

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, February 7, 2016

The Fifth 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.

COMPARED TO WHOM?

Suppose you lived in an isolated land where no adult grew beyond 4 feet in height. Would you consider yourself as being short?

Suppose you lived on an island where all the inhabitants constantly sneezed during the springtime. Would you think of yourself as having an allergy?

Suppose you grew up in an area where everyone was nearsighted and had to wear glasses to see distant objects. Would you believe you had poor vision?

In each case, the answer would be "no."

We only think of ourselves as short when we are in the presence of people who are taller than we are. We only consider we might have an allergy when we notice that the people around us are not constantly sneezing and reaching for antihistamines. We only imagine we might have less than 20/20 vision when we realize that there are people who can easily see distant objects without wearing glasses or contact lenses.

The same thing is true when it comes to being aware of our sinfulness and our need for God's mercy. We become aware of our sins and failings when we are in the presence of good people. A person, for example, who grows up associating only with thieves will hardly think it wrong to steal.

If being in the presence of good people makes us aware of our failings, how much more so does being in the presence of God who is all good and all holy.

In this Sunday's readings, we meet three people who are dramatically made aware of their sinfulness when they come in contact with goodness itself, when they come in contact with God.

In the First Reading (Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8), the prophet Isaiah has a vision of God seated on his royal throne surrounded by angels proclaiming, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts." In response, Isaiah cries out, "Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips." Isaiah realizes his unworthiness before God.

In the Second Reading (1 Corinthians 15:1-11), Saint Paul speaks of himself as "the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle." Paul's encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus completely changed Paul's understanding of himself. He was not doing good as he imagined, but rather in persecuting the followers of Christ he was opposing God himself.

In the Gospel (Luke 5:1-11), Simon Peter allows Jesus to use his boat as a floating pulpit, and then at the instruction of Jesus he rows out from shore, lowers his nets, and catches an

amazing number of fish. What happens leads Peter to realize that he is in the presence of more than an itinerant rabbi. Simon Peter cries out, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

These readings that are proclaimed the Sunday before Ash Wednesday (February 10) are a perfect preparation for Lent. They challenge us to look at ourselves not in comparison to other imperfect people, but rather to look at ourselves in relationship to our good and holy God. When we do that we will realize that like Isaiah, Paul, and Peter, we are unworthy and sinful. Like them, we are in need of God's mercy and grace.

We are in need of this coming season of Lent to turn from sin and to grow in holiness!

© 2016 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski