

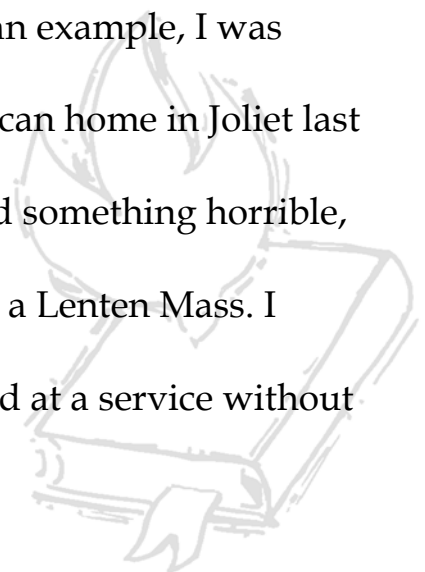
Homily
2nd Sunday of Lent - C

Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
March 12-13, 2022

Gn 15: 5-12
Ps 27: 1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14
Phil 3: 14 - 4:1
Lk 9: 28-36

I have been a priest for over thirteen years; I have lived on this earth this forty some years. And for all the things I have seen and as young as I am, whenever someone in the parish office describes me, I am most often depicted as “a young curmudgeon.” I have been depicted as gristly and forgetful, living my life in a perpetual series of “Senior Moments” that one usually associates with the stereotypical elderly person.

And, for lack of a better way of fighting this notion, I have resigned myself to the fact that my staff is right. I am one of the most absent-minded priests in the presbyterate of Joliet. As an example, I was celebrating my weekly Mass at the Villa Franciscan home in Joliet last Wednesday and in the course of the liturgy I did something horrible, terrible, something that should never happen at a Lenten Mass. I proclaimed the A - L - L - E - L - U - I - A word at a service without



even thinking. One of the residents, a retired religious who lives at the facility, was astute enough to catch me. “Hey fadda,” she blasts out, “you’re not supposed to use that word during Lent!” My guess is that this Sister will probably write a letter to the bishop about Fr. Pete’s horrible liturgical etiquette – my bad.

I give you a second example. A couple of years ago, I was deep in the midst of my pastoral ministry, going about my normal business as a priest. One particular day, I was on a roll, celebrating Masses, visiting our parishioners at the hospital, spending time with the kids at the school, and doing all the kinds of things a priest is supposed to do during the day. This particular day, I was rocking – my homilies were on point and I felt like I was really in touch with the people of my community.

However, as I celebrated the last Mass of the day in the late afternoon, one of the parishioners deflated my bubble of pride with the following comment: She said, “Father, I wish I could have paid attention to your homily, but you distracted me. I don’t wish to be disrespectful, but I don’t think you are wearing matching shoes.” It was then I looked

down to my feet and realized that I had worn one brown shoe and one black shoe the entire day. For a twelve hour period, I had experienced yet another Senior Moment and felt like a fool because of it.

I have to tell you, however, that “Senior Moments” are not restricted to a certain age bracket. In reflection, I have decided that in the world of faith, we are all plagued by them. Whether it be forgetting an anniversary, not spending time at home with the family, or not remembering to attend Mass on Sunday, we all have lapses of memory when we forget what is really important to us in life.

In my reflection about my own spiritual life and the spiritual life of humankind in general, I have come to the conclusion that our relationship with God often appears as one perpetual Senior Moment. In the life of humanity’s faith, we all keep forgetting about the covenant that we made with God some 4000 years ago, a covenant described in today’s first reading from the fifteenth chapter of Genesis. We forget that some 2000 plus years before the coming of Christ, the covenant relationship between God and His chosen people could not weigh heavily on humanity’s side, since humanity even then had the same

propensity to sin as it does today. Abraham could not bear the weight of this covenant and neither could Isaac nor Joseph nor Moses nor Elijah. No prophet, no defender of the law on their own was capable to sustain this relationship between God and humanity.

The story of the covenant between God and Abram in the fifteenth Chapter of Genesis very much symbolizes how much God had to carry us through the Old Testament, the New Testament and even today because all human beings (save one) were not and are not able to handle our end of the deal on our own. You see, a typical covenant that took place in the Old Testament times was very similar to the one found in our first reading today. When two people made an agreement in the times before Christ, the parties involved would seal this covenant with some type of animal sacrifice. Once the animal was split in two, the parties would walk through this sacrifice, symbolizing the penalty that would bear upon the party who broke the covenant agreement.

