

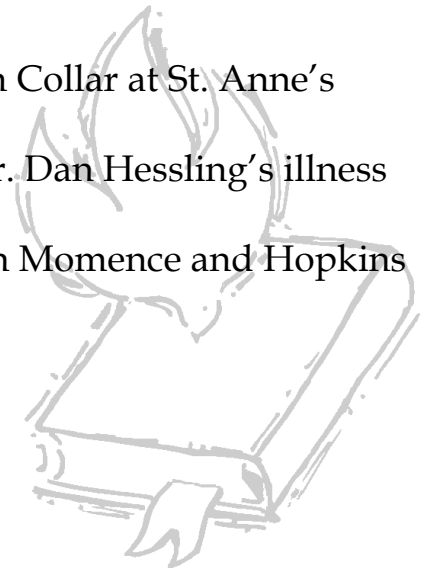
**Homily**  
**18<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT - C**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
August 03-04, 2019

Eccl 1: 2, 2: 21-23  
Ps 95: 1-2, 6-7, 8-9  
Col 3: 1-5, 9-11  
Lk 12: 13-21

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So a little bit of an introduction... my name is Fr. Pete Jankowski, a diocesan priest from Joliet who was ordained in 1996. I was part of an ordination class of three - today, you are in the presence of the last member of that class. In addition to celebrating Spanish Masses throughout the seven counties of the diocese, I also teach theology courses at the University of St. Francis in Joliet; this semester, I am teaching an online course on the Old Testament and a basic theology courses to nursing students. I also serve as a chaplain at Stateville Penitentiary in Crest Hill, IL and have been asked to work with the detention center folks over in Kankakee.

When Fr. Fanale chose to hang up his Roman Collar at St. Anne's after twenty plus years as pastor and because Fr. Dan Hessling's illness did not allow him to continue full-time duties in Momence and Hopkins



Park, I have been asked to cover all three parishes, start a Hispanic Ministry, make sure that all three communities know that I will do everything I can to serve you the best that I can and things of that nature. For this reason, I chose to make sure Mass times were spread out so that I could be present at all the Masses, in the event that I need to cover any or all of them for whatever reason.

The problem is that I, like most folks in this room, have way too much “stuff” in my possession that I brought with me. As a university geek, I have *way too many* books that do a great deal for the mind and soul but much more damage on the back (considering I moved all those books myself on Friday morning). I told Fr. Fanale that he could take every scrap of furniture he wanted from St. Anne’s – after serving that community the way he did, I felt Fr. Fanale could take whatever he wanted (don’t worry – I’ll pay for the replacement furniture myself). After visiting all three rectories these last two months, I realize that *all* the parishes had just as much baggage as I have, both literally and figuratively!

On my part, I decided to rent a storage facility in St. Anne to place my excess “stuff”; I found out that the cost of a St. Anne rental was 2/3 better than what I was using. I have a feeling that the St. Anne Flea Market will be well-served with what I have.

I keep reminding myself, and others, that the physical baggage I have in life parallels the story of the grain bins in the twelfth chapter of Luke (12: 13-21), our reading from today’s gospel. Beside the fact that we can’t take anything with us to heaven, one day someone else is going to take most of what we possess and toss it into that wonderful landfill I guess all your garbage is dumped in Indiana (which is alright with me – who cares about Indiana, anyway?).

You also know what is going to happen if I decided to place all my items in a Flea Market – the “Tickle Me Elmo” that I bought for \$50 is going to be sold for a buck and a half by someone in the community who couldn’t care less about Elmo (BTW, I don’t possess a “Tickle Me Elmo” doll).

When I think about how I address my finances and energies nowadays, I have found that putting my resources into the parishes I serve is a better way to utilize my resources. To my way of thinking, upgrading the rectory and the parish will benefit folks long after I have left the parishes I have served. I would like to think that I try to leave parishes in a better condition than in the way I found them... at least I would like to think I act that way.

Let's face it - Flea Markets and Garage Sales are reminders that the consumer products of this world will age and deteriorate, and after a certain amount of time, the value of most of those items begins to decrease. A car that is driven out of a dealership immediately loses  $\frac{1}{4}$  of its original value once it is purchased. Appliances nowadays are built purposely so that after a few years they will need to be replaced. When I visited Alaska on a recent trip, I learned that totem pole crafters are paid \$2500 *a foot* for their creations, knowing that the wooden pole that they decorate rots from the inside with age and will eventually disintegrate,

making their \$50,000 creation worth practically nothing after a period of years.

