

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, April 26, 2015**

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.

## **A GOOD SHEPHERD CONNECTS**

A firefighter races into a blazing building to rescue a resident trapped in a fourth floor apartment.

A lifeguard struggles to swim through pounding waves to reach a teenager being pulled out to sea by a violent riptide.

A police officer edges onto a narrow ledge of an office tower to try to persuade a distraught employee from jumping.

Why do such persons put their lives in jeopardy trying to save people they do not know? Do they do so because it is their job – what they are paid to do? Or is there something else that drives them beyond money?

In this Sunday's Gospel (John 10:11-18) Jesus speaks of two kinds of people, those who work only for pay and those whose actions are motivated by something more. Jesus contrasts a hired man with a good shepherd.

Jesus says, "A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them." Rather than risk his life to save the sheep, the hired man flees. That happens, Jesus says, "because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep." A paycheck will not induce a hired man to value the life of sheep more highly than his own.

That stands in sharp contrast to the good shepherd whom Jesus praises. The good shepherd is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. He is motivated not by money but by the connection he feels with his flock. He knows his sheep and they know him. There is a relationship. It was such a connection that led Jesus to lay down his life for us. He humbled himself, even accepting the cross, so that we might be saved from the prowling wolves of sin and death. Jesus was no "hired man," but a loving man.

People who risk their lives for others also do so because they are "good shepherds" who recognize some type of connection between themselves and the "sheep" they attempt to save.

They see a human being like themselves. They see a member of the human family. They see a fellow child of God. They see a person with feelings like their own and with family and friends whose hearts will break if that person is lost.

Today we rejoice that Jesus felt so connected to us that he willingly laid down his life so that we might be saved and raised to a new relationship with God.

As followers of Jesus, we are challenged to recognize our connections with others. Once we recognize those human and spiritual connections we will be on our way to becoming good shepherds.

“A hired man...sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away....because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep.”

“A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

© 2015 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski