

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 21, 2019

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.

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

WHAT'S FIRST?

Make a to-do list. That is the advice often given to people who want to be more productive, who want to make better use of their time, who want to get more control of their lives.

But while listing what needs to be done during a particular day or week can be helpful, something else is required to make a to-do list useful. The list needs to be prioritized. The task that a person judges most important, or that will provide the greatest sense of accomplishment, needs to be first on the list. Other tasks are then placed in descending order.

A list that has no order to it will not be very helpful. For when faced with a non-prioritized list of tasks, many of us will first give our attention to the things we particularly enjoy doing or that are the easiest to complete, rather than to the things that are of greatest importance.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 10:38-42), we hear of two people who had different to-do lists, and different sets of priorities.

In that reading, Jesus comes to the home of Mary and Martha. If we look at the phrase preceding this passage, "As they continued their journey," it implies that Jesus did not come alone, but rather with several disciples.

Martha and Mary each faced the task of welcoming not only Jesus but his disciples as well.

Martha immediately started on the things on her "good hostess list." She had to find places for people to sit, prepare the oven, bake bread, determine what meal she could cook with the ingredients she had available, ask if she could borrow items from her neighbors, set out plates, cups, and jugs of water and maybe a little wine for her guest of honor. She had to make sure everyone was taken care of.

Mary, her sister had a different list. Though she obviously felt some obligation to help in the kitchen, she believed the number one thing she could do was to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his words. In doing so, Mary took the position that a disciple assumed before his master - a most unexpected posture for any woman at the time of Jesus.

But when Martha complains about her sister, Jesus tells her, "Mary has chosen the better part." Listening and learning were more important than cooking and serving.

Most of our to-do lists are filled with too many tasks, obligations, and responsibilities. Jesus might tell us what he told Martha, "You are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing."

That one thing that should be first on our list of tasks is to listen to the Lord. We do that when we read the Scriptures, spend time in prayer, come to Mass, examine our lives in the light of the Gospel, and seek spiritual direction.

If we follow the example of Mary, we will gain the wisdom to see what things are truly worth our time and effort. Otherwise, like Martha we will be so busy running from one thing to the next that we will miss what is most important, what most positively affects our lives – listening to the Lord!

© 2019 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski