

Peter Mankin's Funeral Homily No. 9  
Saturday, March 11, 2023

I begin my reflection with the words of encouragement Peter generously shared with others, one and all. I also add "frequently shared:"

### STAY OUT OF TROUBLE!

For the past 2 plus years, as Pete's Alzheimer's journey unfolded, we have pretty much spent 24/7 together. This past Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup> begins as the day before. Pete wakes around 4:30 a.m., not an unusual time. Pete informs me, he's ready to get up. I pull his covers back; he grabs hold of my hands and pulls himself forward. Even at 93, Pete remains a very strong individual. Pete sits up firmly on the edge of the bed. I place his walker before him. Give him a Q-tip to clean out his ears. I have learned to give Pete his hearing aids immediately upon waking. I want him to hear me. I don't want his day to begin with someone yelling or shouting at him. I ask you. When you wake up, do you want someone who loves you to be yelling and shouting at you?

Pete takes hold of his walker, stands up, and walks to his lounge chair in the living room. Reaching his chair, Pete stands with his back to the chair. I place a disposable under pad on the chair. I've learned from Rondell that for the longest time I was placing the pad wrong side up. Thank you, Rondell for correcting me. I place the pad on the chair in preparation for changing Pete's undergarment. Undergarment is the term I prefer to use, I dislike the term "adult diaper."

I pull Pete's pajama bottoms and undergarment down around his ankles. Pete then sits down on his chair with under pad facing right side up. Thank you again Rondell. The undergarment is soaked with urine. Pete has been incontinent for well over a year. By God's grace, he remains continent with his bowels. That is probably more God's gift to me than to Pete.

I continue to be amazed that Pete allows me to assist him with his undergarment without any fuss. I've come to realize that Pete is one of the few individuals among us, who is able to embrace his diminishment simply, as a part of the human journey. He's never expresses shame with reference to his aging and needs. He is always expressing gratefulness for the gift of his life, as it unfolds, in whatever way.

Pete loves life, and Pete loves people, pure and simple. Pete doesn't just love a few people. Pete loves ALL people in the depths of his heart. And his heart, in some mystical way, communicates that love to the hearts of all others. Just as Pete loves us, we in turn have come to love him. We freely desire to be present to Pete as his journey unfolds, wherever it takes him. We don't have to be asked.

I first speak directly to you staff members. You are amazing in your care for Pete. Your care is always above and beyond any responsibilities via a job description. Your presences always makes him smile. I pray each member of the staff feels Pete's love in this moment. In reality, I pray, all whom Pete loves, feel his love in this moment.

It's not just you staff members who love Pete. But also doctors and medical personnel love Pete. How many doctors have given you their cell phone numbers, at their initiative, and tell you: always feel free to call. I don't know about you, but I have no doctors' cell phone numbers in my phone book. I pray Pete's doctors and health care professionals feel Pete's love in this moment, wherever they might find themselves. And I continue to pray each of us feel Pete's love now, in this moment.

Pete loves us, his family members, and friends gathered here, and all those who are unable to be here in person, both near and far. And we in turn love him. I'd be remiss if I didn't express the obvious. Pete has the most tender spot in his heart especially for you, his nieces and nephews. And you know, your Uncle Pete loves you. And your Uncle Pete knows you love him. Your love for your Uncle Pete and his love for you takes form in visits, phone calls, greeting cards, phone texts, and Zoom calls every other Sunday afternoon. I pray all of us, family members, and friends, feel Pete's love in this moment. I pray ALL who Pete loves feel his love in this moment, wherever one be found, near and far.

Once Pete's undergarment and pajamas are again securely fitted around his waist, Pete sits down and gets comfortable in his chair. STOP! This chair has a history and must be shared. It's the chair which Thi Phan helped him purchase when they lived in Chicago together. Pete specifically asked Thi to accompany him on the shopping trip. Pete frequently tells me, he knew Thi would find a chair, comfortable and well-constructed. Pete is correct.

