

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 29, 2018

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.

SUMMER REPLACEMENT

During the summer, some companies hire temporary workers to fill in for employees who are on vacation. Other companies transfer workers to staff departments that are shorthanded during the vacation season.

Since this liturgical year of 2018, which began with the First Sunday of Advent, our Gospel readings have generally been taken from Saint Mark.

However, for the next five Sundays, beginning this Sunday, July 29, the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Gospel readings will be taken not from Mark but from Saint John.

We might say that during these weeks Mark goes on vacation and the Church asks John to fill in!

However, the truth is that the Gospel of Mark does not have enough material for all the Sundays of this liturgical year. So, when we come to the sixth chapter of Mark, where Jesus feeds a crowd of five thousand with five loaves and two fish, we leave Mark and we go to the sixth chapter of John.

In that chapter, John not only gives his account of that miracle, he relates the teaching of Jesus that follows that astounding event.

During these weeks, John, our "summer replacement," will challenge us to grow in our understanding of Jesus who multiplies loaves and fish.

This Sunday, we hear two accounts of people being fed.

In the First Reading (2 Kings 4:42-44), the prophet Elisha is presented with 20 loaves of bread which he tells his servant to share with one hundred hungry people. The servant does as instructed. All are fed, and some bread is even left over.

While that feeding might have been miraculous, it could also be explained by assuming that the crowd was aware that there was only one loaf for every five people. With that in mind they limited the amount of bread they took.

However, sensitivity and sharing do not explain what takes place in the Gospel (John 6:1-15). There Jesus does not have 20 loaves for 100 people, he has 5 loaves for 5,000 people! In addition, he has only two small fish for that vast crowd.

As Andrew very logically tells Jesus "what good are these for so many."

Yet from that little, all are fed. In fact, more food is left over at the end than there was at the beginning! From what seemed to be of little use, a tremendous miracle took place.

In his account of this event, John tells us that those who were fed were so impressed that they proclaimed, “This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.” And they wanted to “carry him off to make him king.”

Obviously, from what Andrew thought was of little use, Jesus did something that revealed he was far more than just another popular preacher.

Our world is more than willing to accept Jesus as a good man, a powerful preacher, a person who could bring out the best in others.

But society is not so ready to accept Jesus as the divine worker of miracles who feeds thousands with a few loaves and fish. And even less so, is it willing to recognize Jesus as the “living bread” who satisfies the hungers that no earthly food can ever lessen – the hungers of the heart and spirit.

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