

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 1, 2018

The Thirteenth 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.

GRACIOUS ACTION

"Priests are always talking about money!" Everyone has heard that criticism at one time or another. And surprisingly it is a complaint often made by people who rarely are at Mass to hear what is being said from the pulpit.

But nevertheless, it is true that priests do speak about money. In speaking about money, priests are in good company. In this Sunday's Second Reading (2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15), we hear Saint Paul talking about money. Paul is appealing to the Christians at Corinth to be generous in the special collection he is taking up to help the Church in Jerusalem.

The Christians of Jerusalem were suffering because of food shortages, economic difficulties, high taxation, plus the Church there was burdened as it cared for the poor and supported the work of missionaries.

As we read in this Sunday's Second Reading, Paul asks the Christians of Corinth to support this collection in light of the "gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ."

As Paul explains, in this gracious act Jesus, though he "was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."

Or as Paul puts it in his Letter to the Philippians, "Christ Jesus who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, ... he humbled himself." (Philippians 2:6-8)

Paul tells the Christians at Corinth that as they have been saved by the humble, "gracious act" of Jesus Christ, so the Christians at Jerusalem should benefit by the Corinthians following the example of Jesus. As Paul puts it, sharing "your abundance at the present time should supply their needs."

We see that gracious action of Jesus also illustrated in Sunday's Gospel (Mark 5:21-43). In that passage we learn of Jesus healing a woman suffering from hemorrhages and coming to the aid of grieving parents whose young daughter had been taken by death.

Out of his compassion and generosity of spirit, Jesus healed a woman and restored life to a dead girl.

We ourselves have experienced the benefits of that same compassion and generosity. For the Son of God took on flesh, came among us, suffered, died, and rose so that we might be healed of sin and raised to a new relationship with God.

If we appreciated the care and generosity God has shown, and continues to show us, we would need no further motivation to make us generous and compassionate people.

The “gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ” should lead us to gracious generosity just as it led the Christians of Corinth to respond to the appeal of Saint Paul.

© 2018 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski