

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, January 31, 2016**

## ***The Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time***

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

### **Courageous and Bold**

How would you describe the personality of Jesus?

If we were asked that question we might say that Jesus was merciful, forgiving, compassionate, honest, holy, and so on.

We might even take Saint Paul's description of love found in this Sunday's Second Reading (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13) and apply that description to Jesus by replacing the word "love" with his name. We might say that Jesus was patient, kind, not jealous, not pompous, not inflated, not rude. He did not seek his own interests. He was not quick tempered. He did not brood over injury. He did not rejoice over wrong doing but rejoiced with the truth. He was able to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, endure all things.

However, this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 4:21-30) reveals qualities of Jesus that we may overlook. Jesus was brave, courageous, and bold.

In that Gospel reading, Jesus was speaking in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. At first all in the congregation "spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth."

But it did not take long for praise to turn into derision as those present began to ask, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" Who was this carpenter's son to be preaching to them? Who was he to be claiming that the prophetic words spoken by Isaiah about the one who would bring good news to the poor and healing to the afflicted applied to him?

But rather than explaining himself or changing his message to appease his critics, Jesus pointed out that prophets are never appreciated by the hometown crowd. Then to illustrate his point he reminded them of Elijah and Elisha whose wondrous deeds were done for Gentiles and not for their fellow Jews, not for their own people.

When the crowd reacted with fury, even attempting to throw Jesus to his death, Jesus did not run away in fear. Instead, "Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away." Jesus faced down his bullies. Jesus was brave, courageous, and bold.

Jesus acted as he did because Jesus knew who he was as God's beloved Son. He knew his mission and purpose in life. He realized that God was with him. He was strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus knew that what the prophet Jeremiah was told in Sunday's First Reading (Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19) applied to him as well. "Stand up and tell them all that I command you...for it is I this day who have made you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass....They will fight against you but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD."

If Jesus were not brave, courageous, and bold, he would have fled when threatened, he would have made his personal safety his first priority. Those qualities that Jesus demonstrated in the synagogue in Nazareth were seen throughout his ministry, especially during his arrest, interrogation, passion, and death.

As followers of Jesus Christ it is no surprise that we are to be kind, merciful, compassionate, and loving. But we are also to be brave, courageous, and bold when it comes to witnessing to our faith and defending the values of the Gospel. And we can be such Christians with the courage and strength that come from the Holy Spirit.

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