

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 12, 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.

AT LEAST DO SOMETHING!

"You need to take off 75 pounds, go to the gym three times a week, cut out red meat and alcohol, get at least eight hours of sleep, and immediately stop smoking." If a doctor gave those orders to a patient, that person would nod in agreement and then probably do little of what the doctor prescribed. The patient would feel overwhelmed by the challenging things the doctor demanded be done – and be done at once.

The apostles in this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 6:7-13) might have felt as overwhelmed as that patient when Jesus let them know what he expected of them. Jesus told them to pair up, go forth, and continue his work on their own. He gave them authority to expel unclean spirits. He ordered them to take no money, no luggage, and no food, only sandals and a walking stick. He told them to be completely dependent on the charity of others. And when they encountered rejection, he told them to just move on and not be deterred from their mission.

What Jesus asked of the apostles in Sunday's Gospel is what he also requires of us, for through baptism, we are the disciples of Jesus in our day. We are the ones with the responsibility of continuing his mission.

We can react in a number of ways to what Jesus says.

We can think that the instructions of Jesus are meant only for the holiest among us – for those willing to be modern day imitators of Saint Francis of Assisi, willing like him to perfectly follow the commands of Jesus and put aside all worldly concerns.

We can think that wearing sandals and holding a walking stick would make us look ridiculous, to say nothing of claiming that we were on a mission from Jesus to expel demons.

We can think that the instructions of Jesus were fine for the disciples of his day, but impractical for us in 2015. How could anyone think of traveling from place to place with no money, with no supplies, and with no certainty of where he or she would sleep? Furthermore, how could any disciple with a wife or children even consider doing what Jesus demanded? How could they abandon their family obligations to become homeless, itinerant preachers?

Those reactions, those very valid reactions, can lead us to dismiss Sunday's Gospel as instructions for other people at another time. But if we look beyond what Jesus is literally saying, we can see that the Gospel reading has instructions we *can* follow.

Jesus tells us to travel in pairs. In other words, he tells us that we are not to be loners but part of a Christian community that offers encouragement, companionship, and support.

Jesus tells us not to be worried about what we are to eat or drink. That is, he tells us that our wants and desires are not to rule our lives. Life is more than satisfying our physical needs.

Jesus tells us to carry a walking stick and to wear sandals. In today's terms, he tells us that we need to be willing to go where we feel the Lord may be calling us, even beyond our comfort zone.

Jesus tells us to stay at whatever house welcomes us. Put another way, he tells us to associate with anyone who is open to the message of the Gospel.

Jesus tells us to expel demons. That is to say, he challenges us to make some effort against the demons that possess our society such as pornography, human trafficking, corruption, injustice, and greed.

While we may not be able to do everything Jesus asks in this Sunday's Gospel, at least we can do something. And as any doctor will tell you, getting a patient to do something is better than the patient doing nothing at all!

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