Thi's name makes me think, it's time to take a little side trip reflecting upon Pete's presence in religious formation. Pete ministers in a religious formation settings for most of his religious life. Pure and simple, Pete loves, enjoys, values living with candidates and young religious. Pete always sees the good in each one, and expects each one to be his best self; however, one's journey might unfold.

In short, Pete genuinely believes in his heart that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God, and Pete trusts we will act accordingly. For Pete, there is no question, we are created good, so be good. For Pete, it's so natural to be good. To be good, most of us is a struggle and at times we fail. Even when we fail, Pete still loves us without reservation. How can one person be so Christ like? His name is Pete.

Pete remains in contact with many former members of the formation program, whose journeys have led them elsewhere. If you ever have an opportunity, listen to some of their stories. Make sure you have Kleenex tissue readily available. Because you will find yourself joyfully crying that another human can be so good. The memories of Steve Krugel are particularly touching.

Returning to Thi's chair, Pete snuggles himself comfortably into the chair. As is the custom, I place his Chicago Bears' Blanket on his legs and upper torso. The blanket is a gift of his nephew Ronnie. Yes, Pete is a great Chicago sports fan. STOP! Some little known information: Pete was not originally a Bears' fan. Growing up, he was a Chicago Cardinals' fan. Yes, the Cardinals were in Chicago for over 60 years. Growing up, Pete's next door neighbor was Rudy Schneider, husband of Katherine, Pete's Godmother. Katherine and Rudy had an only child, Joyce. Rudy frequently took Pete with him to watch the Cardinals play.

Rudy liked Pete very much. Like others, Rudy saw and experienced Pete's inherent goodness. In many ways, Pete was the son Rudy never had. Pete was well aware that Rudy would have preferred that Pete stayed home and not gone to the seminary. It was clear Rudy had eyes for Pete as a son-in-law. Joyce married John, also a neighborhood boy. Pete, Joyce, and John remained friends for life. Yes, Rudy liked John, but John wasn't Pete. There aren't many Pete's.

Returning my attention to the Thi chair, with Pete providing some direction, I'm able to position the Chicago Bear Blanket to Pete's satisfaction. Oh, yes, Pete has his preferences. I now place the Chicago Tribune, gently upon Pete's lap, with the Sports Section ready for first viewing. If the Sport Section is not on top, Pete immediately seeks it out. At this point in his journey, Pete is no longer able to comprehend what he reads. Yet, the presence of the Chicago Tribune provides a sense of comfort and peace. To be with the morning paper is part and parcel of his identity as Peter Mankins, SCJ.

Alzheimer's has robbed Pete of the ability to enter fully into his daily prayer ritual. Yes, he still participates in daily Mass. Yet, as Peter's Alzheimer's journey unfolds, and Tony Russo can readily testify, the Alzheimer's Rite is being birthed. Actually, we're in the process of having it codified.

Pete is not Pete without his identity as a member of the Priests of the Sacred Heart. It always amuses Pete that one who was asked to leave Divine Heart Seminary at the end of his fourth year, will one day serve as a member of the Provincial Council. The mystery unfolds.

To fully appreciate the unfolding of Pete's journey, I must pause to speak of Sister Presiosa. Yes, Presiosa, a Sister of Mercy. She is Pete's 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at St. Ann's Catholic School located at the corner of 55<sup>th</sup> and Garfield, Chicago, Illinois. Sr. Presiosa is a key instrument in the Holy Spirit's bag of tricks. It's the actions of Sister Presiosa, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which thrusts young Peter in a direction, which now brings us to this Chapel to celebrate Pete's life with profound gratitude. Pete has left Time, and now resides in Eternity. Pete's earthly journey is fulfilled.

Sister Presiosa sees qualities in Peter, which many, including us, will experience later as Pete's journey unfolds. Sister Presiosa is touched by Peter's profound, inherent goodness. She encourages Pete to contact Peter Miller, then Frater, who is destined to be the Provincials' Provincial. In short, in 1943, Peter Mankins is accepted by the Priests of the Sacred Heart and is on his way to Divine Heart Seminary.

Today with the assistance of modern educational sciences, it is clear, Pete has learning difficulties. Unfortunately, at Divine Heart Seminary, at this historical moment, the educational resources aren't known, much less available.

