

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®
Sunday, February 23, 2025
The Seventh 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.
Looking to Sunday has been published for more than sixteen years.

IF WE REMEMBER

Les Misérables, an acclaimed epic novel by Victor Hugo, was the basis for a famous, long-running Broadway musical and the inspiration for two movies of the same name.

Les Misérables, also known as Les Miz, is set in early 19th century France. It tells the story of Jean Valjean, a French peasant, who is released from prison in 1815 after having served a 19-year sentence for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his sister's starving child.

On his way to report to his parole officer, the hungry and confused Jean Valjean is shown hospitality by a Catholic bishop who feeds him dinner and offers him a place to stay. During the night, Valjean begins to steal the silver in the bishop's home. When the bishop confronts him, Valjean knocks the bishop unconscious and escapes with the silver.

The police capture Jean Valjean and bring him and the silver back to the bishop. Amazingly, the bishop does not deny Valjean's lie that he was given the silver by the bishop. In fact, the bishop says that he is angry with Valjean since he forgot to take the silver candlesticks.

When they are alone, the bishop says, "Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil. With this silver I bought your soul. I've ransomed you from fear and hatred. Now I give you back to God."

That bishop truly responded to the challenge of Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 6:27-38). "To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back."

Because that bishop acted as he did, Jean Valjean was changed and transformed. He never forgot what the bishop did for him. During the rest of his life, Jean Valjean tried to act with the same love and forgiveness that he had received. He even showed mercy to the police inspector who relentlessly sought to return him to prison.

What that bishop did for Jean Valjean, God has done for us. God has forgiven us not for stealing silver, but for our sins and selfishness. God has even forgiven us for throwing his beloved Son upon the cross. God has ransomed us from the power of evil.

Just as Jean Valjean never forgot the mercy and forgiveness the bishop showed him, we are to never forget the mercy and forgiveness that God has shown and continues to show us.

Perhaps if we remember that mercy and forgiveness, we will be able to meet, at least in some way, the challenge of Sunday's Gospel. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...Be merciful just as your Father is merciful."

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