

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, June 14, 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.

## **MORE THAN WE IMAGINE**

Great stories that endure have more in them than we might first imagine. They have deeper meanings that reveal something about human nature.

For example, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the well-known story by L. Frank Baum, might be thought of as only a fable for children about a lost girl who meets a series of odd characters in her quest to return home.

But that story has layers of meaning that resonate with adults. It takes some age and wisdom to appreciate what lies below the surface. The story deals with self-discovery, the quest for something more, the value of friendship and loyalty, the challenges that come with the journey called life, the search for a savior, the importance of following the right path, and more. In fact, there is a Franciscan preacher who bases a parish retreat on the deeper meaning, the Christian meaning, that can be found in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. ([www.friarjp.com/missions.html](http://www.friarjp.com/missions.html))

If great stories contain deeper meanings, how much more do the parables of Jesus. These short stories told by Jesus have far more in them than we often imagine. In this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 4:26-34), Jesus tells two parables to help explain the kingdom of God. The first parable is about a farmer who scatters seeds that wondrously produce a harvest, and the second is about a tiny mustard seed that grows into a large shrub.

After relating those parables, Mark says, "With many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to understand it. Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private."

Jesus used parables when preaching to the crowds because he knew those simple, allegorical stories would catch the interest of the people and help them to understand some aspect of his message.

But when he was alone with his disciples Jesus explained their deeper meaning. He helped his disciples appreciate the fuller truth he was trying to convey. He showed them what was below the surface. We see Jesus doing just that when he explains the parable of the seed sown in various types of soil (Matthew 13:18-23) and the parable about the weeds (Matthew 13:36-43).

Certainly the Gospel of John presents large passages where Jesus teaches his disciples in private. This is especially true in his discourse during the Last Supper (John 14, 15, 16).

If we are to truly grasp the message of Jesus found in the parables, we need to go deeper. We need to explore the rich truths they contain. The truths in those parables have been proclaimed by preachers and explored by theologians for some 2,000 years. There is always more in them than we think.

For example, in the first parable this Sunday, Jesus says that, “of its own accord the land yields fruit.” The farmer “knows not how.” That mysterious growth may indicate that we may never understand why some people accept the Gospel and others reject it, why some people grow in faith and others remain spiritual adolescents. On the other hand, Jesus may be proclaiming a message of confidence and hope. He may be telling us that despite setbacks eventually the yield that God intends will be produced.

If we are to truly appreciate the parables of Jesus and the entire message of the Gospel we need to reflect, we need to study, and we need to listen to the guidance given us by the Church. If we do not, we will never discover the treasure waiting for us below the surface.

*© 2015 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski*