

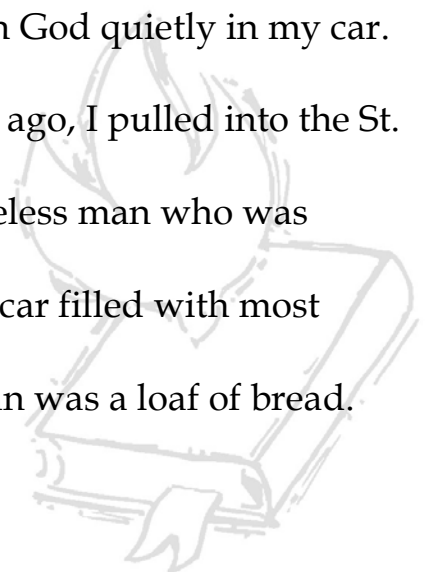
**Homily**  
**28<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT - C**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
October 08-09, 2022

2 Kgs 5: 14-17  
Ps 98: 1, 2-3, 3-4  
2 Tm 2: 8-13  
Lk 17: 11-19

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About ten years ago, I was taking classes at Loyola University while serving as Associate Pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Aurora, IL. Every Sunday during for a year or so, I made it the custom to take my car down Lake Shore Drive, to enjoy the scenery while cruising down Lake Michigan. When in Chicago, I would spend my Sunday evenings at St. Ignatius' Church with the pastor and future Archbishop of Milwaukee, WI (Archbishop Jerry ListECKI), and would prepare for the classes I was taking the following day. During that time, my Sunday routine would consist of this weekly ritual; I found great solace during that time alone to spend time with God quietly in my car.

One wintery Sunday evening some ten years ago, I pulled into the St. Ignatius parking lot when I encountered a homeless man who was asking for money. Arriving at the parish with a car filled with most everything *except* money, all I could give the man was a loaf of bread.



My homily today is inspired by the bread I gave that man.

This particular recipe that I used to make the bread was written and followed by my mother during the time I was growing up on the farm in Sandwich, IL. Now I have to tell you that the pastry I baked each year probably would not win any awards at any baking competitions. I enjoyed baking in the kitchen and I certainly enjoyed the fruits of my labor but I also knew that the bread I used to make was more for sentimental reasons more than anything else, as it brought back fond memories of the time I used to spend with my mother. Which is why, when I returned back to my car after a long day of school, I was none too happy to find that same loaf of bread lying on the ground next to my car in the parking lot of St. Ignatius' Parish in Chicago.

Upon seeing how my gift was rejected by the homeless man, at first I was quite angry - what meant a great deal to me personally meant so little to the man who received my gift. Had I known that this homeless individual was not going to eat the bread, I likely would have never given it to him in the first place. That said, there was a moment of clarity

that arose from that experience, at least from my perspective, and that memory still affects the manner in which I serve today.

On reflecting on my gift to this stranger, I started asking myself why I spent more time getting angry about *his* motivation in not receiving the bread rather than *my* motivation as to why I was giving it. How many times in my life of ministry have I encountered those similar to the lepers in today's gospel who have rejected acts of kindness that I have offered them or have not offered thanks for those kind acts? How many times have I thought to myself, "Well, if ten lepers (or those who the lepers symbolize) approach me in life, wouldn't it be easier just to reject them all, knowing that nine of them are going to take advantage of what I do anyway? In my heart, God often responds by telling me that the motto "love thy neighbor" trumps the phrase "no good deed goes unpunished." Somehow, God tells me to find a way to take care of those in need in the world in which I live without being consumed by the sinful and selfish actions that are embedded within it.

The answer to my reflection very much has been answered over and over again by leaders in most of our religious traditions throughout the

world. In searching through the internet, I found how these leaders would connect the finding of true peace not necessarily in the performing of outward actions for the sake of the actions themselves but rather from the peace in one's heart that motivates and inspires the way I serve others. I wish to present a few of these quotes for the purpose of this homily...

Taken from <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/inner-peace>



"Nobody can hurt me without my permission... (because) Each one has to find his peace from within. And peace to be real must be unaffected by outside circumstances."

- Mahatma Gandhi (the great spiritual leader of the Hindu religion from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century)



"The best fighter is never angry."

- Lao Tzu (the founder of Daoism, the religion that pursued harmony within nature)



"Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without."

- Siddhartha Gautama Buddha (the founder of Buddhism)

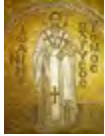


"We can never obtain peace in the outer world until we make peace with ourselves." - Dalai Lama XIV, Buddhist leader



"Spirituality is not to be learned by flight from the world, or by

running away from things, or by turning solitary and going apart from the world. Rather, we must learn an inner solitude wherever or with whomsoever we may be. We must learn to penetrate things and find God there.” - Meister Eckhart, Catholic theologian of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> Century



“Happiness can only be achieved by looking inward & learning to enjoy whatever life has and this requires transforming greed into gratitude.” - St. John Chrysostom, 4<sup>th</sup> Century Doctor of the Church

And finally from paragraph #1776 of The Catechism of the Catholic Church, “Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment... For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God... His conscience is man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths.”

