

**Homily**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT - B**  
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski  
October 23-24, 2021

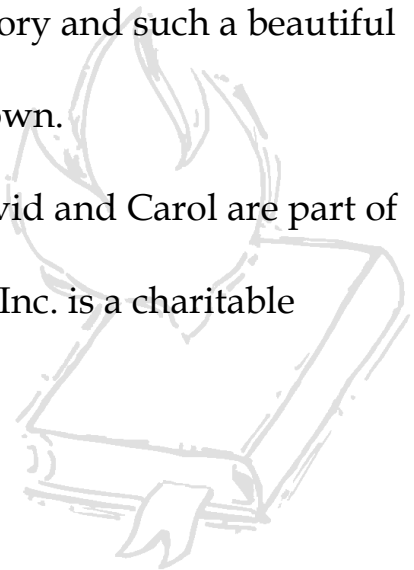
Jer 31: 7-9  
Ps 126: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6  
Heb 5: 1-6  
Mk 10: 46-52

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Prior to the celebrating the liturgy I recorded online, I decided to go to my next-door neighbor of Mayor David O'Connell and beautician wife Carol to get my monthly haircut because I was starting to look like shaggy dog. As is my monthly custom, Carl escorts me to the "hotseat of hair" and then she, her husband on a I have an opportunity to solve the problems of the world for the time I am resigned to that chair.

Mayor David O'Connell serves the little town of St. Anne, IL, home to the first national shrine in the United States. St. Anne is the home to about 1300 people, some of the most loving, giving people you are going to meet. These small towns have such a rich history and such a beautiful story - they really do want to take care of their own.

In addition to his job and mayoral duties, David and Carol are part of an organization called *Christmas, Inc.* Christmas Inc. is a charitable



institution that serves meals to those who are alone for the holidays or desire to celebrate Christmas with the citizenry of the area. The volunteers at Christmas Inc. offer those who visit a nice meal that is catered from one of the local restaurants, a little comfort and a bit of social time and entertainment for those in attendance. Because of the pandemic last year, Christmas Inc. was relegated to handing out pre-packaged meals to the folks of the area but were still bringing hospitality for those who felt alone.

Last year because of COVID, the location for Christmas Inc. moved to the St. Anne hall from its previous location – the hall was not connected to any senior centers and food could be shared with proper social distancing. Thus, the St. Anne volunteers began serving these dinners to the residents of the city starting at 11:00 a.m. on Christmas Day. In various parts of the Kankakee county, there are select locations that offer this same Christmas dinner to those who live within the area, which is really a blessing for those who feel alone this time of year.

I am told that St. Anne's will be utilized once again for Christmas dinners this year, even though COVID rules are getting more relaxed and the folks of the area can share a meal indoors with their friends again. For those who understand what the Christmas spirit truly means, a whole group of good souls wish to take care of others in need; this is the best gift that one can give – the presence of one soul offering the Lord's grace to another.

Over at St Patrick's Church, a nice group of parishioners dedicate themselves to visiting our homebound parishioners on a weekly basis. Another group of parishioners bring baskets of their produce to the church for *gratis* distribution among the faithful. Both parishes have helped our Veterans in Manteno with their yearly collections in November of items sought out by this residence. As a result, parishioners are bringing bathroom items and basic necessities many of us take for granted but residents at the Veterans Home cannot afford.

When I see the wonderful generosity offered by our parishioners at the border town parishes, I am inspired in my own faith life to do the

same. When all of you model the example of Christ, I am inspired to do the follow your example, according to the vocation I am called to live.

As I continue to preach about the 25<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew's gospel, we have an obligation share our resources with what God has blessed us so that we may offer these gifts to others, in word and in action.

We know all too well that many of those we serve will not be receptive to what we do but we are inspired by the gospel to live this way regardless; living like Christ shows God how serious we are to follow our baptismal calling to serve. With God's grace, hopefully people will understand what we are doing, that we would like to give that metaphorical sight to the blind and presence of God to those who cannot embrace or understand it. We want to give hope to those who experience a hopeless situation.

Certainly during this time of COVID, there have been so many folks that have been lonely or depressed and many who have no means to buy or acquire the necessities of life. One of the nice things we have been doing for those in our community, even during the time when we

have been locked down in our homes, is that faithful parishioners joined me outside churches to offer “drive by communion” for those who sought out God’s sacrament. On many occasions this last year or so, I stood outside offering “drive by” confessions. In whatever way we could, our parishioners inspired me to help build the kingdom of God during the most desolate times by “thinking out of the box” and offering God’s love when both society, our government and sometimes our leaders in the Church had prohibited these opportunities. Essentially, what our faithful did for all of you was provide you with a sense of normalcy and hope in the darkest of times.

