

# **LOOKING TO SUNDAY®**

**Sunday, August 14, 2016**

## ***The Twentieth 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.

### **WHY US?**

"Why me?" When a child is picked on, bullied, or excluded by his or her classmates, the obvious question that child begins to ask is, "Why me? Why I am being picked on?"

That is not an easy question for parents to answer. Parents have to explain to their little ones that there are cruel people in this world. People who ridicule those who do not look like them or act like them. People who pick on other persons to show their power.

Today, Christians in some parts of the world are being more than bullied, they are being persecuted. They are being persecuted even more violently and extensively than they were in the first years of Christianity, when followers of Christ were oppressed and executed by order of the Emperors of Rome.

Yet not all Christians suffer persecution or live in fear of their lives. Those whose faith is not challenged are those who keep their religion a private matter confined to home and church, who see being a Christian as simply being a "nice person" and occasionally going to Mass, and whose morality and values are much like those found in the media. Such Christians are so low keyed and their religion is so private a matter that their neighbors and co-workers might be surprised to know of their religious affiliation.

Those whose Christian faith is challenged are those who take their religion seriously. Jesus speaks of that kind of serious, decisive Christianity in this Sunday's Gospel (Luke 12:49-53) There Jesus says, "I have come to set the earth on fire....Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division."

Jesus came to set the world on fire with his message. He called people to make a decision to accept or reject him as the Lord of their lives. He challenged his hearers to choose either the narrow path that he set before them or the wide, enticing one offered by the world. He required his disciples to examine if God's will was guiding them or if it was their will that was being done on earth.

Those who decide for Christ and make him their way, their truth, and their life, obviously stand apart from those who decide otherwise. Decisions for Christ can even separate us from family members who reject him. That is why Jesus says, "From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

If we choose to faithfully follow Jesus, like him we will face opposition. As Saint Paul tells us in our Second Reading, "For the sake of the joy that lay before him, he (Jesus) endured the cross, despising its shame."

Our society is like a bully. It cannot stand those who are different, those who do not embrace its values, those who judge certain actions as sinful, those whose goodness sheds light on the dark places where evil lurks.

If we never experience hostility or persecution for following Christ, if our faith is never scorned, attacked, or questioned, it may be because our Christianity is never noticed by others.

If that is the case, the question we need to ask ourselves is not, "Why me?" but "Why not me?"

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