

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, March 24, 2019

The Third 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.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than ten years.

WITHIN OUR CONTROL

Whenever there is a construction accident that causes injury or death, investigators from the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, as well as state and local officials, quickly appear at the site. They start searching for the cause of the accident. They want to discover what went wrong and how future problems can be prevented.

Whenever a violent incident occurs that results in death, members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other law enforcement agencies converge on the scene. They investigate what happened. They search for those responsible and try to discover what motivated the attack.

When something terrible occurs, we want to learn the details, but more importantly, we want to discover why it happened, and how we can keep such an event from occurring again. We want explanations. We do not like feeling that we have no control over the world around us.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 13:1-9), we hear about a murderous act of violence and a construction accident.

Jesus is told about some Galileans killed by Pilate, the Roman Governor, as they were offering sacrifices in the Temple. Their blood ended up mingling with the blood of the animals they had sacrificed.

In response, Jesus mentions another tragedy, he speaks of the 18 people crushed to death by a falling tower in Siloam.

The Jews speaking with Jesus did not need investigators to tell them the reason these two events occurred. In their minds, the Galileans murdered by Pilate and the residents of Siloam killed by a collapsing tower must have been sinners deserving of divine punishment. God used Pilate's cruelty and faulty construction as instruments of his wrath.

However, Jesus did not accept such thinking. He says the Galileans murdered at Pilate's order were by no means "greater sinners than all other Galileans." And those crushed by the tower were no "more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem."

While those events were not acts of divine retribution, Jesus says they are reminders of the doom that awaits those who do not repent of their sins. As he says, "if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!"

Then Jesus goes on to tell a parable that makes it clear that the time we have for repentance is limited. God, Jesus says, is like the owner of a non-productive fig tree who gives that tree a final chance to bear fruit, otherwise it is to be cut down.

As much as we may want to have control over the events that affect us and want explanations for why things happen, much of life is not within our sway. Accidents, acts of violence, natural disasters, stock market crashes, and political conflicts are beyond our control.

However, there is something within our power. We determine how we use the time given us to respond to the Lord's call to repentance. Striving to live a good and a holy life is certainly within our control.

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