Our first reading from Jeremiah today is referencing the time where God’s Chosen People were exiled from their Promised Land because of their disobedience from God. Like many of our songs of lament from the Old Testament, the faithful who turned away from God cried out because of their entry into the darkness of sin. That said, Jeremiah also states that if the Chosen People put their faith back in God, they would return to the land once lost so that they could receive that hope again;

from their blindness, God would provide them sight to turn from their evil ways to return to the light of faith.

Our second reading from Hebrews talks about Jesus being the Melchizedek of today's age that would restore what was lost from those who strayed from God and lived in the darkness. Hebrews offers the message of hope that this new priest would unify and heal those who were blind and would lead them to the light of salvation.

Finally, our gospel reading today is what we call a "bookend" to Jesus' ministry in Galilee (Mk 8: 1 - 10: 52). In the gospel of Mark, Jesus' Galilean ministry begins with the healing of a blind man and ends with one as well. We are taught in Mark's gospel that the reader should be aware of the power this Messiah offers to those in need but the disciples *did not*. Those who claimed to be followers of Christ acted as if they are standing on the outside of the faith while the readers of the story have more access to who Christ is that the apostles did not.

We are taught that in the gospel of Mark, those who supposedly were part of our Lord's "inner circle," the apostles, those who were supposed

to know the mission of God and the role this “New Melchizedek” played in their lives we just as blind in the first century as we who know the ending of this story seem to be two thousand years later. In today’s age, we seem to live as if Jesus was *not* the Messiah and this his mission and word must conform to our will and desires rather than the other way around. Two-thousand years after this gospel was written, sometimes we live the same way that the apostles did; sometimes we are blinded did use this message just as badly as the apostles were!

The message to which I return is that Jesus’ message and role in our lives is just as foreign to us today as it was to those who stood in front of this Messiah in the flesh. The message to which I resign myself when sharing this story in a barber’s chair or anywhere else is that the message Jesus offers is divisive to those of today’s age as it was in the First Century. We can see in this age that this message often becomes divisive between parent against child, sometimes bishop against priest, bishop against bishop and certainly cleric to the community they serve.,

As we often are resigned to learn, the type of sight that Jesus offers may bring hope to the hopeless but often divides a people rather than unites it. By challenging our disposition and understanding of faith and life itself, our Lord offers us a kind of sight to live like God not because offering charity is not just a nice thing to do but falls in line to a gospel message that places the needs of those we serve ahead of our own, regardless of our vocation.

We know that after Jesus' Galilean ministry, our Lord enters Jerusalem with his message of mercy and suffering and sacrifice and a response from an angry clergy that nail him to a cross. Yet, knowing the end of this story and the hope of the resurrection for those who follow our Lord's path, we are challenged to live like Christ. We are encouraged to bring metaphorical sight to the blind (or literal, if this is the gift our Lord affords us!). We have to keep ministering, regardless the negative response by those around us. We have to keep loving, knowing that very few will do the same or even accept our message. I keep reminding myself how our Lord's ministry caused him to be



beaten, mocked, scourged and ultimately executed, as was the case for those who modeled that example of faith. We just celebrated the feast of St. Isaac Jogues whose hands were mutilated by the natives to whom he ministered, only for him willingly to return to the same natives who ultimately took his life.

What we do know from today's gospel is that great things can be accomplished when we show God we have faith – as was the case in the miracles found in this gospel, faith often *preceded* whatever miracle might result. *We must show God we have faith!*, which is why the folks in our community stood outside the churches during COVID to distribute communion to those in need, to offer the sacraments and to provide hope in a world that often seems hopeless.

Especially now we need to turn to God and ask for direction, ask for life in a time of darkness, we cannot stop ministering to others in God's name. We cannot stop offering the sacraments and offering whatever grace our Lord has provided for us; we must be diligent to live like Christ. This last year in the gospel according to Mark, we have seen how

those who claim to follow Christ were blinded to the gospel message; two-thousand years later, we cannot live the same way. We must be fully cognizant; we must act as if we have faith; we must be fully seeing Christ presence in Christ's message so that he can take that message and bring it to those who have been blinded to the world, those who are hungry and seek help in our food pantry, those who fear attended Mass by celebrating online Masses and bringing communion to those who stay at home and need our support.

As we approach the end of this liturgical season, let us pray for those who try to bring sight to a people seeking faith, hope and certainly Christian charity in this time of darkness. May we all be fully aware of our need to find sight in a time of blindness. May we not fall into the trap that afflicted the disciples of the First Century by recognizing the Lord's presence in our lives, to be cognizant of God's message and then living like Christ by living the faith we have been given and offering the miracle of Christ's grace for the sake of the people that we meet. This is our prayer.