pope Benedict XVI did a few years ago. As I recall, St. Pope Celestine V (July 5 – December 13, 1294) was such a holy and upright man, a religious cleric devoted to a life of prayer. This cleric became a “compromise candidate” for the papal election after a two-year deliberation over whom the cardinals would elect as the Holy Father.

Celestine realized that the life of a pope was not his calling – his life was more devoted to a more contemplative life. Still, his successor (Pope Boniface VIII) was fearful that Celestine might usurp his power. As a result, Boniface VIII locked Celestine V in a tower out of fear, where the retired pope lived out the rest of his days. This type of life would be considered a punishment for most, but for the holy saint, all he wanted was to live a simple life in prayer. In some ways, this retired pope

considered his seclusion a type of blessing and, thus, he spent the rest of his life in that cell with the only individual that really mattered in his life, our Lord and God.

I feel sometimes like Celestine V in my life, to some degree. When I was ordained a priest, I was placed in an assignment that broke me down as a human being; I struggled, I fell and I pulled myself out an assignment where I felt “groomed” by a priest that I had to escape.

After this horrible year, I learned the strength of perseverance. After which, I ended up getting assigned to St. Paul’s Church in Joliet, Illinois (1997-2001). For the years I was assigned there and the friendships I had made, there were a good number of folks from that parish with whom I have still had communications. I give thanks to folks like musician Ray Kaufman, church secretary Ellen Fisher, church sacristan Mary Maloney, and all kinds of other folks from the parish who have been writing me and supporting me and for them.

While at St. Paul’s, I encountered a couple of breakfast partners on my journey, Don and Sue Cordano. For the twenty or so years that I was serving the good folks of Joliet, Don and Sue used to invite me to the

breakfast table for a time of fellowship. Many others joined us at the breakfast table, a good number of whom helped me finance number of projects at the churches I served. Don and Sue were instrumental in spearheading these projects. Without them, without *you*, without *God*, no accomplishments in parish ministry would have been possible for me while serving in the mother city of the diocese.

I think about my next assignment at Our Lady of Mercy Church in Aurora, Illinois (2001-2005). The Church was located on EOLA Road, which stood for "End of the Line, Aurora." There were good number of people, including church secretary Heather Domanski who served at OLA and very much supported me in what I was trying to accomplish in the ministry I served. They knew that I was struggling because I dedicated my life to the protection of the most innocent for the protection of children to defend their rights against a City Hall who most times you cannot defeat (kind of like the manner that Christ died on the cross). To defend children's right is not easy in today's society, especially in a world that sometimes takes advantage of children and hurts them where we are supposed to be defending them and protecting

them.

For the short time I served St. Joseph's church in Addison, Illinois (2005, while I served as a director of religious education at St. Mary's Church in Plano, IL), I am very much appreciative of the folks over there. St. Joseph's was and is a very poor parish, with good, holy folks that needed help of others. The parish is still struggling but the people are still holy and full of God's grace.

My next assignment was at St. Joan of Arc in Lisle, Illinois (2005-06). Like the other parishes I served, secretary Cathy Weinberg and her family were extremely kind to me during the time I served at St. Joan of Arc. Similar to Ellen Fischer's children, I had the honor of celebrating the wedding Mass of Cathy's daughter last December during a very unstable COVID era in our country - we had to be quite creative in order to make this wedding take place in Indiana last December.

During my time at St. Joan of Arc, the bishop called me to serve here at the border town, celebrating Masses for three months both at St. Patrick's Church in Momence and Sacred Heart Church in Hopkins Park, IL. Early in my priesthood, I saw the treasure that these southern

parishes offered this tattered priest. As a youth minister serving in Cary, IL and during my initial years of priesthood, I travelled extensively through the southern end of this diocese and prayed to God that my dream of serving these country parishes would one day become a reality.

Throughout my youth ministry days, I had offered retreats for the teens at St. Anne's, Gilman and all parts in between within Ford and Iroquois counties. As an ordained cleric, priests from the southern end of the diocese have asked me to celebrate Spanish masses and all kinds of different places. I am most indebted to the faithful in Morris, IL as well as St. Mary's Church in Plano, whom I served for the last couple of decades in all kinds of ways. Especially in Plano (next to my hometown of Sandwich, IL), the Marian priests who served there (Fr. Jerry Zalonis, Boniface Vaisnoris and Tony Nackunas) were great role models in the faith for me – especially when my mother passed in 1988 and during my first years as an ordained priest.

I also wish to thank the Poor Clare Sisters of the Annunciation Monastery in Minooka where I have lived on and off the last twenty

years. Mother Dorothy, Sr. Maria Benedicta and the sisters of the convent have been great role models of the faith whom I have served, first in the guest house where I currently live during my off-time and at the convent into which they took the vow of cloister in 1996.

