

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, April 6, 2025

The Fifth 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 sixteen years.

STONE THROWERS

"So what do you say?" That was the confrontational question the Scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus in this Sunday's Gospel (John 8:1-11).

The religious leaders were demanding that Jesus tell them what he would do about the woman they had dragged before him, a woman caught in the very act of adultery. Should she be stoned to death as Moses commanded in the law, or should the stipulated penalty be ignored?

Rather than answer directly, Jesus replied that the person who was without sin in the eyes of God, should be the first to throw a stone at the adulterous woman.

Stones began falling from the hands of those demanding the woman's death. Beginning with the elders, the crowd melted away. Jesus then told the terrified woman standing before him, "Go, and from now on do not sin any more."

Thankfully, we do not live in a society where a person can literally be stoned to death by an accusing mob. However, we exist in a culture where people have their hands full of "stones" they are prepared to fling at others. These stones are weightless, readily available, easy to throw, and more than able to damage their target. These stones are words. These stones come in a variety of forms, they come as lies, gossip, insinuations, slanders, innuendoes, half-truths, false accusations, smears, exaggerations, etc.

Today, people can hurl such verbal stones at others in more ways than ever before. They can use Facebook, Tik-Tok, Instagram, X, and other social media. They can use text messages, emails, podcasts, and leave negative comments and adverse ratings on websites. They can file frivolous lawsuits or make anonymous accusations. They can write slanted stories for print and online publications. They can use AI to generate fake recordings and images of individuals.

People who would never think of throwing an actual rock at someone's face can throw verbal stones at a person with little hesitation and with little regard for the pain and suffering they cause.

We see examples of such verbal stonings in the congressional hearings that take place for those nominated for government positions and in the bullying and gossip that can drive a student from a campus or an employee from a job.

The adage "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words shall never hurt me" is certainly not true.

This Sunday's Gospel has a message for all of us who are sometimes tempted to fling verbal stones at another person, perhaps even ones that may be deserved as were the stones meant

for the adulterous woman: “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.”

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