Notice in the first reading from Genesis that the only party that was able to pass through the covenant sacrifice was our Lord and not Abram. Symbolically, we understand that humanity had (or has) no

ability to withstand the burden of such a covenant. The only way that they were able to uphold the covenant, as we are able today, is if we hold fast to our Lord and to allow our Lord to carry us.

Note that the only person who *could* sustain such a relationship was this “bridge” we call “the God-man,” both divine and human, who was strong enough to bear the weight of all humanity to suffer the punishment of humanity’s sin. As we read in the story of the Transfiguration in today’s gospel, Christ reveals himself as the new Abraham, the new Moses, the new Elijah, the representative of God and man that fulfills the covenant for both parties of this sacrifice. It is Christ’s blood on the cross that becomes once-and-for-all sacrifice that honors humanity’s responsibility in this relationship, a sacrifice that leads us past the cross and into the new and eternal Easter that leaves the life of sin behind us, never to be seen again. That is why we call Jesus Christ the “New Moses,” the “New Elijah,” the fulfillment of everything for which the law and the prophets stood. On that mountain during the revealing appearance or “transfiguration,” we were able to see the divine plan of the God-man made manifest.

Like St. Peter in today's Gospel, many times in life (if not always), we are not able to understand the presence of God before us and the things that pass around us. In the world of faith, our lives very much can parallel that of St. Peter in Luke's Gospel, as we respond to God's presence with words that make no sense and have no meaning. If nothing else, today's gospel reminds us that we must remain focused during Lent; we must do the best that we can to avoid those lapses in faith and keep our eyes fixed to the prize, so to speak. If we are focused on Christ and understand what Christ can do for all of us in this imperfect world, then we allow God to carry us through these difficulties under His watchful care. However, if we choose to live in this perpetual Senior Moment of faith, then our opportunity for salvation passes right on by and we become susceptible to the temptations of the world and all the evils associated with this type of life.

And so, as I conclude this homily, I attempted to find a prayer that would reflect this gift of the Lord carrying us through this sacrifice of faith and our need to remain attentive to the Lord's presence. The

prayer I found as a response to this homily is a common one, a prayer that many of us have present in our homes and in our lives. I offer you this prayer as a statement and testimony to our covenantal relationship with God:

One night a man had a dream.
He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the LORD.
Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.
For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints
 in the sand: one belonging to him,
 and the other to the LORD.
When the last scene of his life flashed before him,
 he looked back at the footprints in the sand.
He noticed that many times along the path of his life
 there was only one set of footprints.
He also noticed that it happened
 at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.
This really bothered him
 and he questioned the LORD about it.
He said, "LORD, You said that once I decided to follow You,
 You would walk with me all the way.
But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life,
 there is only one set of footprints.
I do not understand why when I needed You most
 You would leave me."
The LORD replied, "My son, My precious child,
 I love you and would never leave you.
During your times of trial and suffering,
 when you see only one set of footprints,
 it was then that I carried you."

May we allow our Lord to carry us through the cross and to the new Jerusalem. May we teach others to climb this mountain of faith so that they may encounter our Lord and remain attentive to the Lord's presence in their lives. This is the manner in which we, in our lives, are able to recognize the Lord in His brilliance. This is our prayer.

Las Huellas

Una noche un hombre tenía un sueño.

Él lo soñaba recorría a lo largo de la playa con el SEÑOR.

A través del cielo centelleaban las escenas a partir de su vida.

Para cada escena, él notó dos conjuntos de huellas en la arena:

uno que pertenece a él, y el otro al SEÑOR.

Cuando la escena pasada de su vida centelleaba antes de él,

él miraba detrás las huellas en la arena.

Él notó que muchas veces a lo largo del camino de su vida

allí eran solamente un conjunto de huellas.

Él también notó que sucedió

en los tiempos muy más bajos y más tristes de su vida.

Esto realmente lo incomodó y él preguntó al SEÑOR sobre él.

“SEÑOR, usted dijo que una vez que decidiera seguirle,

Usted recorrería con mí toda la manera.

Pero he notado que durante los tiempos

más molestos de mi vida, hay solamente

un conjunto de huellas.

No entiendo porqué cuando

necesité la mayoría Usted me dejaría.”

El SEÑOR contestó, “mi hijo, mi niño precioso,

le amo y nunca le dejaría.

Durante sus épocas de ensayo y del sufrimiento,

cuando Usted ve solamente

un conjunto de huellas, era entonces que le llevé.”