

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 17, 2016

The Sixteenth 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.

WHO DOES THE DOING?

Is the following statement true or false? Christianity is about doing things for God.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 10:38-42), we meet a woman whose answer would be, "True, absolutely true." She would wholeheartedly agree that religion is about doing things for God.

When Jesus comes to the village of Bethany to visit Mary and Martha, the first thing Martha does is to rush into the kitchen and start preparing a meal for Jesus. She starts slicing and dicing, kneading and baking. She is all about doing something for Jesus, doing something for the Lord.

Certainly it is easy to think of Christianity that way.

Being a Christian means doing things for the Lord. It means coming to Mass on Sundays, praying every day, reading the scriptures, receiving Holy Communion, confessing our sins, supporting our parish, getting marked with ashes, and then sacrificing for Lent.

It means having our children baptized, teaching them to pray, showing them right from wrong, making certain they receive First Penance, First Communion, and Confirmation, bringing them to religious education classes, and sending them to Catholic school if possible.

It means loving our neighbor, feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, and caring about all in need.

It means working for peace and justice so that God's kingdom might truly come into our society.

It means doing all those things and more for God.

Mary, the sister of Martha, might not agree. In fact, she might respond, "False," to the statement "Christianity is about doing things for God."

When Jesus comes to visit, Mary acts very differently from her sister. Rather than doing something for Jesus she simply sits at the feet of Jesus and listens to him speak. Jesus the rabbi teaches, and Mary the student listens and learns. Mary receives as Jesus gives.

When Martha complains to Jesus that her sister Mary is doing nothing for him, Jesus tells her that "Mary has chosen the better part."

Perhaps the "better part" is taking the time to recognize the presence of the Lord who speaks and acts in the lives of his people.

The Lord speaks to us through the scriptures, through the Church, through the good people we meet, and through the events of our lives. He tells us of the Father's love. He shows us the

meaning and purpose of our existence. He lights the way and speaks truth in a society filled with darkness and lies. He proclaims a Gospel that offers the fullness of life today and forever.

The Lord does far greater things for us than we could ever do for him. The Lord claims us as his own in the waters of baptism. He blesses us with the gifts of the Spirit in confirmation. He feeds us with consecrated bread and wine that draw us into a “holy communion” with him and his Church. He forgives our past and offers us a new start in the sacrament of penance. He comes to comfort us as we are burdened with sickness, discouragement, and despair. He embraces and affirms us with a love so great that it leads him to lay down his life for us.

While Christianity does involve doing things for God, Christianity is first and foremost about appreciating what God has done and continues to do for us. Mary would tell us that’s the truth.

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