

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 22, 2018

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.

THE FRIENDSHIP MAKER

Think of the people who are your close friends.

How did you meet them? How did those relationships begin?

Some friendships start when two people are assigned to work together on a project at school or at work. Other friendships originate when two individuals sitting near each other on a plane or train start talking and discover they have a lot in common. Still other friendships come about because one person feels an attraction to someone, and that person walks over and introduces him or herself. And in this digital world, friendships also blossom through postings on social media or online dating sites.

Friendships also happen when a person with two friends who are unacquainted with one another makes the effort to bring those two individuals together. The common friend serves as the "friendship maker." We see an example of just that in a person who thinks two of his or her friends would make the perfect couple and so arranges a "blind date."

In this Sunday's Second Reading (Ephesians 2:13-18), we might say that Saint Paul describes Jesus as the friendship maker, as the one who brings people together.

Paul says that through the ministry of Jesus, Jews and Gentiles have been brought together and the hostility separating them has been overcome. They have become friends through the work of the Lord

As Paul, the Jewish Christian, tells the Gentile believers at Ephesus, "In Christ Jesus you who once were far off have become near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity ... that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God."

Jesus, the one proclaimed by the Apostles as the long-awaited Messiah, and the one preached by Paul as the Redeemer of the Gentiles, unites Jew and Gentile. Jesus Christ is the friend they have in common. He is their uniter and friendship maker.

But we do not have to look at the relationship between Jew and Gentile to see the friendship-making ministry of Jesus. We have an example far closer to home and in our own day and age.

We need to look no further than our own parishes. The people we know in the parish, the people we nod to and recognize at Sunday Mass, those people are our acquaintances and friends because of Jesus Christ. He is the one who has brought us together. He is the friend we have in common.

The relationship that we have because of Jesus is brought to mind at every Mass as we exchange the sign of peace with our "friends" in the pews.

But it is most powerfully manifested as we receive Holy Communion. As we receive the consecrated bread and wine that is his very Body and Blood, the Lord brings us into a “holy communion” with him and with our fellow Christians. We become friends who share the same flesh and blood!

As the traditional Christian hymn puts it, “What a friend we have in Jesus.” He is the friend who introduces us to his other friends, that we might all be one in him.

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