

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, August 27, 2017

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

KNOWING IS NOT ENOUGH

My children give me an argument every time I tell them to get ready for church.

My teenager refuses to take part in the Confirmation program.

My daughter in college tells me she is not religious just spiritual.

My adult children will not join us for Mass when we visit, not even at Christmas.

My married son and his wife have not said a word about baptizing their baby.

Comments like those are often made by frustrated parents who have tried to pass on their faith to their sons and daughters. They made sure their children received the sacraments, went to Catholic school or enrolled in religious education classes, and learned their prayers and the beliefs of the Church.

Such parents are confused, disappointed, and saddened when their children drift away from the Church. Those children know their faith. They might even say they agree with the statement that Peter makes about Jesus in this Sunday Gospel. (Matthew 16:13-20). "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." They might even accept Jesus' response, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" as a justification for the papacy.

But as parents discover, having children who know their faith does not always result in children who live their faith.

Knowing and acting are two different things. Of course, that is the case in other areas of life. For example, we know that proper nutrition, exercise, avoiding stress, and getting enough sleep lead to better health. But knowing those things does not mean we do those things.

We are far more influenced in our lives by the people we know than by the things we learn. Relationships motivate us more than knowledge. That is also true when it comes to faith.

Peter and the other disciples were brought to faith by their encounter with Jesus and their relationship with him. Jesus did not give religion lessons. Instead he spent time with people. He allowed people to get to know him and knowing him changed them.

Peter went from being a fisherman to a disciple not because of the facts he learned but because he had a personal relationship with Jesus. The relationship came first, information came later.

If children are to remain practicing Catholics, if any of us are to remain strong in our faith, we need to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We need to know him as our Savior and Lord and as our brother and friend.

Such a personal relationship with Jesus begins and grows in the same way as any other relationship. Personal relationships require an ongoing investment of time and effort.

An investment in a relationship with Jesus requires time for conversation. That demands setting aside time each day for prayer. It means speaking with the Lord.

It requires time to listen to his thoughts and ideas. That involves opening ourselves to what Jesus is saying in the Scriptures. It means reading and reflecting on God's Word.

It requires setting aside time to share a meal. That means making certain we gather at the Table of the Lord each Sunday. It means "Sunday dinner" with Jesus.

It requires time to watch his interactions with other people. That demands being part of the Christian community where he touches hearts and changes lives. It means being part of a parish, part of the Church.

It requires making the effort to help him. That means assisting the poor, the sick, the suffering in whom Jesus can be found. It means transforming good words into good actions.

If family members and friends are drifting away from their Catholic faith, more than likely the cause is not a lack of information, but the lack of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

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