

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 27, 2025

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

BETTER PRAYER

Do you want to improve your prayer life?

We would likely answer, "Yes, I do." We might want to be more focused in our prayer, less distracted and more aware of God's presence. We might desire to more fully lift our hearts and minds to God in prayer. We might want to more willingly devote time to prayer and believe that time is not wasted, that prayer makes a difference. We might simply want to know the best words to use and how we should pray. All of us would like to be better at prayer.

This was also true of the disciples of Jesus. That is why, as we hear in Sunday's Gospel (Luke 11:1-13), the disciples ask Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." In response, Jesus teaches the disciples what we have come to call the "Lord's Prayer." This Sunday, we have St. Luke's version of that prayer.

In giving us this prayer, Jesus teaches us that when we pray, we are not to look upon God as a distant, impersonal force. He tells us to see God as a father who cares for his children, a father who is worthy of our love and respect, and whose name is to be "hallowed."

Jesus teaches us to pray that God's kingdom of love, justice, and peace, whose coming he proclaimed, will truly take root in our world. As that happens, heaven will begin to appear on earth.

Jesus tells us that as we pray, we need to remember that we are dependent upon God for our "daily bread," and indeed for our very lives.

Jesus then reminds us that we are sinners in need of God's mercy. As sinners requesting mercy, we are to show mercy to those who have sinned against us.

And finally, Jesus tells us to pray that we will remain faithful to God in every trial and temptation.

After giving us those words of prayer, Jesus then teaches us that prayer is something that requires persistence. Consider how many thousands of times we have said the "Lord's Prayer" in our personal lives, and how many hundreds of billions of times that prayer has been raised up to the Father since it was first taught by Jesus to his disciples 2,000 years ago. Repeating that prayer gives continuing praise to God, recalls our ongoing dependence upon God, and it reminds us of how we are to live each day as children of the Father.

Then Jesus says, "I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." While these words might seem to assure us that God will give us

whatever we ask for in prayer, we know from experience that prayers are not always answered as we wish.

But Jesus goes on to say that God does give us what is most important, namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit. "If you...know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

The abiding presence of the Holy Spirit was the gift that Jesus promised his apostles. That is the most important thing we should pray for, and it is a prayer that God will answer.

Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit who improves our prayer life. As St. Paul tells us, "The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought" (Romans 8:26).

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