

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Second Sunday of Easter, April 23, 2017

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.

THE FIRST MOVER

Whenever two people experience a break in their relationship, one of them needs to make the first move if there is to be any hope of healing and reconciliation. If each person waits for the other, nothing happens and what is worse, hearts and attitudes harden and the two people drift further and further apart.

Certainly, there would be a reasonable expectation that the person who caused the break, inflicted the hurt and pain, would be the person to step forward and do something to heal the damage he or she had caused.

For example, if a wife discovered that her husband was having an affair, that wife would be perfectly justified in expecting her husband to express his sorrow and deep regret if he had any desire to save the marriage.

If the owner of a company learned that a trusted accountant was embezzling, that employer would be shocked and saddened to realize his confidence had been betrayed. The employer would expect that accountant to admit his crime, resign, and make restitution.

In both cases, we would be surprised if the aggrieved wife reached out to her unfaithful husband, or the victimized employer brought the disgraced accountant back into the business.

Yet that is what happens in this Sunday's Gospel (John 20:19-31). Jesus had put his trust and confidence in the men he had picked to be his closest followers. Jesus had spent time with them, taught them, shared his ministry with them, and revealed himself to them. He even saw them as his family. As we read in the Gospel of Matthew, "stretching out his hand toward his disciples, Jesus said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother.'" (Matthew 12:49-50)

But it was those trusted disciples who abandoned him and denied him on the night he was arrested. They left Jesus alone to his fate.

Yet in Sunday's Gospel, we read that when the Risen Lord appeared to those less-than-faithful disciples, he did not wait for them to apologize, explain, or seek forgiveness. Jesus, the aggrieved one, the offended one, made the first move. "Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'"

In fact, Jesus wished them "peace" not once but twice. He made the first move to restore the relationship between himself and his disciples. He did not wait for them.

Jesus then sent them out to share with others the undeserved peace and mercy he had shown them. "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'"

They were to go forth and to make the first move toward those who had betrayed their own relationship with God and sinned. They were not to wait for sinners to come to them; they were to seek them out. They were to act like the good shepherd who looked for the lost sheep or the woman who searched high and low for her lost coin.

What Jesus did, and what he commissioned his disciples to do, is what God himself has been doing since the first pages of the Book of Genesis. Humanity sins, turns away from God, and breaks the covenant, yet God, the offended one, does not stand on pride and position. The All-Holy One seeks out the wholly sinful. God makes the first move!

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*May the peace and joy of the Risen Lord
be with you during this Easter Season!*