

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, March 23, 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.

## **SOMEONE NEEDS TO START**

Before two people can have a conversation something needs to happen. That something is very obvious – someone has to begin speaking! Unless that happens, each person will remain in his or her own world. A conversation requires that someone take the initiative and engage the other person.

In this Sunday's Gospel for the Third Sunday of Lent (John 4:5-42), we have one of the most famous conversations found in the New Testament, namely, the exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

It takes place for only one reason. Jesus initiates a conversation with the woman who has come to draw water at Jacob's well. Jesus does that by saying to the woman, "Give me a drink."

That woman herself would never have begun a conversation. Women did not start conversations with strange men. Furthermore she was a Samaritan and so she asked Jesus, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" For as John explains in his Gospel, "Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans."

Furthermore that woman was not looking to speak to anyone. If she were, why would she have come to the well at noon? Women came to draw water in the early morning and not during the heat of the day.

She came when she did because as a woman who been divorced by five men in a row and was now living with yet another man, she did not want to meet people – people who would not talk with her but about her. So the Samaritan woman came to the well when it would normally be deserted.

There Jesus started a conversation with the woman. A conversation that moved from well water to living water, to social taboos dealing with male and female interaction, to the woman's moral situation, to the religious conflict between Jews and Samaritans, and finally to the coming Messiah.

By the end of the conversation Jesus had revealed himself as the Messiah, the Christ, and the woman was brought to faith.

The life of the Samaritan woman was changed because Jesus did the unexpected. He began a conversation with a person judged a sinner by society and an outcast even in her own estimation. That unexpected conversation surprised the woman herself and Jesus' own disciples. As John writes, "His disciples were amazed that he was talking with a woman."

Jesus continues to start amazing, life-changing conversations. He began one with each of us at the waters of baptism and he has continued that conversation through prayer, the scriptures,

the Church, the Sacraments, and the events of our lives. That conversation began because, as he did with the Samaritan woman, Jesus took the initiative.

I imagine the Lord's disciples, who were amazed to see him in conversation with a woman, would be equally amazed to see the Lord talking with us sinners!

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