

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 2, 2014

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on the Gospel Reading 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.

ONE OR THE OTHER

A lawyer cannot sit at the defense table for part of a trial and then move over and sit with the prosecution.

A negotiator cannot represent the interests of a labor union one day and the next day be speaking for management.

A quarterback cannot take the field with his own team for the first half of a game and then decide to lead the opposing team for the final two quarters.

Lawyers, negotiators, and quarterbacks have to decide whom they will serve. One side or other has to get their loyalty and skills. They cannot work both sides of the fence.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 6:24-34), we see that the same thing holds true for disciples of Jesus when it comes to God and "mammon." Jesus says, "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

To put the words of Jesus in more contemporary language, Jesus tells his disciples that they cannot serve both God and the Almighty Dollar. They cannot be devoted to gaining the kingdom of God if at the same time they are seeking to gain ever more material wealth and possessions.

Jesus proclaims a message that stands in stark contrast to that championed by our materialistic society. Jesus tells us, "Do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides."

That does not mean that Christians are to ignore their material wants, focus only on the spiritual aspects of life, and wait for God to provide for all their physical needs. If that were the case, why would Joseph and Jesus have worked as carpenters, Peter and Andrew labored as fishermen, and Paul have written, "we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work, neither should that one eat." (2 Thessalonians 3:10) Further, how can Christians care for the hungry, the homeless, and the hurting without having material resources to share with those in need?

What Jesus is telling us is that we have to serve God and do what God asks above all else.

That means we have to sit at God's table, embrace his message, and counter those voices who testify that the more stuff we put on our "table" the better.

That means we have to be true to the values of the Gospel and do what advances the interests of God and not the interests of a materialistic world.

That means we have to give our energy to winning the battle over selfishness and sin when we are on the “field” in our work life, social life, and family life.

In Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus challenges us to see whose side we are on. As he makes clear, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” It is one or the other!

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