In 2006, the bishop assigned me to St. Patrick's Church in Joliet, the oldest church in the Joliet Diocese (est. 1838). For twelve years as their pastor, I was able to serve the wonderfully holy souls of St. Patrick's, while also assisting the parishes surrounding St. Pat's as well. During a time when Spanish-speaking clergy became scarce, I assisted at Masses in St. John the Baptist Church and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church in Joliet.

I also had the honor of celebrating Masses at Historic St. Joseph's Church with Fr. Tim Andrés. Fr. Time has been a great spiritual support for me during my time at St. Pat's and I still help Fr. Tim while teaching students at the University of St. Francis in Joliet during the school year. When Fr. Time was having his back struggles and he couldn't find help to celebrate Sunday and Weekday Masses, I certainly was blessed to help him out. I remember one Christmas in 2017, I had to celebrate four

Christmas Eve masses - two at my parish and two at his parish because he couldn't find any priests to assist him at the time. I was very blessed that Fr. Tim was so supportive of me and my ministry during my forced sabbatical in 2018-19 as a shoulder on which to lean.

There are so many people that are in need, so many people that have sought out God's love. There are so many lives that God has been able to touch through me and have depended on me to protect and serve them. For this reason alone, I feel blessed.

I often say that there are many aspects of my ministry that I do not enjoy - I certainly am not fond of the administration portion of what I do. That said, the ministry portion of what I do means everything to me. I feel blessed celebrating masses with all of you, helping others with difficulties in life, hearing twenty-four-hour confessions at St. Pat's a couple, three times a year. I feel very blessed that all of you have been part of my life.

I want just to thank you for supporting me and guiding me and helping me. I am not the most social person in the world and I do not enjoy the art of "ladder climbing." All I have ever wanted to do was

save souls, starting with my own.

At times, I have been miserable in offering this ministry; at other times, God has allowed me to do well. Whatever I have done well is all because of you... and everything is *for you*. It is because of you that I am still kicking and fighting for you as a priest and the sacrifice that needs to be made so that you may persevere.

I have to keep reminding myself that I have to suffer and I have to sacrifice because you are worth it. In my life, I know that that road God has asked me to walk is fraught with danger but it is no more dangerous than what the apostles had to walk on carrying the word of Christ “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1: 8). The apostles literally had to give up their lives for the sake of the kingdom. Our Lord had to suffer and die on the cross far worse than any of us for the sake of the kingdom. In relation to them, I have not been as strong as I could be; I need to be better. I need to serve you better. I need to be stronger in what God is asking me to do.

As a result, while on the forced sabbatical I began writing my memoirs that I finished this year – twenty-eight chapters and over 570

pages!!! Those who have read the book know what I have had to endure. One day, this book might have to be published but for now I just do the best I can to help you out.

For now, I try to wake up every day and ask God to let “thy will be done.” I pray and hope that I do well for you. Next Sunday at 10:30 a.m., the Knights of Columbus would like to host an outdoor, bilingual Mass in honor of my 25th Anniversary (weather permitting), with a reception to follow. Each and every one of you is invited to attend this event, not to celebrate me but to celebrate the priesthood and all the priests who have made Christian sacrifices for the benefit of all of you.

I would like to end my homily by offering some words from St. Pope John Paul II concerning this particular feast day and what it means to be a priest. I hold these words close to my heart and I hope that you can continue to pray for me as I do God’s work wherever God sends me to serve. The saintly Holy Father writes,

Blessed are you, Father,
who, in your infinite love,
gave us your only begotten Son.
By the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate

in the spotless womb of the Virgin Mary
and was born in Bethlehem

He became our companion on life's path
and gave new meaning to our history,
the journey we make together
in toil and suffering,
in faithfulness and love,
towards the new heaven and the new earth
where You, once death has been vanquished, will be all in all.

**Praise and glory to You, Most Holy Trinity,
you alone are God most high!**

You alone, always for the glory of God. This is our prayer

Bendito seas, Padre,
que en tu infinito amor
nos has dado a tu Unigénito Hijo,
hecho carne por obra del Espíritu Santo
en el seno purísimo de la Virgen María,
y nacido en Belén hace ahora dos mil años.

Él se ha hecho nuestro compañero de viaje
y ha dado nuevo significado a la historia,
que es un camino hecho juntos,
en el trabajo y en el sufrimiento,
en la fidelidad y en el amor,
hacia aquellos cielos nuevos y hacia aquella tierra nueva,
en la que Tú, vencida la muerte, serás todo en todos.

**¡Alabanza y gloria a Ti, Trinidad Santísima,
único y sumo Dios!**