I even heard a story locally about a lottery winner who took a great deal of their money to buy all kinds of wonderful and unusual things for their home. Alas, the family went through their lottery earning in a short time and one day held a garage sale, selling off all those wonderful and unusual things at garage sale prices in order to make enough money to pay their bills. So it goes in the world of the commercial; capitalism certainly has its benefits and its drawbacks...

What we learn about the commercialism of our lifestyles is that when the “things” of this world become that of *want* (querer) over that of *need* (necesitar), to some degree we fall into the trap of vanity (vanidad; orgullo) about which all of our scripture readings warn us in today’s first reading. Scholars understand this vanity about which Qoheleth, St. Paul and our Lord are speaking today as an empty charism that is worthless and transient and something that will corrode away, very

much like the things we buy at on Amazon, a Shopping Mall, a Flea Market or a Garage Sale.

In my reflecting on today's readings I recalled that St. Basil of Caesarea (one of the great bishops of the fourth century), once named three specific vanities of the world as fear (miedo), toil (trabajo), and greed (codicia). Fear (which isn't covered in our scripture readings today) is the act of loving others solely out of fear of the Lord's retribution if you do not love. Toil (the theme of our first reading from Ecclesiastes) is the vanity of believing your work on earth could be carried into heaven. Greed (the subject of our second reading and gospel) is the act of a mercenary who seeks fortunes that become illusions in the next life.

All too often, those vanities of our lives often blind us to the realities of our faith. Our lives become so political or commercial that the words of Ecclesiastes are just as relevant today as they were at the time they were written, hundreds of years before Jesus walked on earth in the First Century. In fact, if you abridged the Book of Ecclesiastes in a

simple phrase for those who put the things of earth above the things of heaven, the book could easily be summarized in one concise sentence: “Life Stinks and Then You Die”; “la vida apesta y luego mueres” (*Bible for Dummies*). So, if I can utilize a contemporary reference from manager Joe Maddon of the Chicago Cubs (and I’ll clean this up for our Church-going congregation), the theme for today’s homily is adequately entitled, “Try not to Stink and Then You’ll Live.”

In the world of faith, the treasure and value that we are called to seek in this world will not be found in a grain bin or on an art gallery wall – in the end, those things become the folly of a garage sale that brings temporary pleasures but not an eternal salvation. It is the seeking of love for the sake of love that makes us like children, according to St. Basil. It is the innocence of love and service and above all, prayer, that we find the eternal treasure of God’s presence. My personal mantra that underlies most of my homilies is that God created the world and we are the stewards of it. In the end, we own nothing but the relationship that we build with our Lord throughout our lives. It is through this

relationship that we attain the riches of God's grace, a presence that inspires us to live a life of charity, a type of love that is infused with God's presence and inspired by the one who created us and can deliver us to heaven.

It humbles me as a priest to witness a life of faith from those who seek this presence of God, even those who are well off in life and are not in need of any financial resources. I see this humility in the confessional, in the communion line, and in the conversations I have with the people of faith. These people realize that regardless of their social position in the world, they, like all of us, are poor in spirit and in need of the richness of God's grace that cannot be found outside of the boundaries of the faith. They realize that to be poor in spirit is to be dependent on God to guide them along the right paths. They realize that each of us has been endowed with different gifts and instead of hoarding those gifts we are called to share them with the community so that all may benefit from the talents bestowed on each individual.



For when I witness this kind of life from the Christian, it reminds me that we are all one in this cause, that we are not seeking individual fame with God but a type of humility that desires to place the stranger ahead of us in line. The richness we seek is the desire for God's love to reach the corners of the earth and touch the hearts of each person with whom we come in contact. For out of this love we see the face of God and realize the purpose of our existence in the first place.

I end today's homily with the words of love spoken by St. Thérèse of Lisieux, a young woman from the late 1800s who sought the riches of God's grace very early in her life. St. Thérèse strove not seek the vanity of toil or greed but rather the wealth of God's presence in her soul. As a result of her example, this young woman became the great role model and patroness for the missionaries who carry this love of God throughout the world. St. Thérèse writes,

After earth's exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for your *love alone*... In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your

own *justice* and to receive from your *love* the eternal possession of *yourself*.

Después del exilio de la tierra, espero ir a disfrutar de usted en la patria, pero no quiero acumular méritos para el cielo. Quiero trabajar *solo por tu amor...* En la noche de esta vida, apareceré ante ti con las manos vacías, porque no te pido, Señor, que cuentes mis obras. Toda nuestra justicia está manchada en tus ojos. Deseo, entonces, estar vestido de tu propia justicia y recibir de tu amor la posesión eterna de ti mismo.

God's love, God's grace, and God's presence in our lives – these are the greatest treasures we can ever possess. This is our prayer.