

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, August 26, 2018

The Twenty-First 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.

MAJOR NEEDS MINOR

Is he the man I should marry? Should I ask her to be my wife?

Do I choose chemotherapy or radiation to deal with my cancer, or do nothing and just trust in God?

Should I report my co-worker who is stealing money from the company, or just mind my own business?

In life, we are sometimes faced with major decisions that can have serious, long-term consequences.

The readings this Sunday are about people faced with major decisions.

In the First Reading (Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b), Joshua gathers all the tribes of Israel and challenges them to decide whom they will serve. Will they serve the Lord who brought them out of slavery in Egypt or will they bow before the pagan gods of the land in which they are now living?

Before the gathered tribes, Joshua declares, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

In the Gospel (John 6:60-69), the people who heard Jesus say, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven ... whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life," find his words hard to accept.

They are confronted with a decision. Do they accept or reject what Jesus said? As we read, "many of his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him." But Peter and the other Apostles decide to stay with him. As Peter says, "We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God."

In our Second Reading (Ephesians 5:21-32), Paul speaks about the major decision a man and woman make when they decide to marry. They decide to "be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Certainly, we have made such major decisions in our lives. Those decisions have affected our human relationships and our relationship with God and His Church.

But those major decisions need to be followed by countless minor decisions if they are to be lived out.

Those who decided like Joshua to serve the Lord had to make such a decision every day. Just because they served the Lord yesterday was no guarantee they would serve him tomorrow.

The apostles who said they would remain with Jesus had to continually reaffirm that choice by staying with him.

A couple joined in marriage have to say Yes to being married every day. Promised love and faithfulness must be lived out daily in acts of self-sacrifice, kindness and consideration.

Major decisions must be backed up by a continuing series of minor decisions.

A major decision for Christ made at baptism, confirmation, or during a moment of spiritual renewal or retreat requires us to make good minor decisions.

Such minor decisions include: Will I go to Sunday Mass? Am I going to pray today or not? Will I respond to that charitable appeal or just ignore it? Will I visit my elderly parents or put it off for another week? Will I pray with my spouse and children before dinner? Will I respond to my neighbor's request for help or ignore it?

Will I walk away from that lewd conversation at work or be just one of the guys or gals? Will my donation in the Sunday collection just be a dollar or two or will it reflect my gratitude for God's blessings? Will the way I drive, the way I treat strangers, and the way I talk to those working for me, show my self-centeredness or reveal that I follow Christ who served others?

Unless we make good minor decisions, our major decisions will be just words.

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