

HOMILY 22ND SUNDAY in Ordinary Time

August 30, 2026

"You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped." These are the words of Jeremiah the prophet. These are his words when God called him to be a prophet and he found out that it was not easy because people frequently did not want to hear his prophecy, and they treated him badly. Have you ever said these words or something like them when things happened in your life that you did not want or things turned out more difficult than they seemed at first glance? This has happened to me a number of times and I want to tell you about one of them.

I was ordained back in 2003 and assigned to Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish. That is where my pastor, Fr. John Sullivan, taught me how to be a priest and I learned a great deal from him. I have only good memories from Our Lady of Good Counsel. After being there just 1 ½ years, I got a call, while I was on vacation in Florida, that I was being reassigned to St. Agatha Parish. Someone from downtown told me that the pastor of St. Agatha just went on a leave of absence and they wanted me to go there and just be with the people for a while. The day that I arrived there the bookkeeper met me at the door. She said, "we have all these bills. What do you want me to do with them?" I said, "pay them." And she said we do not have any money, and I think they are going to turn off our utilities." It was clear at that moment that I was going to be doing much more than just being with the people. "You duped me, O Lord, and I let myself be duped." Working with the staff and the parishioners it quickly became clear that we were going to have to close. No one at the Archdiocese really knew how to do this. The last time there were a lot of closings was in 1989 when Cardinal Szoke closed 31 inner city parishes. Everyone, including the pastors, found out about the closings on the 5:00 news. As you can imagine there was a lot of negativity surrounding these closings and the way it was handled. The archdiocese was squeamish about parish closings. I was going to have to work with God and with the people and we were going to have to figure this out ourselves. I had 2 hours of prayer every morning where I just sat in God's presence. I spent the rest of the day meeting with individuals and groups, mainly just listening. Eight months later the parish was closed and the majority of the parishioners moved with me to St. Priscilla where I was assigned. It was good for the parishioners of St. Agatha because they no longer had to spend all of their energy just to stay open and since

they moved to St. Priscilla together, they were able to keep their community together. I continued to learn how to be a pastor. I learned how to work with the parishioners and together solve a very difficult problem. That assignment, the seemed overwhelming at first, ended up as something very positive. We are going to be facing some challenges due to the restructuring of the archdiocese. While St. Edith will definitely not be closing, we will have to adjust to some changes, and we will prepare to do this together.

In the Gospel reading we encounter Peter again. Last week he identified Jesus as the Messiah. This week, Jesus tells him that he is going to suffer, die and be raised from the dead on the third day and he says, “God forbid. No such thing will ever happen to you.” Last week he was a prophet, this week he is a stumbling block. When you have challenges in your life you can react in two different ways. You can say, “You duped me, O Lord, and I allowed myself to be duped.” You can acknowledge the difficulty and with Gods help work through it. Or you can refuse to accept the difficulty and become a stumbling block in working through the difficulty. █

This is your homework this week. I want you to look at a difficulty in your life that you have already worked through. Then go through the steps that you went through to resolve it. Note the things that God did to help you through it. You may not have realized that it was God helping you at the time. Times when you think, “It just worked out,” or “things just fell into place.” That was God. That is how we strengthen our trust in God, when we have gotten through life’s difficulties in the past with God’s help and we can be confident that we will work through difficulties with God’s help in the future. Then think of a current challenge you are facing. Are you going to accept the situation and work through it with Gods help, or are you going to be a stumbling block to the solution?