

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, July 31, 2016

The Eighteenth 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.

BIGGER BARNS?

"Father, if I hit it big in the lottery, I will give a large donation to the parish. You won't have any more worries about money." Every pastor has heard comments like that.

Unfortunately, rarely, if ever, does a parishioner have the winning lottery ticket for a multi-million dollar payout. And if someone were to win, the odds are great that the parish would not end up sharing in that good fortune. Not necessarily because the winner would forget his or her promise, but because the person would feel that what he or she won was really not that large in light of his or her personal and family needs.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 12:13-21), Jesus tells a parable about a rich man who does hit it big. The man's fields produce such an amazingly large harvest of grain that his barns simply cannot hold it all. He is blessed with a harvest far larger than any he could have imagined.

The fortunate land owner is faced with a problem, "What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest?" He decides to tear down his existing storage barns and build larger ones for his grain and other property. When all is safely stored away, he intends to "rest, eat, drink, (and) be merry" for years to come.

But his future plans never come to pass for God, the ultimate decision maker, has another idea. The rich man suddenly dies and the contents of his overflowing barns go to his heirs.

When faced with the good problem of having a bountiful harvest, the rich man never considered sharing his blessings with the less fortunate. Instead he expanded his storage space. Perhaps the rich man acted as he did because he was self-centered and selfish.

We certainly get the indication from the parable that he was self-absorbed since as he considers his happy situation, the rich man keeps his thoughts fixed only on himself. He is "I" centered. In fact, he uses the word "I" six times as he thinks about what he should do.

Certainly, if the rich man had been a person of generosity, a person who showed concern for the welfare of others, he would have acted differently. Instead of building barns, he would have helped the less fortunate build up their lives by sharing his harvest with them. In the process he would have stored up treasure in heaven.

The same holds true for us. If our plan is to be generous when we have more than enough for ourselves or when we hit it big in our career or in the Mega-Millions, the chances are that will not happen. Unless we are generous and giving when we have little, we will not be generous and giving when we have more.

Generosity and concern for the needs of others do not come about when our assets reach a certain level. They come about when we realize that all we have is a gift from God. A gift lent to

us only for a time so that we might use it for good. Those who realize that fact and act accordingly are those who hit it big in “what matters to God.”

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