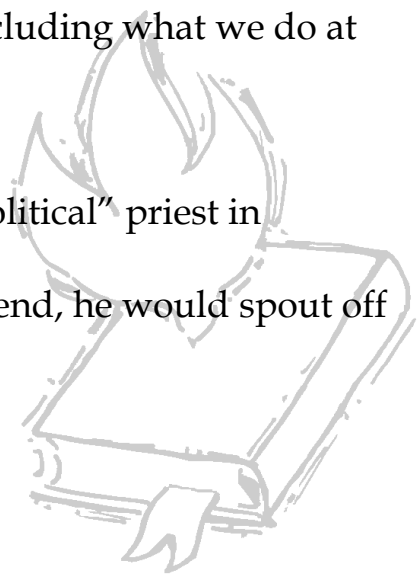


Homily
31st Sunday OT - C
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
October 29-30, 2022

Wis 11: 22 - 12: 1
Ps 145: 1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14
2 Thes 1: 11 - 2: 2
Lk 19: 1-10

If I were going to the local nursing homes in the area and preached the type of homily I am going to do, the residents at these places would tell me that another, more “political” priest would be more apt at preaching this homily than I would. I’m not very good at preaching about political elections – I would rather tell you that when you vote this November, I would encourage you to look at the voting guides that our bishops and the Church publish for your consideration, to reflect on the values purported by our political candidates and then to vote your conscience, knowing that we all are answerable to God and the decisions that we make in everything we do, including what we do at the polls.

That said, I would also tell you that if the “political” priest in question were preaching this Mass on the weekend, he would spout off



that *"You know who I am talking about – this candidate is rubbing their opponent through the mud and smearing their good name and reputation and if you are a good Catholic, you should never vote for this type of person in office."*

Of course, since the nature of politics is to do just that, to build up their own reputation while impugning the reputation of their opponent, you very easily could say the same of *all* of our presidential candidates and every other candidate that runs for office as well nowadays.

If we think about it, this kind of view runs contrary to the basic teachings that we try to instill into your typical third grader within the family: *If you have nothing good to say, don't say anything at all.* [Spanish parallels, viewed positively: *A Dios rogando y con el mazo dando* (Translation: Praying to God but hitting with the mallet) or *De tal palo, tal astilla.* (Translation: From such a tree, such a splinter.)]

Now you know we all do this – we often tell the kids to act one way and then we act in a way quite contrary. This approach is not just limited to all of you. Turn on the television or radio or read the

newspaper and periodicals and this type of slander and libel becomes commonplace, as if it were treated like your typical sport.

According to St. John Chrysostom, these acts of slander and libel apply just as much to all of us clerics as well, when he writes...

St. John Chrysostom: You will not easily find anyone who is free of this fault; not even a member of the cloister (*aka, the priest*), or the father of a family. But such things are the snares of the tempter. For they who search sharply into the faults of others will never merit forgiveness of their own. And so, we have: And you shall not be judged. For he who is mild and forbearing lessens the fear his own sins cause him, while the harsh and the cruel but add to their offences.

San Juan Crisóstomo: Usted no va a encontrar fácilmente cualquier persona que esté libre de este fallo; ni siquiera es miembro del claustro, o el padre de familia. Pero este tipo de cosas son las trampas del tentador. Porque los que buscar agudamente en los defectos de los demás nunca va a merecer el perdón de los suyos. Y así, tenemos: Y no seremos juzgados. Porque el que es suave y paciente disminuye el temor de que sus propios pecados causa de él, mientras que la dura y cruel, pero añadir a sus delitos.

In addition, there is also a plethora of quotations from the saints and in scriptures that also drive home this point. For example...

St. Cyril: He here checks the worst evil of our thoughts; the source and the beginning of the proud man's contempt. For though there are some men who should be watchful of themselves, and live justly before God, this they fail to do, devoting their attention rather to the lives of others. And if they see others weak, unmindful of their own infirmities, they make these an object of slander.

San Cirilo: Se comprueba aquí el peor mal de nuestros pensamientos; la fuente y el comienzo del desprecio de los orgullosos. Porque, aunque hay algunos hombres que deberían estar vigilante de sí mismos, y vivir en justicia delante de Dios, esto no lo hacen, dedicando su atención más bien a la vida de otros. Y si ven a otros débiles, sin pensar en sus propias debilidades, para que éstos hacen un objeto de difamación.

St. Gregory of Nyssa: Be not rash then, harshly condemning those who serve you, lest you suffer in the same way. For so to judge, calls down on yourself a harsher condemnation. Hence follows: Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.

San Gregorio de Niza: No te erupción entonces, con dureza condenar a los que te sirven para que no sufras de la misma manera. Por lo que, a juzgar, hace descender en sí mismo una condena más dura. De ahí siguiente manera: no condenéis y no seréis condenados.

St. Francis de Sales, Introduction to the Devout Life: We all color devotion according to our own likings and dispositions. One man sets great value on fasting, and believes himself to be leading a very devout life, so long as he fasts rigorously, although the while his heart is full of bitterness; and while he will not moisten his lips with wine, perhaps not even with water, in his great abstinence, he does not scruple to steep them in his neighbor's blood, through slander and detraction.

