

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, August 4, 2019

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.

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

THE PRIME QUESTION

What shall I do?

That is the key question. How we answer that question determines how we live our lives. It determines how we relate to people and how people see us. It determines our happiness in this life and in the life to come.

We might say the question "What shall I do?" was the first question that confronted humanity. Adam and Eve were faced with that question when the devil tempted them to eat the fruit of the tree they had been forbidden to touch.

As we know, each one decided to disobey God and to eat that forbidden fruit. They decided they knew better than God what they should do.

"What shall I do?" is the question that also appears in the Gospel reading for this Sunday (Luke 12:13-21). There Jesus tells a parable about a rich man whose lands produced such a bountiful harvest that he did not have space to store all the produce of his fields.

When confronted with such bounty, the man asked himself, "What shall I do?" He did not seek the wisdom or guidance of others nor of God, he simply asked himself that question.

In response, he decided to build bigger barns to store all his grains and other goods. With so much stored safely away, he confidently assumed he could "rest, eat, drink, (and) be merry" for years to come.

But as we know from the parable, that man suddenly dies. The content of his overflowing barns goes to his heirs and God judges him to be a fool for not growing rich in what truly matters.

If that man had considered what God expected of him, rather than considering only what he thought best, he would have shared his blessings and grown rich in the sight of God.

The question that confronted the rich man, confronts each one of us when faced with decisions both large and small. "What shall I do?"

That question confronts us not only when it comes to handling our money. It also confronts us when it comes to deciding how we are going to live our lives; how we are going to treat other people; how we are going to respond to the temptations from a culture increasingly hostile to the Gospel.

When faced with such decisions, we tend to behave like the rich man. We rely only on our own wisdom. In doing so we often make poor choices. We make fools of ourselves in the sight of God.

The truly wise person consults the wisdom of God found in the scriptures, considers the teaching and example of Jesus, takes into consideration the guidance of the Church, listens to people who are walking in the ways of holiness, and seeks the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Such consultation and consideration will help us to make better decisions when faced with the question, "What shall I do?"

The person who goes through life depending only on his or her own wisdom and judgment is like the lawyer who defends himself. As the saying goes, "A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for his client"

People who consult only themselves make foolish decisions.

The wise person knows that "What shall I do? is the wrong question to ask. The right question is, "What would God have me do?"

© 2019 Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski