

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 2, 2017

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

WHAT DIFFERENCE?

On July 4, we celebrate Independence Day, a national holiday commemorating the day in 1776 when the thirteen colonies declared their independence from England.

This holiday is a perfect time to recall the blessings that we enjoy because we live in the United States. We can choose the people who will govern and represent us. We have the right to express our political opinions and to practice our religion. We can freely assemble with our fellow citizens to promote social change. We have access to public and private education. We have the internet, television, radio, smart phones, computers, and social networks to keep us informed and connected. We have access to food, shelter, and health care far beyond most of the world.

But have you ever considered how your life would be different if you were living in North Korea, China, Venezuela, Russia, or Egypt?

Without a doubt, our lives would be very different.

This Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 10:37-42) and Second Reading (Romans 6:3-4, 8-11) challenge us to ask ourselves how our lives would be different if the waters of baptism had not flowed over us.

Would our values, our view of the world, our treatment of others, our relationships, our business dealings, where we spend our time and money, the way we live our lives and how we speak be much different?

For many of us, being baptized or not being baptized appears to make little difference. Other than going to Mass and making sure our children receive the sacraments, most Catholics live very much like their neighbors. The county in which we live seems to affect our lives far more than the waters of baptism.

But in today's second reading, Saint Paul asserts that baptism makes a great deal of difference. In fact, he says it makes all the difference. "Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life."

When we live in this "newness of life" that comes with baptism, things are different. God is not a distant force but a loving Father, a caring Brother. Mercy and kindness are more important than accumulating money or power. Values are grounded in the Gospel of Jesus and not in the whims of society. Freedom is found not in going our way but God's way. Strangers are not those

we do not know but fellow children of God whom we have yet to meet. Mass and prayer are not obligations but moments of contact with the source of all life and love.

When we live in this “newness of life,” our relationship with the Lord guides all other relationships, even those with parents and children. As Jesus tells us, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

When we live in this “newness of life,” we see death not as a fall into nothingness, but as an eternal embrace by the Lord who said “everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11:26).

While this Fourth of July can remind us how different are lives are because we live in the United States, this Sunday’s readings can remind us how different our lives should be because of our baptism!

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