San Francisco de Sales, Introducción a la vida devota: Tenemos toda devoción color de acuerdo a nuestros propios gustos y disposiciones. Un hombre coloca un gran valor sobre el ayuno, y se cree estar llevando una vida muy devota, siempre y cuando ayuna rigurosamente, aunque al mismo tiempo que su corazón está lleno de amargura; y mientras que él no va a humedecerse los labios con el vino, tal vez ni siquiera con agua, en su gran abstinencia, que no tiene escrúpulos a ellos empinada en la sangre de su vecino, a través de la difamación y la detracción.

The Our Father: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

El Padre Nuestro: Perdona nuestras ofensas como nosotros perdonamos a los que nos ofenden.

(1 Thes 4: 11 &) 2 Thes 3: 12 - We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and to eat their own food.

(1 Tés 4: 11 y) 2 Tés 3: 12 - Y ahora vengo a saber que algunos de ustedes viven como holgazanes, sin hacer nada, y, además, entrometiéndose en todo. Les suplicamos a esos tales y les ordenamos, de parte del Señor Jesús, que se pongan a trabajar en paz para ganarse con sus propias manos la comida.

We all are guilty of this sin of pride, where we put down the other person while trying to build up our own reputation. The problem with

this attitude, of course, is that when our children see us acting like this, our words do not parallel our actions and then the kids have to decide whether to follow what we say or what we do. Jesus speaks about this type of hypocrisy as well, when the following words about the scribes and Pharisees could easily apply to all of us when he says, “do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice.” (No hagan lo que ellos hacen, porque ellos no hacen lo que dicen. - Mt 23: 3) This reminds me of the bishop’s remonstrance of those wishing to be ordained a Deacon when he instructs them, *“Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach.”*

I very much have fallen on both sides of this gospel lesson, both in the way I have conducted myself and how others have conducted themselves towards me. I constantly remember how, in 2006 when I first arrived at St. Patrick’s, the leaders of the diocese and the parish instructed me about all the things I had to do for the sake of this parish: address a school and parish debt, start Hispanic Ministry and resolve

major issues that arose in the *Protecting God's Children* program. I told the bishop and the staff that if I undertook these projects, those from the outside looking in, blind to these abuses, would see me as the bad guy of all time. However, I also realized that if I did not address these issues, the parish would suffer much worse.

So, I buckled up and worked with the staff in addressing these issues. As would happen to be, a percentage of this community responded badly to what needed to be done. As I told the bishop, letters were going to be written, whether it be to the pope, to the bishops and to all the priests in the west side of the city. This turned out to be true. As a result of the slanderous and libelous correspondences that resulted from what I was asked to do, I ended up being investigated for three months by the bishop's office over these false accusations. In the end, I was cleared of any wrongdoing, yet the stain of these accusations still form a cloud of the parish (and certainly upon me!) some ten years later.

When I chose to undertake the challenges set upon me in 2006, I realized that far better people have suffered far worse for doing what

was right than I have. We have books filled with the stories of martyrs and much holier people who have born such abuses, such slander and libel that we often see on our televisions and newspapers and magazines and certainly among our political candidates.

On my end, I chose to take this abuse for two reasons. First, I realized that someone had to make this transition and tackle these challenges for the benefit of those living at this parish. If this person handling these challenges wasn't me, it would fall on those who followed me. If these challenges eventually were not addressed, the parish would ultimately collapse and fall. Far too often have we read in history books about institutions caving in on itself because of crises that were not addressed until it was much too late.

The other reason I took this abuse was as a type of "penance" for myself, to remind myself of what it feels to be slandered by others. The days I forget this lesson are the days I remember how slander and libel have affected my life. When I remember these lessons, I also remember

that I, too, need to do better in my life the way I treat others and the way I conduct myself, both at home and in this community.

What we read in our two scripture readings today focuses on the life of the just person and the manner in which we need to right the ship in our own lives to make ourselves accountable to God for all of our actions. The first reading from Wisdom lays out what a just man must do to live the life of righteousness. The gospel from Luke tells us the story of a corrupt man redeeming himself by returning that which he unjustly took from others and rectifying the wrongs he had done in his life.

For the sake of our kids and our own salvation, we must hold ourselves accountable with God for our actions and realize that the manner in which the political process is run in this country is an unfortunate paradigm of what our lives can and have often become. We may differ with each other in the manner we choose to direct this country but for the sake of heaven we must never differ on the manner in which we choose to advance our thoughts and ideals. If we do not

change our attitudes and right our dispositions towards each other and our God, a much worse fate awaits all of us that is infinitely more important than the candidate who sells their soul to lead this country by defaming the reputation of their opponent. Scriptures and saints and common sense tell us this – the challenge is whether we wish to right these wrongs or fall into the same traps that have plagued our media (print, electronic and social) as well as our country's political process.

What I preach today is about common decency, about common sense and about our very salvation. May we all reflect well on the manner in which we treat and speak about each other. May we teach this lesson well to our kids, may we *live* this lesson well for our kids and for ourselves and may we share the fruits of a righteous life with the people that we meet. This is our prayer.