

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, February 21, 2016

The Second Sunday of Lent

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.

CHECKING OUR LISTENING

When you and I get into our cars, the first thing we do is put on our seat belts and then we turn the key or press the starter button. But before we shift into drive and step on the gas, we usually do something else – we turn on our radios or plug in our mp3 players or activate some other piece of equipment to fill the silence as we drive.

Those devices provide each of us with countless choices. We can choose from every style of music – classical, jazz, easy listening, oldies, rock, hip-hop and more. We can listen to sports programming. We can tune into the latest news, weather, traffic reports, and stock market numbers. We can choose from among hundreds of different types of talk radio programs dealing with politics, contemporary issues, religion, health, finance, celebrity gossip, entertainment, family matters, culture, and the list could go on.

What we choose to listen to depends on our taste and mood. We select music and programming that we find enjoyable. That is especially true when it comes to talk programs. We generally choose programs where the opinions and views of the hosts and their guests are in line with our own. We tend to listen to people who reinforce and support what we believe.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 9:28-36), Peter, James, and John are told very specifically to whom they are to listen. In that passage, Jesus takes those disciples with him as he goes up a mountain to pray. In an intense moment of prayer Jesus is transfigured. His divine glory breaks through and Moses and Elijah appear and speak about what awaits Jesus in Jerusalem.

The three disciples then hear the voice of the Father. "This is my chosen Son; listen to him." With those words, the disciples are told that Jesus is the one they are to listen to and follow. Moses and Elijah, representing the law and the prophets, have been superseded by someone who embodies the fullness of the truth. Someone who will proclaim, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." (John 14:6)

That divine instruction given to Peter, James, and John is also given to us as this Gospel is proclaimed. "This is my chosen Son; listen to him."

To follow that command from God, we have to listen to the words and teachings of Jesus that are comforting and uplifting and that seem to endorse our view of life and our opinions. But even more importantly we have to listen to the words and teachings of Jesus that make us feel uncomfortable, imperfect, shameful, and sinful.

We have to listen to the "whole program" of Jesus and not only to those portions that we like. That program includes dying to what we want so we can live as God wants. It includes embracing Gospel values and not the values of our secular, materialistic society. It means being

unashamed to be known as a follower of Jesus Christ. It means showing mercy, care, and tenderness to the least among us.

As we “drive” through our lives, God tells us very clearly that we are to be listening to Jesus. “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.”

This season of Lent challenges each of us to consider how well we are listening.

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