But the Holy Spirit has a plan. Because of Pete's exceptional goodness, faculty are reluctant to ask him to leave. He moves forward. But in 1947, at the end of Pete's fourth year, a painful arrow is shot directly into Pete's heart. Pete is informed, he must leave the Divine Heart Seminary and return home.

Pete, in his grief and anguish confronts God directly: How could You bring me to the seminary, and then send home? I thought You were a Loving God. Pete returns home, and his life continues to unfold. Pete begins full-time employment and contributes to the family income.

In 1951, Pete is drafted into the United States Army during the Korean War. Pete serves one year in Korea. In 1955, Pete's father suddenly dies, leaving Pete's Mother a widow. Pete's other siblings are married with families of their own. Thus the responsibility to provide for his Mother falls to Pete. A responsibility he embraces with a full and loving heart. Eventually Pete becomes employed as a baggage handler for United Airlines. A job, which enables Pete and his Mother to do some traveling. Just one of the perks.

In 1947, Pete's world was literally turned upside down when he is asked to leave the seminary and return home. In May, 1961, Pete's world is again about to be turned upside down, even more profoundly than before. This time is more tragic. In May, 1961, Pete's Mother Helen goes into the hospital for cataract surgery. Cataract surgery then, is not like it will be in the future. Helen must spend at least one day in the hospital following surgery. All are expecting a successful surgery with improved eye sight for Helen.

What? Is this to be the plan?

During or following the surgery, Helen experiences cardiac arrest and dies.

What follows is truly unbelievable, mysterious. The Holy Spirit reawakens Pete's vocation to Religious life. Pete quickly contacts the SCJs. Fr. Justin Guiltname is the recruiter. Justin remembers Pete from Divine Heart Seminary. Justin, like so many others, recalls Pete's exceptional goodness. Faster than you can blink your eye lids, three month later, August, 1961, Pete arrives at Sacred Heart Novitiate, Sainte Marie, Illinois. The mystery of God's plan continues to unfold.

Pete says, "Yes" to what will be a blessed / joyful journey beyond his ability or anyone's ability to imagine. Pete makes his religious profession on August 28, 1963. Pete spends almost his entire ministerial life encouraging and inviting young men to be their very best selves, to reach deeply into their hearts. And we have all come to know Pete as the loving and caring individual who draws the very best out of our hearts. Pete also, for most of his ministerial life, is the one who oversees Community finances. There is something comforting about having a finance person with a GENEROUS & LOVING HEART.

Back to Pete, sitting comfortably in his Thi chair. As Pete, reads his newspaper, I place a chocolate donut on the adjoining table. Pete has made many sacrifices throughout his religious life. Giving up chocolate donuts isn't one of them. Pete eats half of the donut, acquiring sufficient energy to complete his journey from Time into Eternity.

Pete's breathing becomes very shallow. I sense the Angels are calling. I wonder, "Why so soon. I'm not ready." I anoint Pete at 6:00 a.m. and gently hold his hands. In less than 15 minutes, Pete answers the Angels' call. In a blink of an eye lid, Pete passes from Time into Eternity where Pete is received into the loving arms of Jesus. Gently hugging Peter, Jesus tenderly kisses his forehead, whispering: "Welcome home, my Beloved Friend." As the welcoming crowd gathers, the Holy Spirit is seen nodding to Sister Presiosa, saying, "You did good!"

And Jesus now invites us, who remain in Time, to weep both in sorrow and in joy for the gift of being loved by this Saint, who we knew simply as Pete. And even now, PETER, the Saint, is saving a place for us.

I will be remiss, if I don't conclude with Pete's frequently expressed encouragement, which he shared freely and frequently with one and all:

STAY OUT OF TROUBLE!

In recognition of Pete's love for each one of us, I invite you to join in proclaiming Pete's words of encouragement. And maybe with a promise to actually try. Thus we proclaim together the words of Pete, who loved us, and whom we loved in return.

So at my invitation: One, Two, Three ....

STAY OUT OF TROUBLE!

Again ..... Again ... Again....