

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, June 25, 2017**

## ***The Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time***

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.

### **A CONTRADICTION**

If you came to a door that had a large sign posted on it with the words, "NEVER USE THIS DOOR" written in large red letters, what would do?

Most likely you would follow the instructions and look for another door.

But suppose you came to a door with the same sign, but right above that sign there was another one, equally large, that had bright green letters that read, "USE THIS DOOR AT ALL TIMES."

What would you do now? Each sign contradicts the other. To say the least, you would be confused.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 10:26-33), Jesus seems to give two contradictory messages, not about doors but about fear.

The Gospel begins, "Jesus said to the Twelve: 'Fear no one.'" However, a few verses later Jesus seems to contradict that message. He says, "Be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

"Fear no one" or "be afraid" – which is it?

When Jesus says "fear no one," he is telling us not to be afraid of openly sharing our faith. "What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."

Certainly, in our day we see courageous Christians doing as Jesus asked. Despite social and economic discrimination, despite the threat of physical violence and even death, they profess their faith in Christ. In many places, merely gathering for Sunday worship is an act of courage and a way the Gospel is proclaimed "on the housetops."

Those Christians know that the truth of the Gospel will ultimately prevail. "Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known." They also have the assurance of Jesus who promises, "Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father."

But Jesus does tell us there is someone we should fear. We should fear the "one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." We should fear God who can destroy far more than just physical life.

We have reason to fear God if we fail to live out our relationship with the Lord. "Whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."

We deny the Lord when our words and actions contradict the values of the Gospel. We deny the Lord when we fail to join our fellow Christians for Sunday Mass. We deny the Lord when we do not allow him to guide our decisions at work, at school, at home, and in our social interactions.

Jesus tells us not to fear people whose influence is limited to this life, but to fear God.

Yet today it seems many of us are far more afraid of the judgment of society and afraid of paying the cost that comes with living the Gospel than we are afraid of God.

Yet as Jesus makes clear, there is only one whom we truly should fear – the “one who can destroy both body and soul in Ghenna.”

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