

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 14, 2019

The Fifteenth 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.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than ten years.

MOVED BY COMPASSION

When something terrible and life-threatening occurs, most people move away from the danger as quickly as possible. However, there are some people who actually move toward it.

We see that happen when a mass shooting or bombing takes place. Those in the vicinity run from the danger, while first responders move toward it.

We certainly had a dramatic example of that on September 11, 2001 when the Twin Towers were hit by jets used as deadly missiles by terrorists. Those in the burning towers ran for their lives, while police, firefighters, and other first responders moved toward the danger.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus tells a parable in which people move in opposite directions. Two people move away from danger, while another person moves toward it.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a priest and Levite journeying on the road to Jericho come across a man robbed, beaten, and left half dead by robbers. When they see the situation, the two pass by on the opposite side of the road. They move quickly away from a potentially dangerous situation, thinking perhaps that those who attacked the man might be lying in wait for another victim.

When a Samaritan encounters the injured man, rather than crossing the road and moving away from him, he approaches the man. Jesus tells us the reason the Samaritan acted as he did. He "was moved with compassion at the sight."

The priest and Levite were motivated by self-concern, while the Samaritan was motivated by compassion. He felt for the man, he sensed their shared humanity, he recognized his obligation to a fellow human being, he imagined himself in such a situation.

Compassion moved the Samaritan to do what the priest and Levite did not do. If we look at the Gospel of Luke, we see other examples of the power of compassion.

In the parable of the Forgiving Father, also known as the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tells us that when the father saw his wayward son returning, the father "was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him." (Luke 15:20). Compassion moved the father to go to his undeserving son.

We also see compassion move Jesus himself when he encounters the widow of Nain burying her only son. Luke tells us, "When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' He stepped forward and touched the coffin ... and he said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.'" (Luke 7:13-14) Compassion moved Jesus to come to the aid of a weeping mother.

We might say that it was similar compassion that led Jesus to embrace the Cross so we sinners might be raised to new life.

If we are to follow the example of the Good Samaritan, perhaps the first thing we need to do is to deepen our sense of compassion for those suffering. We need to recognize our obligation to the members of our human family. Such compassion will lead us to go toward our neighbor in need and not move to the other side of the road.

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