

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, July 24, 2016**

## ***The Seventeenth 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 INDIFFERENT ONE?**

God is in heaven serenely contemplating the universe that he hurled into the nothingness of space at the moment of creation. Occasionally God glances at the sphere of matter on which we live and die as it circles an insignificant sun on the edge of a galaxy lost in an ocean of other massive clusters of stars.

That description certainly paints God as distant and indifferent. Yet that is the notion that many people have of God, if they believe in the existence of a divine being at all.

Yes, God can seem to be indifferent to what is happening around us. Just consider the poverty, starvation, homelessness, disease, drug addiction, alcoholism, physical cruelty, sexual abuse, pornography, crime, corruption, war, torture, abortion, human trafficking, persecution, family breakdown, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and all the other forms of suffering, sin, injustice, and selfishness that ravish our world.

Despite all those evils, in the view of many people, God seems to be detached and uninvolved, merely a sometimes observer.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 11:1-13), Jesus tells a parable that might lead one to assume why God does nothing. God must be asleep at the switch.

Jesus tells a parable about a man who goes at midnight to the home of a friend to borrow some bread so he can feed an unexpected guest. The man bangs and bangs at the door of his friend's house but he is told, "Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything."

The man banging at the door is told to go away. But eventually that man gets the bread he seeks. He pesters his unwilling friend until he drives the weary man out of bed and into the kitchen. Persistence gets a response.

In relating that parable, Jesus seems to be telling us that we need such persistence when it comes to our prayer, when it comes to bringing our needs and concerns before God.

"I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."

When the door is not opened, when we do not get what we seek, the obvious conclusion is that we have not shown enough persistence. We need to keep banging on the door of heaven until we arouse the attention of God and get God to do something.

That conclusion puts God in a very bad light. It also does not fit the first part of the Gospel where Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray. There Jesus simply says we are to tell God what

we need. "Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins .... and do not subject us to the final test." He does not tell us to keep repeating those requests again and again.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us, "In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

We are to be persistent in our prayer not to arouse God, but rather to rouse ourselves out of our sleep of indifference and out of the darkness that blinds us to the presence and will of God.

As Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said, "I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I believe that prayer changes us and we change things."

The more we pray, the more God bangs on the doors of our hearts, the more God comes in and transforms us and makes us instruments of his mercy and love.

If God seems to be uninvolved and distant, God is not the one asleep at the switch, we are!

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