In the heart of the faithful believer, in that silent, calm place where no outside force can reach, in that place within the heart where the believer finds true peace, that faithful believer of most every organized religion would find their ultimate goal and what a Buddhist might call a sense of “self-enlightenment.” From that center focal point, the motivation and source of good for that faithful believer can be found which results in the true motivation and reason as to why that believer serves others in the first place.

For this particular reason, we understand the motivation of two individuals in the bible, the Prophet Elisha and our Lord Jesus Christ, who offer this love to those outside the circle of faith because in their hearts, this love cannot be limited to those within that circle. Our first reading today speaks about a Syrian named Naaman, a general of an Aramean army who opposed the Jewish people of the time. As a sign of God's power and as directed by God's will, the prophet Elisha chose to cure of this man's leprous condition because he wished to share his gift of love with a people who did not understand what God's love was all about. And because Elisha shared that love and peace that was a part of him, that peace was shared with a foreigner whose cure of leprosy changed the hearts of an Aramean people who were suddenly introduced to that life of love.

In our gospel reading today, we read about a Samaritan leper, one who was on the outskirts of the Jewish faith, whom Jesus chose to cure along with nine other individuals with the same condition. Of those who were cured of their leprosy, the gospel implies that all of them were of the Jewish faith yet only the one on the outskirts of the faith found a

change of heart to come back to say “thank you.” We learn that a divine heart that chose to extend itself not to just one group of people but to all people resulted in a change of heart for anyone who comes with an open heart to that divine presence.

What we learn in today’s scriptures is that the reflective and peaceful heart inspires the believer to serve all people and to allow God to penetrate the hearts of those who seek love. We read about the change of heart that resulted from the work of Elisha and our Lord Jesus Christ; we realize that this same result can be affected in our own loving hearts as well. Whether the recipient chooses to accept this gift or not is between them and God; whether this recipient receives God’s grace in the first place is up to us and our ability to let God guide us.

We learn today that the result of this initial gift of kindness leads to a second, more important gift, the one of *faith*, which serves as the torch that guides us to our ultimate destination, the eternal life of love with the Lord. The gift of faith is not limited to those we serve – the gift that we give is also poured back upon us when we serve. As our Lord would say about judging others could easily be applied to the life of Christian

service – “the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you” (Mt 7: 2).

I learned from my story about the abandoned bread that the act of charity does not become corrupted by a man who rejects the kindness offered him; it rather remains a constant reminder of how I choose to respond to call of God in my heart to serve. As we grow in life, we also learn how to be more prudent in the way that we serve. In our St. Vincent de Paul Hotline Program at St. Patrick’s, we certainly wish to investigate whether people requesting help with paying bills are truly in need but we do not determine whether we help them by the manner in which they give thanks. When we set parameters for our Food Pantry services to those who live in our zip code, we limit the scope of the food we give due to practicality’s sake but we do not determine who gets food depending on their religion, ethnicity or way of living.

This weekend at St. Patrick’s Church, we honor so many individuals and groups who have listened to this call of God in their respective hearts and have responded to that call from the heart to serve the world



based on the unique gifts that our Lord has afforded them in life. From this call comes forth *The Knights of Columbus* who are present with us this weekend, who one Tootsie Roll at a time give of themselves for the sake of those who are mentally handicapped and developmentally disabled. We give thanks to our *Legion of Mary* who commit themselves to visiting all those in our community door-to-door so that they can be invited to come home in order to find God. We give thanks to our *WayPoint Youth Group*, who represent the future of our parish and the hope that this ministry of faith can continue. We give thanks to Deacon Chuck Peterson, who has devoted twenty-five years of his life to the St. Vincent de Paul Society and Stateville Prison as his response to God's call. And, on a personal note, I give thanks to my father, who helped raise me and form me and is celebrating his eightieth birthday this weekend.

It is most fitting that our Holy Father has designated this weekend as a formal consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the revelation of our Blessed Mother in Fatima almost a century ago.

This weekend, our own diocesan bishop is offering a Mass to consecrate

the Joliet Diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary as well. As this consecration involves a conversion deep in one's heart and a response to God's call by devoting ourselves to praying for peace throughout the world, I thought it fitting to conclude this homily with a prayer directed to Our Lady of Fatima. My hope is that my life continues to be changed and moved by the example of our Lord and our Blessed Mother so that when I am sharing the bread from my table, I do so not with a selfish heart but with one filled with God's peace and God's presence. My prayer is that you may all continue to be moved by this example of God's peace and grace as well...

O Virgin Mary, most powerful Mother of Mercy, Queen of Heaven and earth, in accordance with your wish made known at Fatima, I consecrate myself today to your Immaculate Heart. To you I entrust all that I have, all that I am. Reign over me, dearest Mother, that I may be yours in prosperity, in adversity, in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in life and in death.

This is our prayer.